



## EDUCATION! EDUCATION! EDUCATION!

York Consulting Ltd (YCL) has extensive research and policy experience in education. Our work spans all sectors of education, from early year's development through to lifelong learning.

### A New Relationship with Schools

The New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) policy was a recognition from schools and DfES that bureaucracy was an ongoing area of concern in primary and secondary education. The DfES identified a need to streamline and improve the relationship between DfES, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools and a need for closer alignment of national and local priorities.

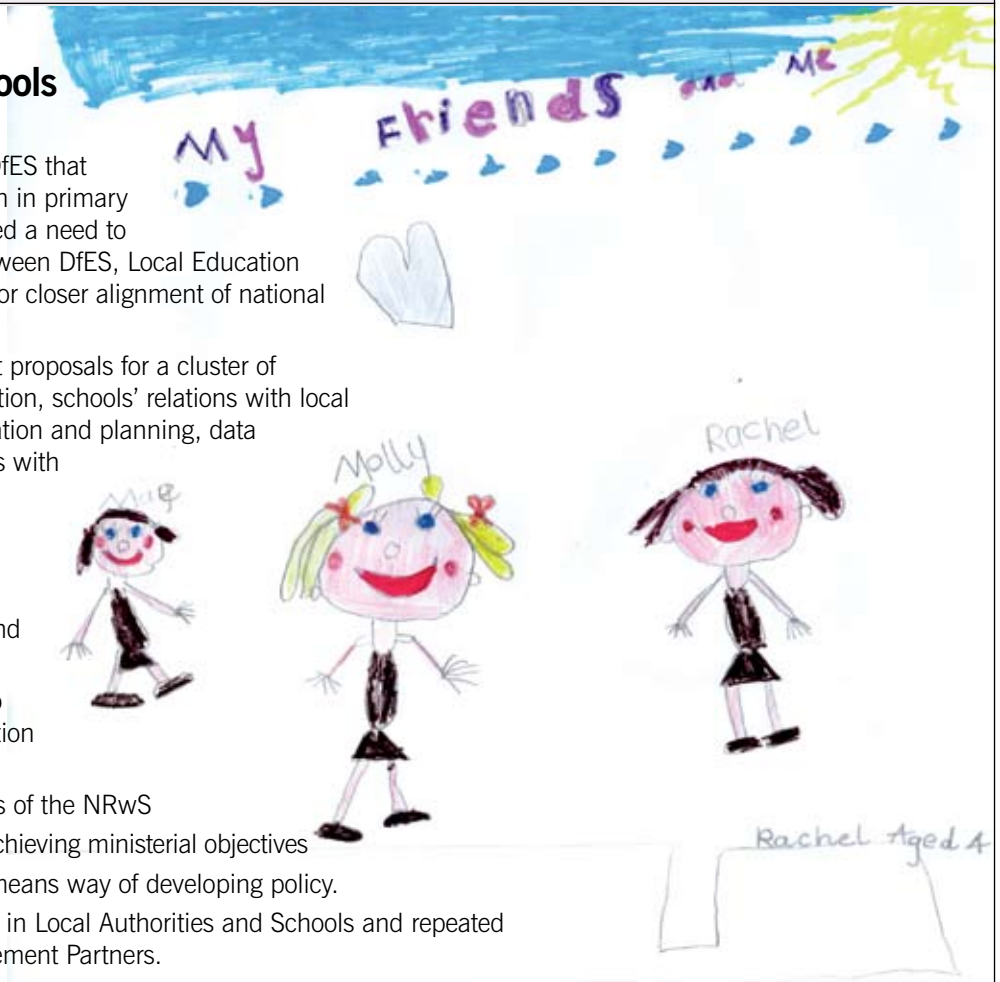
Published in 2004, the NRwS policy set out proposals for a cluster of interlocking changes affecting school inspection, schools' relations with local and central government, schools' self-evaluation and planning, data collected from schools, and communications with schools.

The NRwS has seven strands: School Self-Evaluation, Inspection, School Profile, School Improvement Partner (SIP), Single Conversation, Communication Production and Use of Data.

**York Consulting has been commissioned to evaluate the NRwS.** This multi-year evaluation aims to:

- assess the implementation of five strands of the NRwS
- assess the effectiveness of the policy in achieving ministerial objectives
- assess the new relationship process as means way of developing policy.

The study involves ongoing case study work in Local Authorities and Schools and repeated surveys of LAs, Schools and School Improvement Partners.



***“Lack of affordable, accessible childcare is the single most important barrier to work for lone parents on Income Support”***

Source: National Employment Panel's What Works Report

### Lone Parents, Work and Childcare

Despite improvements since 1997, the number of lone parents claiming income support remains high. **Encouraging lone parents' transition into work continues to be a key government priority.** Previous research has identified that a lack of affordable, accessible childcare is the single most significant barrier to work for lone parents on income support. Childhood poverty is associated with being in a lone parent family. Emphasising that 'work is the best route out of poverty', the government is continuing to make provision available to enable lone parents to work. This includes providing high quality, affordable childcare in recognition that:

- lack of childcare is a major barrier to employment for lone parents;
- high quality early education and childcare has important benefits for child development.

York Consulting is currently evaluating the Extended Schools Childcare pilot of behalf of the Scottish Executive.

The Extended Schools Childcare pilot aims to offer a 'virtual childcare guarantee' to help lone parents on benefits back into work.

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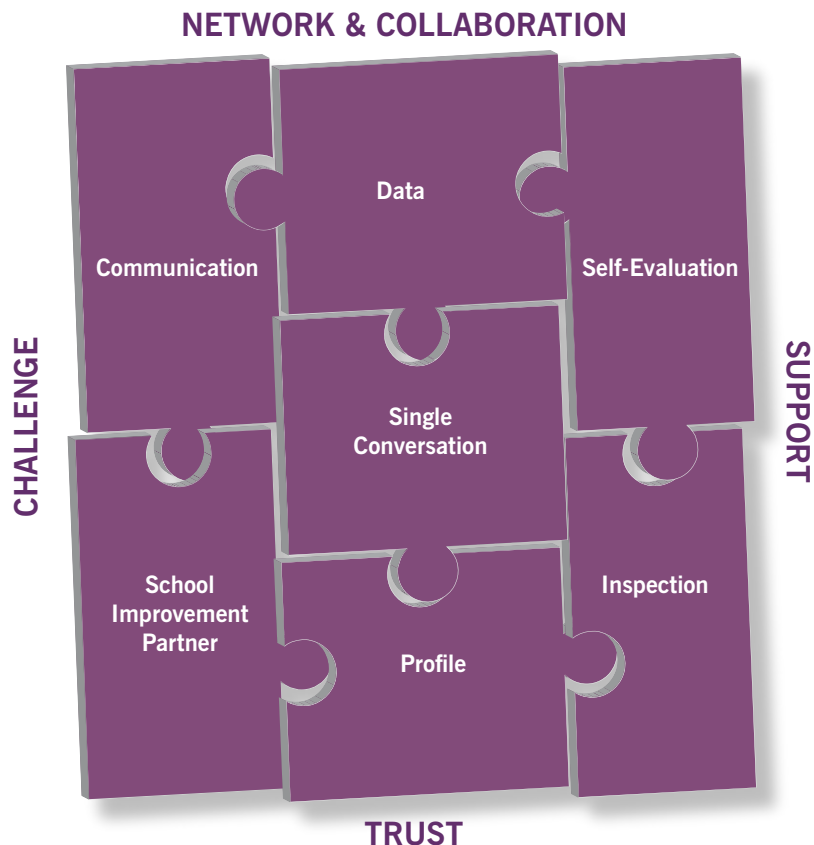
## Primary SIPs Pilot Evaluation

Under the NRwS, a pilot of Primary School Improvement Partners (SIPs) has been taking place in six local authorities since September 2005, and is due to end in July 2006.

A SIP acts as a critical professional friend to a school, helping its leadership to evaluate its performance, identify priorities for improvement, and plan effective change.

York Consulting is evaluating some key features of the implementation of the pilot as it reaches its close. Fieldwork is taking place in schools and LAs in the summer term of 2006.

It is intended that the learning from the pilots will inform the national roll out of Primary SIPs.



Source: DfES/Ofsted (2004) *A New Relationship with Schools*



## Every Child Matters: Working in Partnership

Working in partnership to develop multi-agency responses to services for children and young people has been a key policy focus in recent years.

'Every Child Matters' set out the framework for multi-agency collaboration to promote 5 key outcomes for children and young people. In England, Children's Trusts have been established to focus on focus on improving outcomes for children and young people through joint working. Wales focuses on 7 core outcomes for children and young people which are delivered through multi-agency partnerships, Children and Young People's Framework's.

**YCL has recently completed a first stage evaluation of the effectiveness of Children and Young People's partnerships in Wales** and the accompanying Children and Young People Support Fund 'Cymorth'. This has involved disseminating our work at two national conferences in Wales.

## What We Offer

YCL has an established team of over 25 experienced and highly qualified consultants. We have reputable experience in education and policy research, with an established track record of delivering complex, multi-year assignments for central government and its agencies to demanding timescales.

YCL provides first-rate, independent research and evaluation across all areas of education.

YCL uses a wide range of research techniques to ensure that the research services we provide are rigorous and valid whilst being tailored to the needs of the client.

YCL places great emphasis on effective project management and quality assurance to ensure the highest standards for our clients.

YCL recognises that, to be meaningful, research needs to relate to practice. We therefore pay particular attention to drawing out practical recommendations from our research and to disseminating our findings.

We work **across all sectors of education:**

- **Early education and child care:** This has involved for example, working with providers and customers to explore the supply-side and demand-side factors impacting on the development of the local childcare infrastructure; and evaluating policy initiatives such as language and play and Books for Babies.
- **Primary Phase:** many of our evaluation activities involve work in the primary phase for example, to examine the potential impacts of literacy and 'catch-up' programmes.
- **Secondary Phase:** this current year we have continued to work in secondary schools across England, Scotland and Wales across a wide range of programmes such as our evaluations of the TDA's Student Associates Scheme; The Scottish Executive's Determined to Succeed programme and an examination of school class sizes.
- **14-19:** YCL continues to work at the forefront of the developing 14-19 arena. Examples of our current work include: the evaluation of Young Apprenticeships on behalf of the LSC and research on behalf of DfES to map funding streams accessed to support the delivery of 14-19 provision, as part of developments to support the implementation of the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper.
- **Further Education:** given concerns regarding recruitment and retention in FE, YCL has been involved in a number of large-scale studies for DfES this year. This has involved consulting with teachers, managers, support staff and learners across the FE sector.
- **Higher Education:** this year we have continued to work in the field of widening participation, currently advising DfES on how information can be collected on the costs of Aimhigher interventions.
- **Lifelong Learning:** we continue to work in the lifelong learning arena, researching adult skills, employability and skills for life programmes. This year, this has included evaluating E2E, Employer Training Pilots, Union-related learning programmes and the maths for life programme.





## Key YCL Contacts

YCL's work in education is lead by **Dr Vicky Hopwood**. Vicky has over 10 years' experience of undertaking educational research and consultancy as well as 'ground level' experience of working in schools.



*Dr Vicky Hopwood*

*vicky.hopwood@yorkconsulting.co.uk*

Vicky is supported in Scotland by **Alison Hunter**, a Principal Consultant, based in our Edinburgh Office. Alison has extensive knowledge of education in Scotland pre- and post-devolution. She is a former primary school teacher and has also taught at FE and HE levels.



*Alison Hunter*

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We offer high quality, evidence-based research for policy makers, managers and practitioners in all sectors of education.

## Promoting Participation

Recognising the experience, expertise and knowledge that students bring to the table, the Higher Education Councils in Scotland and Wales are striving to engage the participation of students in reviewing the quality of teaching and learning.

York Consulting is currently working for the Higher Education Funding Councils in Scotland and Wales to:

- **evaluate the Sparqs project.** Sparqs (student participation in quality Scotland) seeks to support and train student reps in their role to comment on the quality and standard of the teaching they receive.

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- **evaluate the extent and effectiveness of existing student representation structures in Higher Education Institutions in Wales** and to assess whether it would be beneficial to establish student representation support at the national level.

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## Our Clients:

Our key clients over the past 12 months include:

- Department for Education and Skills: Schools Directorate
- Training and Development Agency for Schools
- Welsh Assembly Government: Children's Services Directorate
- Scottish Executive: Early Education and Childcare Division
- National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
- University of Leeds

## YCL Contact Details

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