
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 23 November 2010
Subject: The Direction of the Youth Service
Report of: Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines developing ideas on the proposal to change the delivery model of the Youth Service to targeted areas only and involving the voluntary, community and not for profit sector more through the "Big Society".

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Ketan Gandhi, Head of Integrated Youth Support
Public/Exempt: Public/ exempt
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive / Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

This reports to the key council priority of:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.

Financial:

As part of the Council's efficiency savings, currently subject to consultation, it has been proposed to save £1.89 million from services to young people over the next two years. The proposal is for a saving of £570k in 2011/12 and a further £1,328k in 2012/13.

The current Youth Service budget is £1,032,796 and there are additional budgets for services to young people across the directorate and subject to a service level agreement (SLA) with Bedford Borough in the case of the Youth offending team that aggregates to £633k.

The Government is developing proposals for national funding of preventative services for young people and it is possible that there will be grants to bid for or access to non ring fenced funding. In seeking views on such, the Government has specifically excluded funding for Connexions from its deliberations as the decision to remove the Area Based Grant funding for the Connexions service was made in the Coalition Government's emergency budget in the current financial year. It may be necessary to retain up to £125k to fund statutory guidance going forward.

Legal:

There is a legal framework of entitlement for a service of information to young people and the offer of some opportunities 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. This could be a signposting service to voluntary groups as well as/or instead of in-house provision. Legislation requires 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:

The Council will need to ensure that there is smooth transition from in-house delivery to any different model which could include a fully commissioned out model and/or signposting to voluntary groups

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Consultation with staff and trade Unions will be undertaken in accordance with existing procedures.

Equalities/Human Rights:

An ongoing equality impact assessment is being developed.

Community Safety:

Possible implications for anti-social behaviour and youth offending.

Sustainability:

The development of provision to meet local need matched to an understanding of the changing demographic is the best way to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members of the Committee are asked for their views.

Background

1. Recent Government decisions have included the removal of funding for the Area Based Grant which was reported to the Executive in August 2010. Funding may yet be available in the future via an investment in early intervention services in the form of a non-ring fenced Early Intervention Grant (worth around £2bn nationally) by 2014/15. The details of how to bid and whether Central Bedfordshire would qualify have yet to be announced nationally.
2. The Department for Education has cut its non-school budget by 12% 'rationalising and ending' all centrally directed programmes for children, young people and families. Local authority cuts and the removal of ring fenced protection for youth services is likely to lead to the restructure of many services for young people nationally.

3. As part of its on-going statutory consultation on the restructuring of Children's Services, the Council has proposed to cease undertaking the functions of the Connexions Service by the end of the current financial year. This proposal is subject to statutory consultation which will end on 13 December 2010, after which the proposal or an amendment proposal will be implemented.
4. This report outlines proposals for re-designing services to young people, including the youth service towards less Council run provision and more volunteering. These proposals suggest that a commissioning approach with schools and volunteers will be adopted, focusing on the truly vulnerable and developing a strategy to use volunteers more.

Current position

5. Youth work can be described as the personal and social development of young people, provided through informal education and positive activities. Its distinctive characteristics include the voluntary engagement of young people, young people's active involvement in developing provision, the use of informal education as the primary method of youth engagement, and an approach to provision that is responsive to the needs of young people.
6. Detail of staffing will be arranged by the Head of Paid Service and will be subject to statutory consultation. However, the current Youth Service supports the direct delivery of both universal and targeted youth provision. The current provision is 7 youth centres, one youth information shop which is currently being developed as part of the 'under one roof' initiative in Dunstable town centre, and the following staff. The staff list excludes Area Based Grant funded staff referred to earlier in the report:
 - 1 Area Manager
 - 1 Business Support Manager who supports the wider Integrated Youth Support Service
 - 3 full time equivalent Senior Youth Workers
 - 11 full time equivalent Youth Workers
 - 16 part time (10 hours per week) Youth Support Worker Posts
 - 4 Administration posts 3 of which provide support across Integrated Youth Support Service and one specifically to support the work force development team and the coordination of accredited awards.
7. In addition, there is a Youth Participation Team. This area of work primarily concentrates on children's participation. The Youth Offending Service (a shared service managed by Bedford Borough) enacts the Council's responsibility for prevention of offending and re-offending via a Service Level Agreement and a governance board.
8. All of the above services contribute to the budget total shown in the financial section of this report.

Performance

- 9 The Youth Service has made year on year improvements in meeting performance targets. As part of the government's reduction of targets and performance indicators, information will not be available to compare nationally from 2009 onwards, however the service compares to benchmarks well. It is in the bottom quartile of funding nationally.

Youth Service BVPIs – Final figures April 09 – 31 March 2010

	National Benchmarks 2009/10	Actuals 1 April 09 to 31 March 2010
Contact with young people	5650	7106
Participant activities	3390	3540
Recorded Outcome	2034	2223
Accredited Outcome	1017	1103

Professional Practice

10. Good youth work begins with looking at young people's situation and develops a response based on their needs. The relationship between a young person and the youth service is voluntary and as such activities have to be available when young people want them and are able to access them, often this is when other activities are closed. The aim is to give young people opportunities to make informed choices in a safe environment and gain qualifications through a personalised curriculum of activity.
11. Youth work plays an important role in helping to manage risk. Youth work builds emotional resilience, judgement and decision making in young people and places them firmly in control of their present and their future, supporting them to manage risk as they move in to adulthood.
12. The youth service provides young people with 'things to do and places to go', with a clear focus on addressing key social issues affecting young people as well as ensuring that our work contributes to the wider local and national agenda. The provision is known to Members as a result of their Task Force report from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A brief summary is shown at Appendix A.
13. In addition to providing provision through 7 youth centres, the service makes a significant contribution to:
- Leading and enabling integrated youth support to develop across the authority
 - Enterprise programmes
 - Training programmes leading to accredited awards
 - Youth Leadership programmes

- Residential activity
- Reducing the number of young people not in education or employment, (NEET's)
- Being a first point of adult contact for support to young people
- Neighbourhood Improvement Planning
- Supporting the voluntary and not for profit sector – enabling them to provide services
- Reducing anti social behaviour, primarily through detached / street based interventions
- Supporting attainment in schools for those at risk of exclusion and or not achieving
- Reducing bullying
- Providing support to young people who are or at risk of becoming pregnant, taking drugs, binge drinking, self harming, being bullied or considering leaving home
- Developing positive activities on a Friday evening and at weekends
- Supporting council departments and partner agencies with youth involvement and “Young Inspector Reviews”
- Developing the Youth Parliament
- Young people led programmes including “Street Cred” which is a young people led grant giving committee, nationally funded up to this current financial year.

Changing the delivery model of youth provision to targeted areas and focus on the most vulnerable young people.

14. A future model would be developed to offer a targeted approach to those young people who need it most. The universal offer would reduce and for those young people who are not in targeted groups, there would be the development of the Big Society approach. It is set out below as a two phased approach.
15. A good response to young people and a service at reduced cost could be achieved by enabling (as part of the Big Society agenda) the voluntary sector, faith groups, community groups and youth led projects to run universal provision through youth centres, whilst ensuring that the skills of a small core team of professional staff are targeted at vulnerable young people and in areas of significant deprivation. A list of current partners is shown in Appendix B.
16. The creation of a lean but highly targeted youth support service would provide:
 - Opportunities to reach the most vulnerable young people and address the issues they face. In many cases the intervention would be planned to seek to prevent progression into specialist services,
 - Respond to hot-spot incidents of anti social behaviour,
 - Supporting NEETs back in to education, employment and training
 - Supporting vulnerable young people at key transition periods
 - Supporting and enabling the voluntary sector, faith groups, community groups and youth led projects to run universal services
 - Providing a web based information service

- Tracking vulnerable young people including NEETs
- Advising the commissioning team on services that require procurement or a search for volunteers by the Children's Trust
- Undertaking the statutory consultation responsibilities of the service.

Phase 1 - 2011/12

17. This work would begin to create a targeted Youth Service to meet the challenges identified above – moving towards delivering only in targeted areas and to vulnerable young people, enabling the community, voluntary, not for profit sector to run youth provision and establishing an infrastructure for a commissioned-out service. Detail of staffing will be arranged by the Head of Paid Service and will be subject to statutory consultation.

A targeted youth service would consist of:

A Business support manager working as part of the commissioning team
 2 Senior Youth Workers
 7 Targeted Youth Support Service Workers
 11 Part time youth support workers
 3 Administration staff

Phase 2 - 2012/13

18. This phase would be a more significant move to a reduced commissioned out service to targeted areas only whilst providing universal services in other areas through volunteers in line with the "Big Society" agenda.
19. To retain a small specialist team to work alongside the commissioning team to oversee the commissioning / procurement of services.

A small specialist team would consist of:

A Business support manager
 2 Senior Youth Workers
 1 Administration Officer

20. If voluntary groups or town and parish councils or other agencies do not come forward to share provision the majority of the youth clubs will need to be considered for closure in this phase. However, if Government grants or other funding become available as referred to earlier in the report this may well be an opportunity to reshape these services and be much more responsive to local need.

Implementation

Phase 1

21. In consultation with Town and Parish Councils and in accordance with the Compact with the voluntary sector the Council will identify partners from the community, voluntary and not for profit sectors to run the provision either through volunteering or commissioned work. Discussions will also take place during the Central Bedfordshire Together Community meetings.
22. The least used Council youth centre in Toddington would close in the financial year 2011/ 12 or sooner and the saving made. Work would be done to encourage volunteers in the area to develop alternative delivery options along the lines of the Big Society.
23. Youth participation work outside the Youth Parliament and Young Inspectors programme will be significantly reduced or stop. The Youth Parliament will remain and will be supported by visits from elected Members and existing staff from Children's Services who have relevant skills to work with young people.
24. Youth work contribution in schools will end and schools will be able to buy in provision if required. A notice will be served of an intent to reduce the contribution to the Youth Offending Team whilst protecting the statutory obligation.
25. A transition strategy for youth work to move from local authority delivery to commissioning will be established in accordance with the Council's existing Commissioning Strategy for children's services.

Strategy:

- To begin developing the Government's "Big Society Agenda"
- The Council will focus its youth work on supporting the most vulnerable young people and work in geographical areas of most need
- Enable the community, voluntary and not for profit sectors to contribute more fully to any remaining work.
- To enable and support the community, voluntary and not for profit sector to secure national, regional and local funds enabling them to build a strong infrastructure for local delivery
- Opportunity to develop a specific needs based / outcome led model for commissioned delivery model for Central Bedfordshire

Summary of savings:

26. The development of a targeted youth service, the removal of youth participation activity and giving notice of a reduced contribution to the Youth Offending Team will achieve the proposed saving of £572k . This calculation excludes the cost of saving from the reduction of the Head of Service which is subject to the existing statutory consultation following the decision of the Executive in July 2010 to reduce Head of Service posts.
27. The reduction in phase 2 of most of the universal offer, including youth clubs, and a possible further reduction in the contribution to the Youth Offending Team, will contribute to the saving of £1,328,000 from services to young people. This will make a total saving of £1.89M over two years as projected within the Council's budget consultation.
28. Alongside this, every opportunity will be taken to seek Government grants as outlined above. Work will also be undertaken to establish whether any services to schools that may need to be commissioned to provide a small amount of statutory advice and guidance to replace the statutory duty that was previously enacted by the Connexions service can be funded by the Direct School Grant via a bid to the School Forum.
29. The savings for phase 1 will be developed before the commencement of the financial year 2011/12 and any savings made as soon as possible. The savings for phase two will need to be developed and plans for delivery drawn up before the commencement of the financial year 2012/13.

Conclusion and Next Steps

30. If Council budget pressures continue to allow the approach based on a two year phasing the work will proceed as outlined in the report subject to Executive agreement. In order to ensure there is clarity of purpose via a needs assessment and proper commissioning, the following actions will be measured against the Council's commissioning strategy:
 - Identification of targeted areas and vulnerable young people
 - Identification of need across all areas to establish the vulnerability of young people.
 - Identify what is meant by value for money in consultation with young people
 - Consultation with relevant young people about any proposed changes.
 - Maximise any bidding opportunities, particularly for access to any government funding.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Detail of current youth clubs

Appendix B – List of current voluntary sector partners

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

- Central Bedfordshire Commissioning Framework (Executive 13 October 2009)
- Report to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Future of the Youth Service (14 September 2010)
- Task Force Review of the Provision of Facilities for Children & Young People in Central Bedfordshire (14 September 2010)

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands