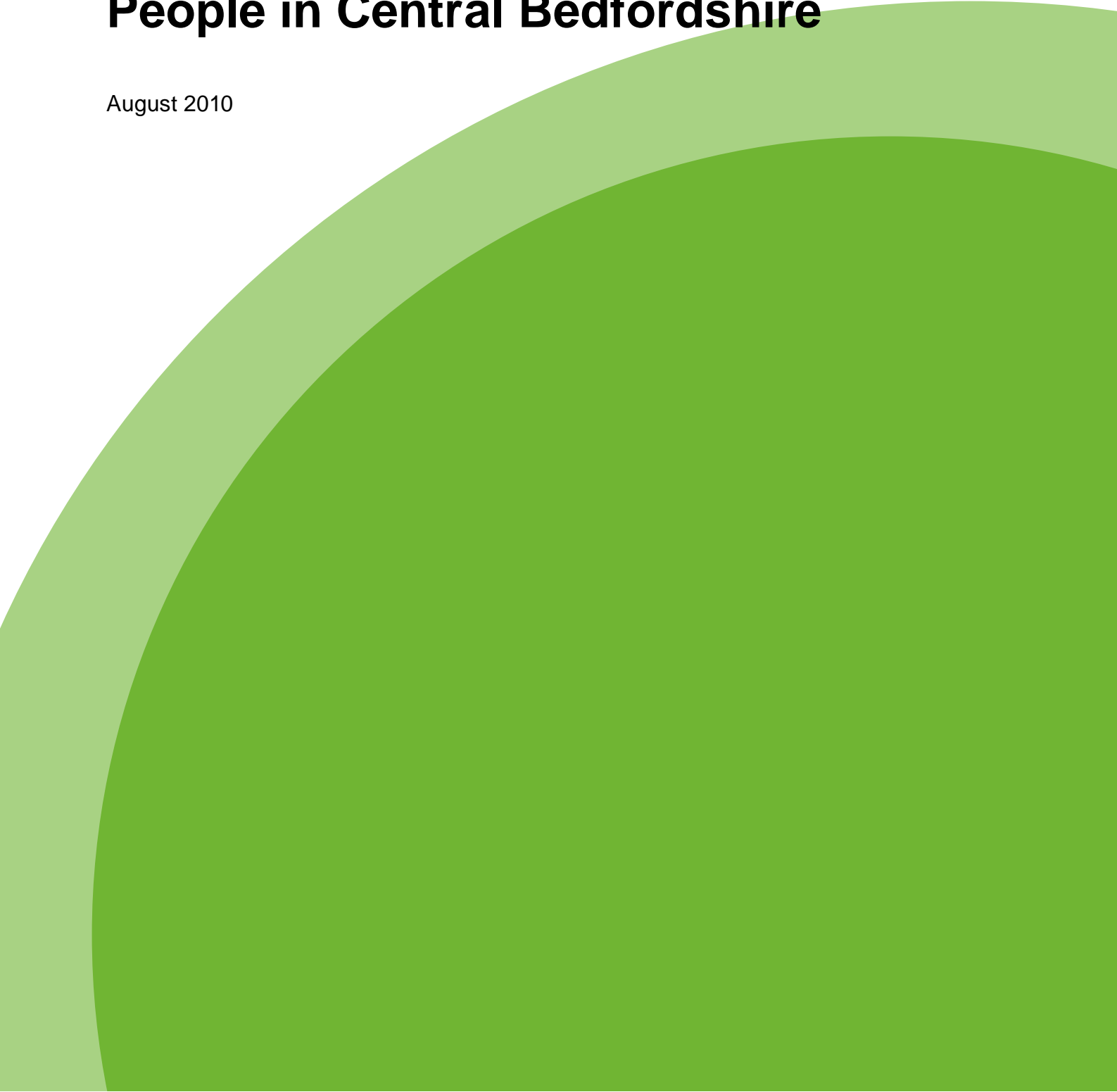


# **Task Force Review of the Provision of Facilities for Children and Young People in Central Bedfordshire**

August 2010



## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Executive focuses on raising the aspirations of the most vulnerable young people in Central Bedfordshire.**
- 2. That the Executive analyses the positive activities on offer in Central Bedfordshire and the outcomes of the Tellus Survey and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in order to identify need locally and gaps in provision.**
- 3. That the Executive analyses the numbers of NEET young people at ward level in Central Bedfordshire and prioritises the allocation of resources in the wards with the highest numbers of NEET young people where there is a gap in provision and a need has been identified locally.**
- 4. That the Executive develops links with the parenting service to reduce the impacts of teenage pregnancy on the numbers of NEET young people in Central Bedfordshire.**
- 5. That the Executive encourages the use of apprenticeship schemes, where appropriate, but also promote opportunities for young people to enter into jobs.**
- 6. That the Executive encourages other organisations to extend apprenticeship schemes to provide training for youth workers and enhance the local youth offer.**
- 7. That the Executive develops its role as a commissioner of services, increasing the range of universal services that are provided by other organisations.**
- 8. That the Executive ensures the youth services it provides are delivered in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.**
- 9. That the Executive actively promote the co-location of services such as youth service and Connexions in facilities throughout Central Bedfordshire to enhance positive outcomes for children and young people.**
- 10. That the Executive be requested to provide a report and action plan relating to the accepted recommendations arising from this review to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee within six months.**

## **Background**

- 1. Members will recall that at the meeting of Children, Families and Learning Overview Scrutiny Committee on 11 August 2009 the Committee resolved to set up a Task Force regarding the provision of facilities for children and young people in Central Bedfordshire.**
- 2. The areas to be covered by the Task Force were agreed in consultation with Members and officers in Children's Services and were agreed as follows:-**

- To provide policy advice on youth provision in Central Bedfordshire and the legislative framework for targeted and integrated youth support services and what this means for Central Bedfordshire Council.
  - To consider the implications for working with partners to deliver targeted and universal services and develop and identify key local issues for which further or improved services are required within existing resources or through targeted efficiencies.
3. Following an invitation to all non-Executive Members the following Members were appointed to the Task Force:-
    - Councillor Norman Costin (Chairman)
    - Councillor Rita Egan
    - Councillor Adam Fahn
    - Councillor John Street
    - Councillor Peter Williams
  4. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Anita Lewis, and the Assistant Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Christina Turner, were also invited to attend meetings of the Task Force.
  5. It was stated at the outset that the areas to be considered during the review might be refined during the process of the investigation and during the process it was proposed that a specific focus be placed on the number of children and young people who are not in education, employment or training (otherwise known as NEET). The Task Force discussed the positive activities available for children and young people in Central Bedfordshire and the barriers to engagement, which might lead to young people becoming classified as NEET.
  6. Following discussion of the key areas to be included in the review the Members agreed that it was important to understand the Council's current performance in relation to children and young people who were classified as NEET and how that compared to local and national figures.
  7. Having considered performance in relation to NEET statistics the Task Force then considered what were the barriers to reducing the numbers of NEET young people and how could youth centres contribute to minimising this. The Task Force also discussed partnership approaches to delivering services and considered how the Council could promote cost-effective approaches to delivering youth services collaboratively.

### **Meetings and Site Visits**

8. The Task Force met on 3 occasions during the course of the review and carried out a series of site-visits to youth centres in Central Bedfordshire. Meetings occurred as set out below:-
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<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Purpose of the Meeting</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
02 December 2009	To receive a strategic overview of youth facilities and the youth services and to agree the issues to be considered by the Task Force	Cllrs Costin, Fahn, Williams and Cllr C Turner (Assistant Portfolio Holder Children's Services) Glen Denham (Assistant Director Integrated Services) and Ketan Gandhi (Head of Integrated Youth Support)
02 February 2010	To discuss integrated youth support services (IYSS) and targeted youth support services (TYS)	Cllrs Costin, Egan, Street and Williams Glen Denham (Assistant Director Integrated Services) and Ketan Gandhi (Head of Integrated Youth Support)
18 March 2010	Site visits to various youth clubs in Central Bedfordshire to view some of the youth facilities currently available in Central Bedfordshire so as to inform the remainder of the review	Cllrs Costin, Egan, Fahn and Williams. Ketan Gandhi, Head of Integrated Youth Support
16 June 2010	To receive evidence and discuss positive activities currently available in Central Bedfordshire. Also to discuss the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training.	Cllrs Costin and Williams and Cllrs A Lewis (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) and C Turner (Assistant Portfolio Holder for Children's Services) Martin Pratt, (Deputy Director of Children's Services), Ketan Gandhi, Head of Integrated Youth Support and Katherine Peddie (Head of Policy and Strategy)

9. Members received briefings from officers in a series of early meetings to discuss work that was already underway in relation to Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) and Targeted Youth Support (TYS).
10. Members also undertook a series of visits to youth centres in Barton, Toddington and Leighton Buzzard in order to inform the review. The purpose of these visits was not to propose specific recommendations in relation to adaptations or funding in these centres. Members were asked to consider the key issues as they related to the whole range of youth services and facilities on offer for children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. There are therefore no specific recommendations

contained in this report relating to these three centres.

### **Key Findings:**

11. The Task Force's review was undertaken in context of the current financial situation. It was highlighted to Members that there were limited resources to deliver youth support services and as a result the Task Force should consider the Council's priorities in relation to the delivery of services. The Members of the Task Force considered it was important to understand the implications of reductions in the youth service and Connexions budgets and the effect this would have on vulnerable young people. It was suggested that reducing budgets, which are specifically targeted at vulnerable young people, would have a negative long term effect and the Council needed to consider how it would address these negative effects.
12. The services within the structure that had been incorporated to form Integrated Youth Support Services were youth services, Connexions, Family Adolescent Services, the Family Intervention Programme Team and the Young People's Homelessness Officer.
13. The Task Force considered the following areas in detail and received evidence in relation to the following areas:-

### **Targeted Youth Support Services and Children and Young People who are not in education employment or training**

14. The Task Force discussed the importance of delivering an appropriate range of services for children and young people of a variety of ages. Members were also informed of the duties on local authorities to secure access for young people to positive activities through the 1996 Education Act by way of the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. Central Bedfordshire Council was required to provide both educational and recreational positive activities.
15. To ascertain the views of children and young people on aspects of positive activities the Task Force received the outcomes of the most recent Tellus survey, which was completed by children and young people in years 6, 8 and 10. The survey indicated that 69% (target: 77.9%) of young people consulted participated in positive activities, which was in the upper middle quartile of our statistical neighbours. It also indicated that children and young people wanted more places where they could spend time with friends (47%).
16. The Task Force was particularly impressed with the great deal of positive work that was being carried out and the wide range of support and activities that were being made available to children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. Officers presented Members with a schedule of positive activities in Central Bedfordshire for ages 3 to 11 years and 12 to 19 years. Members were particularly impressed with the development of the 13 – 19 central youth website, which provided children and young people a database of activities and other organisations that offered information, advice and guidance throughout Central Bedfordshire ([www.13-19central.co.uk](http://www.13-19central.co.uk)).

17. The Tellus survey also indicated that some children and young people were unsure about their future particularly in relation to those that would go on to apprenticeships and jobs. The importance of enhancing aspirations, particularly in the Houghton Regis area, was discussed as a specific concern. Closer working relations had been developed between Connexions, Job Centre Plus, 14-19 consortium manager, National Apprenticeship Service and the Economic and Skills team to better inform young people about future aspirations.
18. The Task Force focused on the numbers of young people who were beyond statutory school age but were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Task Force received figures in relation to the numbers of NEETs in Central Bedfordshire as well as other local authorities in its comparator group and figures nationally. At the end of March 2010 the number of young people in Central Bedfordshire aged 16-18 who were NEET was 5.7% (332 young people) compared to 6.1% (regional average) and 6.5% (national average). The adjusted target for 2010 – 11 for Central Bedfordshire was 5.0%.
19. The Task Force was informed that the key factors to young people becoming NEET in Central Bedfordshire included a lack of life skills, a lack of appropriate employment opportunities, teenage pregnancy and a lack of joined up information, advice and guidance. The Task Force raised specific concerns that 17% of 16-18 year old NEETs had a level 0 attainment level and that 15.7% were either teen parents or teenage pregnancies. Officers informed Members that the Council was developing links with the parenting service to minimise the negative effects of being a teenage parent and the Task Force stressed the importance of continuing to develop these links.
20. The Task Force also considered a breakdown by area of NEET young people aged 16-18 and were told by officers that significant work was being undertaken to address those areas that were in greatest need of targeted youth support (TYS). This work included the development of the right *provision*, the right *systems* and the right *support* in these local areas.
21. There was a significant amount of work underway to increase the numbers of positive activities available specifically for young people who were NEET and to increase targeted youth services for those who are NEET, engage in anti-social behaviour or are teenage parents. It was increasingly important that the Council understood the level and type of youth provision available in local areas, thus providing a base of information on which the Council could understand where facilities were located. The 13-19central website provided a great deal of information on the location of local activities and the Task Force felt that this information would be important to assess gaps in local provision.
22. Members also noted that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to support the development of apprenticeships. The use of apprenticeship schemes was appropriate for many young people although in some cases it was more appropriate to encourage that young person to enter into work. In some cases young people had said that they would rather get a job than enter into an apprenticeship scheme. The Task Force agreed that good relations with the colleges needed to be maintained to promote the use of apprenticeship schemes.

23. The Task Force felt that it may be appropriate for Children's Services to investigate the feasibility of developing an apprenticeship to train youth workers. This apprenticeship could be developed in partnership with other appropriate organisations in order to enhance the local youth offer.
24. The Task Force agreed it was important that the Council continued to develop new ways of working in those wards with the greatest need so as to make a difference in the most effective way. It was increasingly important in light of the current financial situation and the resource challenges facing the Council that it should ensure its targeted services were prioritised in those areas of greatest need so as to minimise the numbers of NEET children and young people in these areas.

### **Property and Assets**

25. On 18 March 2010 the Members of the Task Force visited youth club facilities in Barton, Toddington and Leighton Buzzard. The purpose of these visits was to see first hand some of the youth facilities on offer. Members were provided with a short briefing and were informed of the outcomes of commercial valuation appraisals and feasibility reports for each site prior to the visits.
26. Members noted that there was a range of standard of facilities in Central Bedfordshire. One of the facilities that Members visited was not currently in use due to health and safety concerns and it was not deemed to be fit for purpose for providing youth services. Members were told that in some cases there were alternative groups, parish councils or schools that had registered an interest in renovating these facilities for alternative provision. The Council had assessed in many cases that the cost of refurbishing a building outweighed the value of that property. In some instances funding had been secured from alternative sources such as StreetCred Youth Opportunities to assist with developments.
27. Members discussed possible options for the presence of facilities in areas and noted that there was a greater level of demand for youth facility provision in some areas than others. It was considered important that there was sufficient provision of youth facilities relative to local need and that this might be informed by the outcomes of the Tellus Survey. The Council should ensure that there were appropriate mechanisms to assess the demands of local children and young people. These mechanisms would provide an explanation of people's aspirations, their skill sets and how the Council can support these children and young people to achieve what they want.
28. Members of the Task Force felt that it was important to ensure that local Town and parish Councillors and ward Councillors were consulted on feasible options for provision within their areas that could include the use of alternative facilities, where appropriate.
29. During the visits Members went to Leighton Buzzard Youth Centre and were particularly impressed with this facility, which offered a range of positive activities. The centre also worked in partnership with schools to run group mentoring projects for middle and upper schools based at the centre and staff from the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Family Adolescent Support Team (FAST) also used the

centre to meet with young people.

30. There were clear recognisable benefits for having purpose built youth centre facilities that enabled dedicated youth workers and Connexions and youth services to be based in one building. Members expressed a view that the Council needed to learn the positive lessons from the success of the youth centre at Leighton Buzzard and should encourage similar opportunities for partnership working to achieve similar positive outcomes elsewhere.
31. The Task Force felt that youth centres were an important means of enhancing the local youth offer and could minimise the number of children and young people who are NEET. The use of youth centres to enhance co-location of services and provide a joined-up approach to the delivery of support services to children and young people needed to be promoted.
32. In relation to property and assets the Task Force considered it was important that the Council had a full understanding of the range of facilities that were available in local areas that could be used to deliver youth services. As a result of financial constraints it was accepted that the Council did not have the funds to deliver new facilities or to undertake extensive renovation of facilities that were fit for purpose. The Task Force agreed therefore that the Executive should be asked to consider what could be achieved by working in partnership with other local agencies to renovate or deliver new facilities in areas of greatest need where the Council did not have any capital funds available. The Council needed to be specifically aware of other facilities that were already in use by other bodies in the local area for other purposes which could also be used to deliver youth services.

### **Working in Partnership**

33. In light of the current financial situation the importance of partnership working was greatly enhanced. The Task Force was informed that Integrated Youth Support Services had been involved at a much greater level in influencing commissioning of training. The Council had also been developing learning opportunities through the Future Jobs Fund in collaboration with Job Centre Plus and working with the Connexions service through the 14-19 strategy to develop careers guidance at an earlier stage. External funding had also been received in some cases to deliver additional IYSS programmes, such as the development of a Youth Parliament, although it was not clear the extent to which this funding would be available in light of the current national budgetary review.
34. The Task Force agreed that whilst there was a need for a wide range of universal services to be available in Central Bedfordshire and for targeted services locally these need not necessarily be provided by the Council. It was felt that the Council should investigate how these services could be provided in partnership or be commissioned from other local organisations. Promoting the Council's role as an 'enabler' of services was to become increasingly important whereby the Council preserves the services that they felt were more important and investigated opportunities for delivering other services in partnership with others. The development of 'think family' practice, making sure that the support provided by children's, adults' and family services is co-ordinated and focused on problems



affecting the whole family needed to be promoted.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

35. This report provides recommendations for consideration in relation to targeted and integrated youth support services. Members are asked to comment on the contents of this report prior to it being submitted to a future meeting of the Executive.