



BY GILL FRANCES

 **A SMALL SHOW WITH A**

THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

BIG

NCB

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU



SHOUT

The National Children's Bureau unites partners and stakeholders across the U.K. to create better futures for youth //

We believe in making collaboration count at the National Children's Bureau (NCB). Founded in 1963, NCB has emerged as the United Kingdom's leading multi-agency children's services and studies organization. Collectively, we work to promote the voices, interests and well-being of children in every aspect of their lives. We help create better outcomes for youth by delivering essential information on policy, research and best practices to our members and partner organizations. At 3,000 members strong, NCB can influence government policy in ways that really count. **We think of ourselves as a small show with a big shout.**

Quantity of members is one thing. Quality is everything. NCB's growing member base includes government leaders, children's trusts, health authorities, schools, universities, libraries and voluntary organizations, as well as professionals and practitioners. Our library houses Europe's biggest collection of books on children and is a key information source for children's services professionals.

A Natural Fit

NCB joined the International Youth Foundation and its Global Network as a partner organization in 2005. The benefit of working with these professionals from all over the world is priceless in terms of knowledge shared and relationships developed.

We considered IYF a good match because its work aligns closely with the six key outcomes that form the value basis for NCB:

- Ensuring children and young people have a voice
- Demonstrating respect for children and young people
- Recognizing the physical and psychological well-being of youth is paramount
- Giving young people equality of opportunity through recognizing and valuing diversity
- Providing children and young people safe, nonviolent yet stimulating environments
- Supporting youth in improving their life chances to reach their full potential



Youth at the Top

NCB attributes much of its effectiveness to the roles young people play within the organization. *Young NCB*, an organization for those under 18, has more than 330 youth members directly involved with running NCB. Not only do elected members sit on our board of trustees, they shape priorities around the issues that matter most to them. Currently, these priorities include life skills as part of personal, social and health education, free and accessible transportation and emotional well-being.

NCB is also unique in its ability to forge links between children and government leaders. Young members work at high levels with government leaders, meeting with key ministers and talking to them about how to improve policies and practices relating to young people.

Of course, we firmly believe that improving the lives of children requires partnerships that can mobilize the necessary resources. A good example is our partnership with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to found the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) in 2002.

Through the Alliance, more than 65 organizations work together to reduce bullying and create safer environments where children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. The most recent ABA event in November 2006 involved all 24,000-plus schools in England taking part and making use of the anti-bullying educational resources NCB provided.

Life Routes is another highly successful multi-stakeholder initiative that NCB supports. Operated in partnership with IYF and funded by Nokia, *Life Routes* is an innovative life skills program that helps young people throughout England learn how to promote their emotional health and well-being while realizing their role in the wider community.

Since 2004, *Life Routes* has worked with more than 25,000 young people and trained more than 550 adults. In a recent evaluation, no fewer than 80 percent of youth participants reported an improvement in at least five skills because of the program. As one young woman in Gateshead says, "Now we know we are stronger than we seem, braver than we believe and smarter than we think."

I can't think of a better outcome—for all of our programs and all of our youth. **Y**

Gill Frances is the Director of Well-being at the National Children's Bureau in the United Kingdom.



Above: NCB plays a key role in bringing young people together with the country's leaders as a way to engage them as active and informed citizens.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NCB

What is the National Children's Bureau?

- The UK's largest multi-agency network of child service providers and researchers
- A collaborative effort among more than 3,000 members, including government, NGO, academic and professional representatives
- A leading publisher in the field of children's services, with over 80 titles covering a range of topics that include early years, disabled children, participation, play, and young people's views
- An organization that carries out research, policy and development studies on behalf of central and local government, trusts, foundations and charitable organizations
- The leader of approximately 60 projects a year, supported through public and private grants that range between US\$20,000 to US\$30,000
- A library and information service that makes up the UK's premier collection of information on children's issues, offering a catalogue of over 68,000 abstracts of books, reports and journal articles on children and youth
- Young NCB is NCB's free membership network for all children and young people under 18, offering them opportunities to speak out on issues they feel are important
- A member of IYF's global network of partner organizations since 2005

Learn more about NCB by visiting
www.ncb.org.uk