



# A NATIONAL YOUTH INFORMATION FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND

Discussion Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

If we are to build a future in which Scotland is wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, smarter and greener, we need to support young people to be involved and see themselves as active citizens. We need to ensure our young citizens are well informed and confident in their ability to explore, research and find the information they need, when they need it, and to use information to enable them to reach their full potential, and overcome any barriers preventing them from doing so.

Since May 2007 there have been fundamental changes in how Government works with its partners, particularly with local government. In November 2007, the Scottish Government, in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and all 32 Scottish local authorities, signed a Concordat<sup>1</sup> which led to the introduction of a National Performance Framework<sup>2</sup> and the adoption of Single Outcome Agreements<sup>3</sup>. These Agreements focus on key national and local outcomes and indicators and provide a mechanism for new innovative approaches to support local communities and enhance community engagement and involvement.

The Scottish Government is also actively supporting key policies, for example the Skills Strategy<sup>4</sup>; Getting it Right for Every Child<sup>5</sup> and More Choices, More Chances<sup>6</sup>. A Curriculum for Excellence<sup>7</sup> is focused on four pillars - enabling young people to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. An exciting and important part of taking this forward will be a new Youth Framework<sup>8</sup> currently being developed and expected to be launched in late 2008. The Framework will be a practical resource for anyone making decisions that affect the support available to young people and for those delivering services to young people.

If these policies are to succeed, we need to support young people and ensure their information needs are met and service providers are supported to be 'fit for purpose'.

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<sup>1</sup> The Concordat – Strategic agreement between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Government signed in November 2007

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government's underpinning principles for performance management. Scottish Budget Review Nov. 2007

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Agreements between the Scottish Government and Community Planning Partners

<sup>4</sup> Skills for Scotland, A Lifelong Skills Strategy. September 2007

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government's Review of Children's Services and Children Hearing System 2006

<sup>6</sup> Scottish Government Strategy to reduce numbers of young people not in education employment or training 2006

<sup>7</sup> Scottish Government's Flagship Policy to improve learning, attainment and achievement for children and young people Nov. 2004

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Government proposals on working with young people 2008



Young Scot is currently working with the Scottish Government and COSLA to develop new, innovative and cutting edge ways of engaging and supporting young people through coordinated approaches to youth information. Young Scot: Active aims to support Scotland to become a ‘**nation of informed young people**’

There is a growing recognition of the importance of relevant, accurate information, accessible by young people in formats they appreciate and at the times they need it.

The paper proposes the development of a **National Youth Information Framework** which recognises the importance of quality holistic information services which provide universal services for all young people and which are sufficiently sensitive/ sophisticated to offer personalised and specific services to identified groups (e.g. young people who require more choices and more chances) in a non-stigmatising way.

Young Scot, as the national youth information agency for Scotland is well placed to lead the development and promotion of the Framework in association with the Scottish Library and Information Council<sup>9</sup> and others. The paper has also been informed by desktop research and reflects work by other key organisations such as Learning Teaching Scotland (LTS)<sup>10</sup>, Caledonian University<sup>11</sup> and the European Youth Information and Counselling Association (ERYICA)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> SLIC – Independent advisory body to the Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers

<sup>10</sup> Learning Teaching Scotland – provides advice, support, resources and staff development to Scotland’s education community

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Information Literacy Project, Caledonian University 2004 - 2009

<sup>12</sup> ERYICA – an international not for profit youth information organisation based in Luxembourg established in 1986



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This discussion paper places at its heart Articles 11 and 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>13</sup>. The right to information underpins this paper and it recognises the emphasis being placed on youth information within the European Union White Papers on young people and communications policy<sup>14</sup>.

It highlights the principles of the Youth Information Charter adopted by the European Youth Information and Counselling Association in 2004 and suggests that the time is right to develop a National Youth Information Framework for Scotland in support of the European Charter and the future development of information services for young people in Scotland.

The paper identifies legal, social and political reasons why the time is right to develop a Framework and acknowledges that young people seek information from a number of perspectives or roles and that these are influenced by the lifestyle, life events and life circumstances that impact on their lives.

The paper suggests that a key focus of the Framework should be on how young people can be empowered through effective access and use of information. The importance of access is discussed, with the need to strike the balance between universal services for all young people and specialist resources to ensure those hard to reach or seldom heard benefit from quality information.

Quality is seen as paramount in the development and delivery of youth information services and the paper seeks views on how quality assurance can be enhanced and developed as an integral part of the Framework, without introducing additional bureaucracy and costs.

The impact of social networking is explored recognising the incredible change it has, and is making in the lives of young people across the world. The impact of social networking for information providers is acknowledged with opportunities and challenges in the way we shape services for the future. Drawing on recent research the issue of information literacy, concerns around information overload, inappropriate use of internet material, failure to evaluate and synthesise information and neglect of non-digital sources of information are also highlighted as important issues for service providers and young people.

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<sup>13</sup> UN Rights of the Child legislation adopted by the United Nations in 1989

<sup>14</sup> Commission of the European Communities: A New Impetus for European Youth



The paper places particular significant importance on the use of information as a tool and catalyst for learning. The Framework offers support mechanisms for teachers, librarians, youth workers, health workers etc on how to use information to engage and empower young people. In doing this there are significant workforce development issues. The Framework could evidence the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and practices, leading to a culture of continuous improvement.

The paper does not consider the resource implications of developing or adopting a National Youth Information Framework. That is a discussion for a future time. However, significant resources are already in place and a coherent approach is required to maximising their effectiveness. The important focus should be on what the future shape of youth information services in Scotland should look like towards the outcome of delivering a nation of informed young people.

A summary of the questions asked throughout the paper is contained in Appendix 1.

*It is hoped that youth information providers and those who provide information to the public, including to young people will consider the paper and respond. It invites youth information providers and young people to join Young Scot in developing a National Youth Information Framework that will support those involved in the delivery of information to young people to provide consistent, high quality information services.*

## PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework would offer those who provide information to young people the opportunity to ensure that young Scots are able to access high quality, up-to-date information on issues of interest to them, and opportunities open to them, in a variety of formats. Young Scot believes this can be better achieved through approaches that are collaborative, co-ordinated and co-ordinated. The Framework would bring together the experience and expertise of key information providers with an emphasis on:

- *shared aspirations*
- *agreed outcomes,*
- *continuous improvement,*
- *sharing best practice,*
- *co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation*
- *new innovative approaches,*
- *ensuring quality.*

## AT THE HEART OF THE YOUTH INFORMATION FRAMEWORK

The right to information has been recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in the Recommendation No (90) 7 of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe. This right is also the basis for youth information activities undertaken by the European Union.

*'Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.'*

**Article 11 - Freedom of Expression and Information, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**

*'Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to others.'*

**Article 13 – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

*Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taking into account.'*

#### Article 12 – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

### THE IMPORTANCE OF 'INFORMATION'

*'All citizens should have access, in their own language to information about the matters of public concern. This means information should be made widely available through a wide range of channels, including the mass media and new technologies such as the internet. It also means that people from all walks of life in all EU countries should be helped to develop the skills they need to access and use that information.'*

White Paper on a European Communications Policy  
Commission of the European Communities<sup>15</sup>

The potential of developing a National Information Strategy for Scotland was proposed in the paper 'Enabling Seamless Access' published by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC 1999). This paper suggested a strategy was needed to bring together key information providers and networks to work closer together to bring added value and meet the challenges of more personalised and individual learning. Since that time SLIC has made a significant contribution to the development of information services across Scotland and is fully committed to working with Young Scot and others to focus on the development of a new vibrant Framework approach.

Developing coherent approaches to youth information is also a growing area of interest across Europe. The Commission of the European Communities communication on 'Promoting young people's full participation in education, employment and society'<sup>16</sup> called on Member States to:

*'...continue their efforts to increase youth participation and formulate information strategies for young people.'*

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<sup>15</sup> Commission of the European Communities White Paper on European Communications Policy 2006

<sup>16</sup> Communication from the EU to European Parliament, EU Councils, EU Economic and Social Committees and the Committee of the Regions 2007



In April 2008, the European Parliament issued a written declaration on devoting more attention to youth empowerment in EU policies of which youth information and youth engagement were seen as important elements:

*'In complex societies and in an integrated Europe that offers many challenges and opportunities, access to information and the ability to analyse and use information is increasingly important for young Europeans. Youth information work can help them to achieve their aspirations and can promote their participation as active members of society. Information should be provided in ways that enhance the choices available to young people, and that promote their autonomy and empowerment. Respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms implies the right of all young people to have access to complete, objective, understandable and reliable information on all their questions and needs.'*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> EU Parliament Declaration 2008



## PRINCIPLES

In 2004, The European Youth Information Charter was adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly of ERYICA held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. The Principles of the Charter provide a basis for minimum standards and quality measures as elements of a comprehensive, coherent and co-ordinated approach to youth information work.

The principles are offered as guidelines for generalist youth information work and seeks to guarantee the right of young people to information within the terms of Article 11 of the Freedom of Expression and Information Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

1. Youth information centres and services shall be open to all young people without exception.
2. Youth information centres and services seek to guarantee the equality of access to information for all young people, regardless of their situation, origin, gender, religion or social category. Special attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups and young people with special needs.
3. Youth information centres and services should be easily accessible, without appointment being required. They should be attractive for young people, with a friendly atmosphere. The operating hours should meet the needs of young people.
4. The information available shall be based on the requests of young people and on their perceived information needs. It should cover all topics that could interest young people, and should evolve in order to cover new topics.
5. Each user shall be respected as an individual and the response to each question shall be personalised. This shall be done in a way that empowers users, promotes the exercise of their autonomy, and develops their capacity to analyse and use information.
6. Youth information services shall be free of charge.
7. Information is given in a way that respects both the privacy of users and their right not to reveal their identity.
8. Information is provided in a professional manner by staff trained for that purpose.
9. The information offered is complete, up-to-date, accurate, practical and user-friendly.
10. Every effort is made to ensure the objectivity of the information provided through the pluralism and verification of the sources used.
11. The information offered shall be independent of any religious, political, ideological or commercial influence.

12. Youth information centres and services shall strive to reach the largest possible number of young people, in ways that are effective and appropriate to different groups and needs, and by being creative and innovative in their choice of strategies, methods and tools.
13. Young people shall have the opportunity to participate, in appropriate ways, in different stages of youth information work, at local, national and international levels. These can include, among others, identifying information needs, the preparation and delivery of information, managing and evaluating information services and projects and peer group activities.
14. Youth information centres and services shall co-operate with other youth services and structures, especially in their geographical area, and shall network with intermediaries and other bodies that work with young people.
15. Youth information centres and services shall help young people both to access information provided via modern information and communication technologies, and to develop their skills in using them.
16. Each source of funding for youth information work shall not act in any way that prevents a youth information centre or service from applying all the principles of this charter.

*The principles of the ERYICA Charter provide a set of minimum standards. Should the Framework adopt these principles and should consideration be given to the inclusion and adoption of further principles which should underpin the Framework?*

## THE TIME IS RIGHT NOW!

*'Use of information technology is not a pre-requisite to a young person surviving...but it is most certainly an element of them thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.'*

ERYICA Conference Portugal 2007<sup>18</sup>

There are a number of *legal* reasons why the time to develop a Youth Information Framework is now. In addition to the legislation already mentioned, there is a range of Scottish legislation which places a duty on public sector bodies to consult, engage and inform. This is particularly true in relation to education, social care, planning and community planning. In order to ensure young people are in a position to make informed choices and contribute effectively to the

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<sup>18</sup> African-Europe Youth Summit held in Lisbon Dec 2007

future of Scottish society and the shape of public services, accurate information in formats preferred by young people is imperative. Improved co-ordination and collaboration by information producers and providers would help young people navigate their access to relevant information and support central and local government in meeting their legislative and statutory requirements.

There are important *social* reasons for ensuring high quality information services for young people. Young people are part of families, local communities and need information in a number of roles:

- As individuals
- As learners
- As members of families
- As members of peer groups
- As members of local, national and global communities

The nature of information and the times young people need to access it varies depending on the particular role they are playing. The need for specific information can be influenced by the *lifestyle* of the individual, whether in terms of entertainment, leisure, learning or chaotic challenges such as alcohol or drug misuse etc. It can also be related to *life events*, particularly transitions such as puberty, primary to secondary schooling, independent living, relationships, bereavement etc. Finally, the need for specific information can be influenced by *life circumstances* such as health, poverty, abuse, debt or the ability to grasp positive opportunities.

*The different roles young people adopt in their lives and the situations they find themselves in govern the nature of information they seek.*

Information is not only important in helping young people in their own personal situation but also in assisting them to have the knowledge and confidence to be citizens in their own communities and in building their feeling of belonging, in essence contributing towards building social capital and community cohesion.

As previously highlighted, the Framework would also contribute towards a number of *political* objectives at national and local government levels. A Curriculum for Excellence: Successful Learners; Confident Individuals; Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens is underpinned by the need for informed and engaged young people. Youth information providers need to be active contributors to the delivery of A Curriculum for Excellence whether in schools or other services. Recent developments in terms of youth work and schools, and examples of good practice of youth

information work in schools through Young Scot/ Dialogue Youth and SLIC, clearly illustrate the valuable contribution youth information projects can make to the active citizen agenda.

The recommendations of the Equally Well report on health inequalities<sup>19</sup> and the Government's new approaches to youth justice outlined in the Preventing Offending by young people: A Framework for Action<sup>20</sup> offer opportunities to further develop the role of youth information in for example promoting positive lifestyles and activities available to young people in their local areas.

The Framework can offer significant help in bringing together service providers to co-ordinate activities and address issues brought about by *technological advancements*. The use of the internet including social networking has brought significant changes to the way young people access and use information. These changes have revolutionised the provision of information and with these changes has brought challenges for information providers.

In January 2008, the University College London published its findings of a study into the 'information behaviour of the researcher of the future'<sup>21</sup>. The study considered how researchers, currently in their school or pre-school years are likely to access and interact with digital resources in five to ten years time. Defined as the 'Google Generation' i.e. those born after 1973 who have no recollection of life before the web, the study considered the untested assumption that this generation is different to what went before the web in terms of attitudes, aptitudes, experiences and information literacies.

The report findings concluded:

- Information literacy of young people, has not improved with the widening access to new technology;
- Internet research shows that the speed of young people's web searching means little time is spent in evaluating information, either for relevance, accuracy or authority;
- Young people have poor understanding of their information needs and thus find it difficult to develop effective search strategies;
- Faced with a long list of search hits, young people find it difficult to assess the relevance of the materials presented and often print off pages with no more than a perfunctory glance at them;
- Young people have unsophisticated mental maps of what the internet is and as a result, Yahoo or Google, becomes the primary brand that they associate with the internet.

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<sup>19</sup> Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities 2008

<sup>20</sup> Scottish Government Framework to enable young people to realise their full potential through opportunities and support 2008

<sup>21</sup> University of London research into young people and web literacy 2008

*Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*

University College London 2008

**EMPOWERMENT, ACCESS AND QUALITY**

In creating a Scotland where young people take their place as responsible citizens, effective contributors, successful learners and confident individuals, we have to create structures and cultures within which young people can be *empowered*. Participation in the future design of public services and the opportunity and power to influence decision-making processes is enhanced when young people are informed and involved. It is vital that those who engage with young people recognise the learning opportunities that exist through youth information and can encourage and motivate young people to use information in ways that influence their life choices and their aspirations.

*Access* covers a wide range of issues from physical access to facilities, at times when young people want and need it, to disabled access, digital access, firewall policies in schools. We have to explore how best to ensure that young people are not prevented, unnecessarily, from gaining access to the information they need. Equality issues are paramount in taking any framework forward with particular focus on those who are not just 'hard to reach' but for some, who we have 'failed to reach'. In January 2008, The Scottish Library Information Council, working with Scottish Public Library Services carried out a consultation on the needs of library users whose first language was not English<sup>22</sup>. Young Scot provides specific information on their services to young people coming to Scotland to work, study etc. These are simple examples of approaches that can be shared and enhanced through an effective Framework and network.

Access can also be limited by levels of information literacy and one of the key opportunities would be to develop, through the Framework, co-ordinated approaches towards putting in place measures to ensure young people can use the internet but that they have the skills to evaluate and synthesise the information they are seeking and accessing.

An important aim of the Framework would be to ensure *quality* information services for young people and that those involved in providing youth information services are confident, well trained and providing the highest possible levels of service.

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<sup>22</sup> SLIC Online survey across 32 Scottish local authority areas 2008

The Scottish Library & Information Council's 'Building on Success: a public library quality improvement matrix'<sup>23</sup> provides a self assessment model which allows local authority library services to demonstrate to the public how good their services are and the range and diversity of the services offered. The model assists services to:

- Recognise strengths in the services already being delivered;
- Identify areas for improvement and future plans for action;
- Share best practice and establish benchmarks;
- Report on the quality of provision to those responsible for the service

The Improvement Service's 'Public Service Improvement Framework' (PSIF) Self Assessment Toolkit for Local Authorities<sup>24</sup> provides a valuable starting point to develop quality measures. The PSIF, launched in March 2008, is an innovative and bespoke quality model for public services in Scotland. Developed by West Lothian Council in partnership with Quality Scotland and Investors in People Scotland it integrates other quality frameworks such as the EFQM excellence Model, Charter Mark and the Investors in People Standard.

The PSIF Model uses nine criteria, organised in two sections.

*What we do – evaluating the processes and policies in place*

- Leadership
- Service Planning
- People Resources
- Partners and other resources
- Service Processes

*What we achieve – Analysing the results gathered*

- Customer Results
- People Results
- Community Results
- Key Performance Results

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<sup>23</sup> Scottish Executive/ SLIC Self Assessment Framework 2007

<sup>24</sup> Improvement Service –Partnership organisation involving the Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Scotland.

A further example is the **Eurodesk Quality Catalogue**. Eurodesk is an Association Internationale working with Eurodesk partners in participating countries. Its main aim is to answer enquiries from young people and those who work with young people and provide access to high quality European information. The Quality Catalogue is intended as a guide for the use of Eurodesk National Partners in evaluating Eurodesk activities and services delivered in their country. It provides a flexible instrument for measuring quality development as an ongoing process:

- To help evaluate Eurodesk activities and services, appropriate to the national situations and the support services delivered at a European level;
- To measure, at regular intervals, whether the established quality criteria are being achieved by each national partner and within the network in general;
- To facilitate follow up action to raise the quality of the work across the network.

These models provide a useful starting point for discussion on how the Framework could support enhanced quality assurance, building on existing practices and not introducing an additional layer of bureaucracy and costs. The Framework would provide a way of for service providers to support and learn from each other through sharing best practice, improved networking etc. Currently the Improvement Service and SLIC are working towards a partnership approach in mapping the two frameworks.

*Views are sought on the issue of quality assurance and the provision of youth information services?*

*We would like to hear from organisations who can provide examples of how youth information has been used as a catalyst to engage and empower young people, particularly those who are deemed 'hard to reach'.*

## APPROACHES TO YOUTH INFORMATION

In developing this discussion paper, consideration has been given to the approaches adopted across the European network of youth information services. The ERYICA paper on 'Structure and Financing of the Youth Information Systems and Classifications of Youth Information' published in March 2008<sup>25</sup> provides a useful picture of what structures look like and the approaches being developed.

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<sup>25</sup> Report produced on behalf of ERYICA by the Ministry of Education, youth and Sports of the Czech Republic 2008

Across Europe approaches are varied and attract a range of funding sources. The majority are focused around youth information centres whether national or local. Most provide information on a core range of subjects and issues:

- Education
- Health
- Leisure
- International youth programmes
- Relationships
- Employment
- Money
- Housing
- Politics
- Law and rights
- Ecology

Scotland is considered at the forefront of youth information services because of the connection between youth information, opportunities and action. The development of the Young Scot Portal, Young Scot Card and more recently Young Scot WOW (What's on Where) search engine, are examples of the move away from a centre or shop front approach in the provision of information to exploiting the opportunities through new technology and in working across portfolios at national and local government levels.

One approach to the categorisation of information worth noting is that adopted in Finland. The Youth Act of 2006 included references to youth information services and promoted a model based on the identification of three different kinds of information needs of young people and their ability to satisfy that need:

Services are developed and priorities focused on providing information services for:

- **Young people who are able to find information independently**  
This focuses on supporting young people who already know what kind of information they need and are able to find it on their own.
- **Young people who feel that they need/ want something**  
Helping young people clarify their needs and then assist them to access the information they want
- **Young people who have problems and face challenges**

Supporting young people with information to help young people who want to resolve issues or seek help, particularly those who may have chaotic lifestyles or difficult life circumstances.

*Views are sought on the issue of the classification of information needs and how a Framework could help in the development of high quality universal services that are sensitive to the needs of the most disenfranchised from society.*

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

The world wide web has transformed the way we search and find information, perhaps of greater significance is the development of social networking. A few years ago, social networking did not exist. You Tube, Bebo, MySpace, Facebook and others now play an important part in the lives of many young people. Millions now create and publish their own materials, some even becoming pop stars, authors as a result of uploading and performing their own compositions, works.

With high quality, user friendly desktop publishing software it can be, at times difficult to differentiate between formally published and self-published material. Having the skills to evaluate the content and quality of the available material is becoming even more critical.

Research by Childnet International<sup>26</sup>, into the issues of access and promotion of quality content, awareness and advice, protection and policy, provides an interesting insight into the impact of social networking. In June 2008, Childnet's Digizen Project<sup>27</sup> published a research report on how social networking services could and were being used to support personalised formal and informal learning by young people in schools and colleges.

The report was designed to support teachers and others with an interest in using social networking services and innovative curriculum approaches and those with an interest in e-safety and digital literacy. It considered definitions of social networking, offers a checklist to evaluate social networking sites, discusses the opportunities, benefits and risks of social networking services and showcases some innovative practice.

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<sup>26</sup> A UK not for profit organisation working in partnership with others to 'help make the internet a great and safe place for children'.

<sup>27</sup> Project to investigate how social networking services can and are being used to support learning in schools and colleges 2008

There were however warnings for service users about trying to develop profiles on social networking sites. Evidence would suggest that young people are very protective about who uses social networking sites and indeed may resent organisations 'invading' what they see as their space. The credibility of any organisation using social networking sites is very important as is their relationship with young people. Independent research carried out in August 2005<sup>28</sup> showed that Young Scot, as a brand was trusted and respected by 85% of young people and its services were valued by young people. This level of trust led Young Scot to enter the world of social networking and the results to date have been very positive and encouraging, but more work needs to be done with young people about how best to use these opportunities.

*Views are sought on the ways in which service providers could maximise the use of social networking without alienating themselves from the young people we are trying to support?*

## INFORMATION LITERACY

*'Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in a ethical manner'<sup>29</sup>*

The UCL Report on the Google Generation suggests that there has been no improvement in information literacy skills over the past 25 years or as a result of the web. Although young people are more proficient at using the internet, there appears to be no evidence that they are 'expert searchers'. If looking for material and information, young people appear to visit only a few sites, many of which do not contain any real content and they don't stay long enough on the page to actually read the content. Online reading, the report suggests, is based on skimming titles, content pages and abstracts – Power Browsing. Young people also have difficulty in making relevant judgements about the pages they retrieve.

Research by Learning Teaching Scotland (LTS)<sup>30</sup> identified a number of concerns about information literacy including:

- Problems of information overload
- Inappropriate use of internet material

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<sup>28</sup> Independent research into young people's views of Young Scot's services and products. MacArthur Research, Edinburgh 2006

<sup>29</sup> Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals 2004

<sup>30</sup> Cambridge Training and Development Ltd – Information Literacy and Study Skills, An overview of research for LTS Scotland



- Failure to evaluate and synthesise information
- Neglect of non-digital sources of information

Their research also suggests that information literacy may need to be considered as a new subject discipline, shifting attention away from technologies to the actual information and to an understanding of information processes.

LTS has developed a range of learning materials to enhance information literacy skills. An online resource groups activities around the themes of **What, Look, Choose and Tell** - logical steps of what someone needs to find out, where they find it, choosing what is appropriate and using it in context.

Both the UCL and LTS research identifies the need for early intervention of information literacy skills if we are to succeed in equipping our young people to maximise their use of digital resources. Intervention at upper school and university is deemed too late with many learning to 'get by' with Google. This issue is particularly relevant when considering those young people not in education, employment and training.

The Scottish Library and Information Council has funded research and developed learning programmes over a period of time to encourage young people and others to improve their skills. This work resulted in Scottish Qualifications Authority qualifications which are now moving into their third edition. The work was a precursor to *The National Information Literacy Framework* developed by Caledonian University which provides an approach to information literacy using the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework<sup>31</sup>.

The initial focus of the National Information Literacy Project was to help produce secondary school leavers with a skill set which would be transferable into a further or higher education context or working environment. The project has subsequently expanded to include the primary school sector and lifelong learning. Its general aim is to promote the understanding and development of information literacy in all education sectors, in the workplace, the home and wider community primarily in Scotland and beyond. Its work to date will greatly inform the wider youth information agenda.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority<sup>32</sup> has also indicated an interest in the development of a National Youth Information Framework from the perspective of the linkages with existing accredited modules and courses and in the potential development of new approaches supporting information literacy based around the youth information.

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<sup>31</sup> The SCQF is a company limited by guarantee promoting lifelong learning by helping individuals and employers to understand the range of Scottish qualifications and increase access.

<sup>32</sup> SQA – Scottish national body responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees



Building on the work developed by Caledonian University, LTS and SLIC consideration could be given to enhanced modular developments, specifically with P7/S1 linking with Young Scot's existing work around the transition from primary to secondary school.

*How do we best approach the issue of information literacy within the Framework, particularly at the key transitions in the life of a young person?*

*Should we consider, in partnership with others, the development of formal curricular resources to be used in primary and secondary schools, colleges and the youth work sector?*



## BEYOND INFORMATION LITERACY - ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Young Scot has a reputation for developing and delivering innovative work using information as the 'hook' to help young people build skills and self-esteem. Services and products include Young Scot's books used as classroom resources, youth workers using the Young Scot magazine as a tool to start a topical discussion in a youth group, hundreds of young people trained by Young Scot as web journalists, maintaining their local pages on the Young Scot portal.

These are a few examples of how information is being used as the catalyst for other personal and group learning, skills development and confidence building.

Youth information provides a unique opportunity to enhance the range of activities through the Scottish Government's Schools intranet – GLOW<sup>33</sup>. The potential for online discussion forums, debates, sharing of views and information are exciting. The Framework would provide links across information providers to ensure that GLOW benefits from the experience and expertise available to use youth information as a learning tool consistent with the pillars of A Curriculum for Excellence.

The Scottish Government's 'Moving Forward – a strategy for improving young people's chances through youth work'<sup>34</sup> recognises the importance of relevant, user friendly information delivered in formats that young people want. The strategy also stresses the importance of involving young people in developing information. This pro-active approach to youth information could be enhanced through an effective Framework, maximising the opportunities for young people to be producers as well as consumers of information.

In 2008, the YMCA<sup>35</sup>, published a report 'Youthwork in Schools – the task ahead'<sup>36</sup>. The report provides a summary of key issues in the development of youth work and schools partnerships. A Curriculum for Excellence is not a school policy and many of its aspirations are being met through work with young people outwith the school environment. There are many examples of excellent joint work involving, for example Young Scot/Dialogue Youth initiatives in Edinburgh schools, the National Young Scot Smart Citizenship project and the Schools Connections Initiative in North Ayrshire all provide examples of links between schools and community learning and development workers.

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<sup>33</sup> GLOW – National Schools Intranet for Scotland, formerly the Scottish Schools Digital Network (SSDN)

<sup>34</sup> Scottish Government's Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances through Youth Work 2007

<sup>35</sup> Young Mens' Christian Association

<sup>36</sup> YMCA Report on consultation on identifying and addressing the core challenges and opportunities through youth work in and with schools 2007



The Scottish Library and Information Council, in gathering evidence for the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix, has already evidenced good practice in engaging young people and meeting their information needs. Edinburgh City Council's Sighthill Library has won national awards for its work which has contributed to a reduction of 60% in anti-social behaviour in the area. This was a forerunner of the Libraries4U Programme which secured funding from the Public Library Quality Improvement Fund to modernise three libraries in partnership with local young people.

Some examples are work to promote youth literacies includes, in North Ayrshire, libraries are working with Young Scot developing text messaging with young people and have established a Youth Inspectors programme to develop information and library services. East Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils have well established reading and web based activities and Perth and Kinross are developing health information and financial information programmes.

*How could the Framework raise the profile of youth information services and promote the importance of information as a catalyst for positive action?*

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Youth information providers exist within a changing working environment. There are significant challenges in relation to, for example, the future role of libraries, the impact of e books, young people as information developers and publishers and not just consumers.

In the Learning Teaching Scotland research paper - Information literacy and study skills (2005), it is suggested that we have to shift attention from the technologies to the actual information and to an understanding of information processes and information behaviours. For those directly involved, as information providers or those who want to use information as a catalyst for learning e.g. teachers, youth workers, health improvement workers etc, there is a need for recognition of the workforce development issues in ensuring quality services.

The principles of the European Youth Information Charter<sup>37</sup> states:

*'Information is provided in a professional manner by staff trained for this purpose.'*

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<sup>37</sup> EY Information Charter – adopted by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of ERYICA, Bratislava 2004



Skilled and confident staff is paramount in delivering our outcome of a nation of informed young people. The Framework provides the opportunity to evidence the core competences and skill areas critical to the delivery of quality information services.

The Scottish Library and Information Council's Annual Operating Plan 2006-2007<sup>38</sup> provides a helpful range of activities in support of workplace developments. Based on this model, a programme of workplace development activities could include:

- Developing new delivery models which are consistent with the principles of ERYICA
- Promoting the unique contribution of youth information services to the social capital of Scotland and local communities
- Articulating and advocating the difference youth information services make to key national and local government policy priorities including Single Outcome Agreements
- Developing good relations with other professions and services
- Developing job descriptions - combining skills and knowledge requirements
- Considering, with stakeholders the future direction and resource requirements for continuous improvement

*How could the Framework enhance workforce development?*

## RESOURCES

This discussion paper has not focused on the issue of resources. The purpose is to stimulate discussion around the services we should be providing to meet the needs of our young people and to suggest that the development of a Framework that does not introduce additional bureaucracy, builds onto existing practices and brings together the information providers to best support their own work but also to better support others who use information as a learning tool.

No doubt resources will, in the future, be considered in the context of adopting the Framework, but the view taken in developing this paper was that the focus should be on what we want to achieve not what it would cost. That is for another day!

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<sup>38</sup> Scottish Libraries and Information Council 2006



## NEXT STEPS

This paper will provide a starting point for discussion with as wide a range of youth information providers as possible. It is proposed that following extensive consultation with service providers, a parallel consultation will be undertaken with young people, through Young Scot's own offline and online channels of access and communication. A Reference Group will then be established to support Young Scot in the development of the Framework with a launch in Summer 2009.

## CONCLUSION

A National Youth Information Framework would enable enhanced opportunities for those dedicated to the provision of youth information services. A Framework would bring together organisations with **shared aspirations**, working towards **agreed outcomes** through enhanced **co-ordination, collaboration and co-operation** across sectors and agencies.

Through the sharing of **best practice** youth information services would strive towards **continuous improvement** further developing the skills and confidence to be **creative and innovative** in developing and delivering **quality youth information services**.

*Young Scot invites information providers and interested parties to work with them to further develop the Framework over the coming months. Your views and ideas are sought around how your organisation can contribute to making the Framework a positive vehicle for improving and enhancing youth information services in Scotland.*

## RESPONSES

*Responses should be forwarded to:*

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NATIONAL YOUTH INFORMATION FRAMEWORK DISCUSSION PAPER – APRIL 2009



by Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009

## APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

- 1. The principles of the ERYICA Charter provide a set of minimum standards. Should the Framework adopt these principles and should consideration be given to the inclusion and adoption of further principles which should underpin the Framework?*
- 2. Views are sought on the issue of quality assurance and the provision of youth information services.*
- 3. We would like to hear from organisations who can provide examples of how youth information has been used as a catalyst to engage and empower young people, particularly those who are deemed 'hard to reach'.*
- 4. Views are sought on the issue of the classification of information needs and how a Framework could help in the development of high quality universal services that are sensitive to the needs of the most disenfranchised from society.*
- 5. Views are sought on the ways in which service providers could maximise the use of social networking without alienating themselves from the young people we are trying to support.*
- 6. How do we best approach the issue of information literacy within the Framework, particularly at the key transitions in the life of a young person?*
- 7. Should we consider, in partnership with others, the development of formal curricular resources to be used in primary and secondary schools, colleges and the youth work sector?*
- 8. How could the Framework raise the profile of youth information services and promote the importance of information as a catalyst for positive action?*
- 9. How could the Framework enhance workforce development?*