Advocacy and Lobbying

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Introduction

Youthline was established over 36 years ago with a primary focus of involving young people to develop themselves and to provide services to help young people and their families.

It provides a range of community development initiatives, training and development programmes and an integrated range of youth and family focused early intervention and grass roots services. It is the first point of contact for thousands of young people seeking help each year, providing immediate support, development opportunities and referral resources.

Youthline provides creative youth participation and youth development processes, combining community development, public health action, and effective health promotion. It provides quality services that reflect the youth participation and youth development principles, utilising youth centered, strengths based models backed up with quality evaluation and research initiatives.

Youthline may be said to be the leading youth organisation in New Zealand's youth community as well as in its social services and health sectors. It is also by far the most well known youth help service within the youth community.

Yet despite its success, vast experience and its wide range of services provided, advocacy is an area which Youthline has not fully developed. It is called on by the media to make statements, but has not to date played an important role in providing advice, guidance and direction to government and other relevant organisations on youth issues.

Advocacy and lobbying brings many benefits to the community but these activities would further strengthen Youthline as an organisation within the political framework of New Zealand.

<u>Advocacy and health</u>

The World Health Organisation defines **Advocacy for Health** as:

'A combination of individual and social actions designed to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance and systems support for a particular health goal or programme'.[1]

Advocacy has also been defined as:

'The use of tools and activities that can draw attention to an issue, gain support for it, build consensus about it, and provide arguments that will sway decision makers and public opinion to back it'.[2]

Advocacy was seen as important by Ministers of Health who signed the Mexico Ministerial Statement for the Promotion of Health (Fifth Global Conference on Health Promotion, Mexico City, June 5-9, 2000).

They said:

'Advocacy is an important tool and includes lobbying, political organization and activism, overcoming bureaucratic inertia, identifying a champion for the cause, enabling community leaders and mediating to manage conflict'.

Aotearoa/New Zealand was one of the signatories.

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[1] Report of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Advocacy Strategies for Health and Development: Development Community in Action. WHO, Geneva, 1995.

[2] Nathan, S. Rotem, A and Ritchie J (2002). Closing the gap: building the capacity of non-government organisations as advocates for health equity. Health Promotion International, Vol 17(1),pp 69-79.

In the public health field, public policy advocacy emerged as a key health promotion strategy during the 1980s and 1990s. It became a crucial strategy for health promotion with the release of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986.[3]

Advocacy for healthy public policy does seek to alter policies in order to achieve identified health and well-being outcomes. But it is also about changing the process by which policy is made.

The main two targets of advocacy include:

- the policies, plans and practices of government and large organisations whose actions affect the lives of many people,

- laws (acts or bills), and government regulations.

Types of Advocacy

The WHO notes that advocacy can take many forms, including:

- the use of the mass media and multi-media,

- direct political lobbying,

- community mobilisation through, for example, coalitions of interest around defined issues.

The WHO also notes that health professionals have a major responsibility to act as advocates for health at all levels in society.

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[3] McCubbin, M. Labonte, R., Dallaire, B. (2001) Advocacy for healthy public policy as a health promotion technology. Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto.

Public submissions

One of the strongest advocacy and lobbying tools is that of public submission and is seen as the main tool whereby an organisation can provide advice, guidance and direction to government and other relevant organisations.

What is a submission?

A submission is the presentation of views or opinions on a matter currently under consideration (act, bill, policy, plan, etc.) by government or some other organisation. Submissions are normally received in written form, and they can be reinforced through oral presentation. By writing or presenting a submission, an individual or organisation can provide an organisation with that person's or organisation's insights, observations and opinions. Providing reasons for any proposed changes or proposed actions to be taken, will give validity to the submission.

Calling for submissions

When an organisation decides to seek submissions, it usually places advertisements in the public notices column of the major daily or relevant local newspapers.

The advertisement will state:

- the name of the bill or act, policy or plan for which submissions are sought,

- the name of the organisation that is considering the matter,

- where and by what date submissions should be sent.

Most organisations also post notices on their websites when seeking submissions. The document for consultation is usually available for downloading from the website.

Some organisations (e.g. Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth Development, and local authorities) hold databases of relevant stakeholders to consult with directly. Such stakeholders are automatically sent copies of consultation documents for comment. It is possible to be put onto these stakeholder databases by contacting the Strategic and Policy sections of these organisations.

How to write a submission

While there is no set format that a submission should take, the aim is to present a submission in a way that is both ordered and easy to read.

The following information should be provided:

- *Heading* - Head your submission with the name of the organisation to which it is addressed and the full title of the bill, act, policy or plan.

- *Who is it from?* - Clearly state who the submission is from. State your name and designation, and give the name of the organisation you are representing. Include a postal contact address, email address and daytime telephone number.

- *Whether you wish to appear before a committee* - Clearly indicate whether you would like the opportunity to speak to the organisation in person. If you wish others to appear with you before the organisation, either in support or to speak, include their names and designations.

- *Your organisation* - If you are writing for an organisation, give brief details of the organisation's aims, membership and structure. Make sure that you have the authority to do so and note your position within the organisation.

When writing a submission on a bill or act state your general position on the bill or act, whether you support or oppose the measure being proposed, and give your reasons.

You should always have a copy of the bill, act, policy, or plan so you know what is being proposed.

Content of a submission

When writing a submission, comments in relation to a bill, act, policy or plan are usually made. There are five basic principles that apply:

- *Relevant* - Your submission must be relevant to the matter before the organisation. An organisation may decide not to receive a submission it considers not relevant.

- *Clear* - Arrange your sentences and paragraphs in a logical order. Present a clear and logically developed argument. A submission that jumps from one issue to another and back again or jumbles unrelated issues together may cause confusion and decrease its impact.

- *Concise* - Be simple and direct. Do not write more than is necessary. An overly long submission may prove too long for full consideration. They want to know what you think and the evidence or arguments you have that support your view.

- *Accurate* - Be accurate and complete. Include all relevant information. It will only confuse an organisation if in your submission you refer to evidence or information that is not included. Make sure your facts are correct. An error-ridden submission will greatly reduce its impact and credibility.

- *Conclusion* - Restate your recommendations in a conclusion at the end of the submission or an executive summary at the beginning. You should consider listing your submission's recommendations or summing up its main points.

Why provide a submission?

Government organisations including local authorities can control a large number of factors that determine the health of young people in their areas.

Local authorities are required under the Local Government Act 2001 to consult with their communities at several different points in the planning cycle. Interested individuals and organizations (such as public health providers) can make submissions.

When to provide a submission?

Councils operate on a yearly planning cycle within a three-year cycle. The points that are open for public consultation are the Long-Term Council Community Plan, Community Outcomes, and Annual Plan.

Long-Term Council Community Plans

Under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2001 local authorities are required to produce, once every three years, a Long-Term Community Council Plan (LTCCP) covering at least the next 10 years. Each LTCCP sets out 3 years in detail and the remaining 7 years in overview.

The purpose of the LTCCP is to:

- Describe the activities of the local authority,

- Describe the community outcomes of the local authority's district or region,

- Provide integrated decision-making and co-ordination of local authority resources,

- Provide a long-term focus for the decisions and activities of the local authority,

- Provide a basis for accountability of the local authority to the community,

- Provide an opportunity for participation by the public in decision-making processes on activities undertaken by the local authority.

Community Outcomes

Community outcomes are a reflection of what is important to a local community within a city, district, or region. The purposes of community outcomes and the processes for identifying them are addressed in Section 91 of the Local Government Act 2001:

(1) A local authority must, not less than once every 6 years, carry out a process to identify community outcomes for the intermediate and long-term future of its district or region.

(2) The purposes of the identification of community outcomes are:

(a) to provide opportunities for communities to discuss their desired outcomes in terms of the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community; and

(b) to allow communities to discuss the relative importance and priorities of identified outcomes to the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the community; and

(c) to provide scope to measure progress towards the achievement of community outcomes; and

(e) to promote the better co-ordination and application of community resources; and

(f) to inform and guide the setting of priorities in relation to the activities of the local authority and other organisations.

A local authority may decide for itself the process that it is to use to facilitate the identification of community outcomes under subsection (1), but the local authority:

(a) Must, before finally deciding on that process, take steps:

(i) to identify, so far as practicable, other organisations and groups capable of influencing either the identification or the promotion of community outcomes; and

(ii) to secure, if practicable, the agreement of those organisations and groups to the process and to the relationship of the process to any existing and related plans; and must ensure that the process encourages the public to contribute to the identification of community outcomes.

Community Outcomes Framework

Community outcomes provide a means for people and organisations in the region/district/city to help identify and prioritise needs for that area. They can provide a structure for activities at a local level, and joint initiatives or resource use.

Figure 1: Community Outcomes Framework

Involvement in developing and using community outcomes
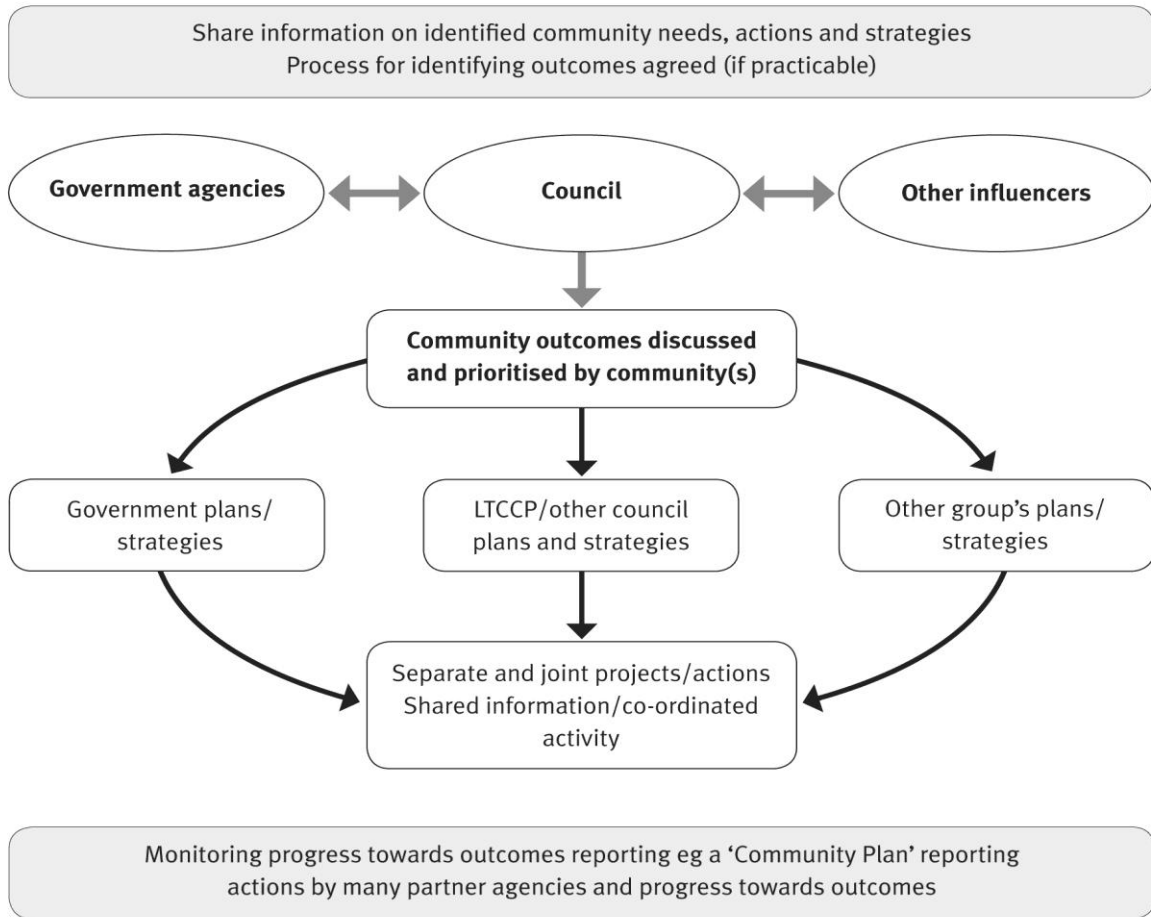
Important government organisations' websites

The following table identifies important and relevant government organisations' websites where documents for consultation are posted.

Organisation	Website address
Auckland City Council	http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/focus/2004/full.asp
Auckland	http://www.arc.govt.nz/arc/index.cfm?9AC1B011-BCD4-1A24-95E8-

Regional Council	CA9057D7F95CCAB35E63-88E4-4358-889C-043A012DF815
Manukau City Council	http://www.manukau.govt.nz/councilpubs.htm
North Shore City Council	http://www.northshorecity.govt.nz (under 'your council' and 'city plan')
Waitakere City Council	http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/abtcnl/pp/ltccp.asp
Auckland District Health Board	http://www.adhb.govt.nz/about/reports.htm
Counties Manukau District Health Board	http://www.cmdhb.org.nz/Counties/News_Publications/Planning-documents.htm
Waitemata District Health Board	http://www.waitematadhb.govt.nz/wh-portal/Resources.asp?CatID=55
New Zealand Parliament	http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz/Programme/Committees/Submissions/
New Zealand Government online	http://www.govt.nz/news/?ntype=CurrentConsulting
Ministry of Health	http://www.moh.govt.nz/forums.html
Ministry of Social Development	http://www.msd.govt.nz/index.html
Ministry of Youth Development	http://www.myd.govt.nz/index.aspx
Ministry of Justice	http://www.justice.govt.nz/

Summary

By developing advocacy and lobbying activities Youthline would strengthen its standing within the political framework. It would not only advise, guide and direct government and its organisations regarding youth issues, but would also strengthen its status within these organisations.