
Meeting: Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 14 September 2010

Subject: Future of the Youth Service

Report of: Cllr Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Summary: The report summarises the present situation regarding the provision of the youth service. It sets out background to the presentation to the Committee offering early thoughts on the way forward. The youth service policy will not be presented to the Executive until early next year as the new policy for the service will need to be informed by the direction given by the Government and the emergent budgetary situation nationally and locally. Members are asked for early views in the light of the work of their own task force.

Contact Officer Edwina Grant

Public/Exempt Public

Wards Affected All

Function of: Council and Children's Trust statutory partners

Financial:

The aim of the provision for the youth service is to make proper provision for young people outside the formal curriculum of the school. The maintenance of an offer to young people of leisure time activities as far as is reasonably practical is based in current statute. However, how the authority provides this function is at its discretion. This decision will link with the financial resources made available and comment on current financial resources as contained within this paper.

Legal:

There is a legal framework of entitlement as outlined above that is enshrined in the Education Act 1996 as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The delivery model is a matter for Council discretion. However, the Acts outline that the Local Authority must consult with young people about the activities and the provision of information and must publish information about activities.

Risk Management:

Young people are subject to personal and collective risk assessments by nature of being assessed for access to such provisions.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

There will be future staffing implications in any changes to the way provision is made available. Any consultation necessary will take place at the appropriate time.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Equality issues will be picked up as part of implementing any changes in provision.

Community Safety:

None specifically

Sustainability:

None specifically

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. Overview and Scrutiny members are asked to share their views at this early stage with the Lead Member for Children's Services in the light of their own Task Force report elsewhere on this agenda**

Reason for recommendations

This is an early paper brought to Overview and Scrutiny as the policy on the youth service is a matter for review during the current year. This covering paper contains the background to the current service and the presentation will set out some thoughts for discussion. It is anticipated that the policy paper will be presented to Executive in early 2011 when the Government's position on future delivery models is known. The Chairman of the Committee will be asked to consider placing the draft of this policy on the work plan after the comprehensive spending review and government task force views are known.

1. Background

- 1.1** The Councils vision is to improve the quality of life of all people in Central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique character of our communities and our environment. One of our five strategic priorities is to educate, protect and provide opportunities for children and young people. The Youth Service contributes to all of the Children and Young People's Plan and other partnership priorities, including the following:

- Improving prevention, early identification and intervention.
- Increasing opportunities for children and young people to play an active part in influencing the decisions that affect their lives and well-being.
- Developing a locality based approach to delivering integrated services.
- Developing the Family and Youth Information Service.
- Reducing child poverty.
- Developing the approaches to improve prevention and early intervention and strengthen and improve family relationships by encouraging positive parenting.

- Ensuring children and young people are able to make responsible decisions in relation to drugs, alcohol and sexual health.
- Reducing the incidence of and impact of bullying on children and young people.
- Raising achievement for all learners particularly underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances.
- Improving engagement and enjoyment for all children and young people.
- Developing and promoting children and young people's positive contribution to communities across Central Bedfordshire.
- Reducing youth offending and anti-social behaviour.
- Promoting and providing activities and information for all children and young people and their families, ensuring that the hard to reach and those with disabilities can take part in mainstream activity.
- Developing a locality approach in reducing the number of NEET targeting those areas with the highest NEET levels.
- Working with employers, colleges and schools to increase the range and quality of local training, volunteering and job opportunities.
- Inspiring our most vulnerable young people to raise their aspirations and provide integrated support particularly to care leavers, young offenders, young carers, young people with physical and learning disabilities, gypsy and traveller children and teenage parents.

The future of Children and Young People's Plans is to be subject to legislation. However, the Council must work according to current statute which requires a consultation on a new Plan with a view to the Plan being agreed by Council by April 2011 at the latest. The consultation on new priorities will suggest that fewer more focussed objectives are considered. In the second Plan for Central Bedfordshire Council the "how" we will deliver on our outcomes will need to be clearer as the Government has set aside some of the surveys and performance monitoring previously available to judge progress.

2. Principles

2.1 The Youth Service within Central Bedfordshire is an integral part of an Integrated Youth Support Service providing a coordinated service to all young people aged 13-19 according to their needs (up to 25 for young people with disabilities or special needs). All local authorities in England and Wales were required to create an Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) by April 2008 ensuring that the following key elements were in place:

- Empowering young people – ensuring they are engaged in shaping the Services they receive and providing more things to do, places to go and someone talk to.

- Making a contribution – encouraging more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities.
- Supporting choices – providing better information, advice and guidance to help young people make more informed choices.
- Reforming targeted support – providing better and more personalised intensive support for those young people with the greatest need.

2.2 Local Authorities, along with partners, are expected to work together to adapt their approach to specific local circumstances. “Aiming high: a ten-year strategy for positive activities”, identified in more detail the improvements sought, including increasing the influence of young people in designing services and reforming the workforce so that it would operate in a more integrated manner. The aim was greater flexibility and coherence across services in each local area, with particular emphasis on:

- supporting the needs of vulnerable young people;
- improving the access of all young people to ‘positive activities’;
- commissioning an increasing range of services through the private, voluntary and community sectors, and from not-for-profit organisations as well as the public sector; and
- ensuring that young people are involved in developing their own services and in decision-making that affects them.

2.3 The coalition Government has not given a commitment to this approach continuing. They have set up working groups nationally to advise on how children’s services policy will be delivered. The Government’s ‘Big Society’ programme was launched in May 2010. The cross-government policy programme will create opportunities empowering local people and communities. One of the major cornerstones of the ‘Big Society’ agenda is to encourage people to take an active role in their communities. For young people much of this will be driven through the recently launched National Citizenship Service.

3. Youth Service Budget

3.1 The current Youth Service budget is £1,032,796. There is separate funding in 2010/2011 via Area Based Grant of £1,878,228, for Connexions and then a further £98k for Connexions Workforce Development. This has been reduced in total by the sum of £473,617 in-year as a result of the Area Based Grant not being paid in the final quarter. In addition, the Area Based Grant contained a sum of £66,272 reduced by £15,882 in the same way. The youth service also accessed a share of Education Health Partnership monies spent via Health partnerships which has had the effect of reducing access to a further £29,368. The Service also manages the Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Funds, allocated by young people for young people, although both have now been “de-ring fenced” and have an uncertain future. We are awaiting further Government announcements.

The working assumption should be that none of the Grants are secure. The Area Based Grants have already been subject to a Council decision to stop the activity in the area where it was funded, which impacts upon Connexions and Positive Activities for young people. The Children's Trust commissioning group was consulted upon the implementation of this change. As stated above, other Grants are not secure and information will be available from October onwards. The Council funding set out above will in itself be subject to discussion as the Council develops its budget proposals and responds to its medium term financial planning.

4. Performance and future delivery models

- 4.1 Performance compares favourably with statistical neighbours and will be discussed in the presentation.

The emergent thinking about next steps will also be discussed in the presentation and the views of Members of the Committee will be sought.

Appendices: None

Background Papers:

Education Act 1996

Education and Inspection Act 2006

Aiming High – a 10 year strategy on positive activities D.F.E. (Then DCSF)