
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16 October 2012
Subject: Youth Services
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report provides the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update about commissioned Youth Support Services and provides an opportunity for members of the Committee to discuss proposals for meeting the new national requirements captured within 'Positive for Youth'.

Advising Officer: Pete Dudley, Assistant Director Learning, Commissioning and Partnerships, Children's Services
Contact Officer: Ben Pearson, Head of Children's Services Commissioning
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The services provided through the Council Youth Support Services commissions directly impact on and contribute to the following Council Priority:
 - Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young peopleIt also impacts on the following priority areas
 - Managing growth effectively
 - Creating safer communities
 - Promoting healthier lifestyles.

The services also directly contribute to the Medium Term Plan priorities to reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and providing education and training opportunities for young people.

Financial:

2. The report refers to the use of the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) that is used to commission Youth Services from voluntary and community organisations. There is no impact on the Council core budget however the EIG is not guaranteed beyond 2015/16.

Legal:

3. The commissioned services outlined in the report will include supporting the Council to meet its statutory duty to “encourage, enable or assist young people’s participation in education or training”. The commissioned organisation will also be required to “assist the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work” as outlined in Section 42A of the Education Act 1997.

Risk Management:

4. Not applicable

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. There is no impact on staffing within the Council.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the consultation exercise to re-commission Youth Services. There will also be contractual expectation of all commissioned providers to match styles of interventions and approaches to meet the needs of all clients.

Public Health

7. The commissions will include providing additional leisure and recreational services for young people and will support promoting a healthier lifestyle.

Community Safety:

8. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

9. The Council will work with commissioned organisations to secure any additional funding available to sustain provision beyond 2015 when the commissions end.

Procurement:

10. The future commissioning of services will be designed and completed in conjunction with the Corporate Procurement Team. This will include adhering to all necessary procurement rules and regulations.

RECOMMENDATION(S):**The Committee is asked to:-**

1. **Scrutinise and ask questions about the proposed changes in the commissioning of Youth Services.**
2. **Provide recommendations for Youth Parliament and other young people about how to influence and improve future services.**
3. **Consider the implications of ‘Positive for Youth’ and ‘Raising the Participation Age’ for the Council and its partners.**

Background

11. The Children's Services (CS) Commissioning Service designed specifications to secure the Council-run youth centres and other key youth support services, which due to a reduction in core budget would have closed in April 2011. There was a consultation with all interested organisations, young people, Council officers and members that influenced the final design of the specifications.
12. The authorisation to award previous contracts was delegated in line with the Council's corporate framework. The contract to run the Youth Centres was awarded by the Council Executive. The same delegations will take place for future commissioned services.
13. The CS Commissioning Service was allocated £943,342 from the Early Intervention Grant for 2012/13. This allocation was to develop a series of commissioned activities and to provide continuity in funding for the Youth Support Services. The allocation was split into the following areas:
 - Locality based youth provision including the running of youth centres
 - Youth Service Commissions including positive activities for young people and securing appropriate training opportunities for NEET young people (Not in Education, Training and or Employment)
 - Preventing Risky Behaviours

Key Activity within current commissioned services

14. The contract to run locality based youth provision including youth centres was awarded to Make a Difference (MaD). Currently 1533 different young people have participated in Youth Provision provided by MaD.
15. Community Voluntary Service and Voluntary Community Action were awarded the contracts to promote and develop volunteering opportunities for young people. Since the commencement of the project 180 young people have volunteered as a direct result of the commission.
16. Sport Support was commissioned to provide a wide range of outdoor educational opportunities for young people. In 2011/12 304 different young people participated in outdoor education activities through this commission.
17. As part of the Risky Behaviours (RB) commission, which included support services for drug, alcohol and sexual health services; 4YP were commissioned to provide information, advice and guidance to young people as part of the Council support to NEET young people in the absence of Connexions. To date 4YP have supported 529 different young people. The Council are currently in the top quartile of authorities for maintaining low levels of NEET young people (currently at 3.9%).

18. The Drug and Alcohol aspect of the Risky Behaviours commission is delivered through Plan B (drug and alcohol specialists). Within the last 12 months we know that within the young people's drug and alcohol related service, 88 young people received a targeted one to one intervention to address emerging issues regarding substance miss-use. In addition to this, 265 young people accessed a group intervention.
19. Brook (Teenage Pregnancy specialists) delivers the sexual health services aspect of the RB commission. The sexual health contract addresses young people at risk of early parenthood. The service targets both male and female young people who are identified as being at risk (based on known factors associated with teenage pregnancy such as unhealthy attitudes regarding sex and relationships, low self esteem and limited knowledge of safe sexual practices). In the past 12 months 125 young people have accessed the service. Of these, 25% accessed one to one sessions and 75% attended a group programme.
20. In addition to commissioned services, the CS Commissioning Service has provided support to town and parish councils to secure and sustain youth provision within their locality. Youth provision has now been developed in Toddington, Flitwick and Potton by Town and Parish Councils respectively.
21. The above commissions all have a robust quality assurance framework which is used by Council officers in order to monitor performance. To date one commission has been asked to produce an improvement plan based on performance concerns and significant improvement has been achieved since the intervention.
22. During 2011/12, staff within the CS Commissioning Service have completed accredited training around Outcome-based commissioning. This learning has enabled officers to reflect on the way previous services were designed and has helped the service to adopt improved approaches to how commissions can improve delivery, quality, and efficiency and really add value.
23. This has improved the way future commissions are developed and will allow the service to define the added value required from providers more accurately. The CS Commissioning Service has now designed and is consulting on draft specifications for 2013-15 youth services to ensure that areas of good practice are not lost and that future services are able to capture and report the sustainable behaviour changes made by young people. These specifications will also ensure new services meet the requirements of the new national developments outlined below.
24. The consultation exercise includes meeting with interested parties, the Council's key partners and young people about the design of the specifications. These specifications include the following areas:
 - Locality based youth work including Youth Centres
 - Information Advice and Guidance for Young People who are NEET
 - Volunteering
 - Drug and Alcohol Support Services
 - Sexual Health Support Services

25. The Commissioning Service will provide opportunities for positive activities such as outdoor education, arts, music, dance and training opportunities for young people will be undertaken through existing commissioning arrangements based on the demonstrated needs of young people.
26. The draft specifications for the 2013-15 commissions have been designed in the light of significant learning gained from the monitoring of current procurements. They introduce a much greater emphasis on 'impact' as opposed to numbers-led targets. In line with best practice nationally the new specifications also introduce a 'payment by results' culture.
27. The CS Commissioning Service provides support and guidance to the Youth Parliament and has developed and improved the 'youth offer' to encompass training which enables young people to become Young Inspectors and Young Commissioners. This approach is vital to ensure that services the Council commissions or provides meet the needs of young people and that young people views are central to continuous quality improvement of services.
28. The Commissioning Service supports young people, including those from the Youth Parliament and Children in Care Council, to be involved in every stage of the commissioning process – from designing what services will look like, to interviewing prospective providers and taking part in reviewing the quality of services. The move towards empowering young people to make a difference to their services is captured in the new national policy development 'Positive for Youth'. This will be outlined in more detail in the presentation following this report.
29. Following intensive training over the summer period young people will be involved in the Quality Assurance of services as follows:
 - The Youth Parliament will be undertaking inspections of Health Services as part of the Health Watch Agenda and their reports will be published.
 - Young Inspectors will be inspecting commissioned providers and publishing their reports on the Council website. They will be undertaking the 'Youth Audit' as part of the Positive for Youth' AgendaIn addition to these quality assurance roles Young Commissioners will be fully involved in the commissioning of services for 2013-15.

Raising the Participation Age

30. The Government is Raising the Participation Age. This will mean that all young people in England must continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015.
31. Raising the Participation Age (RPA) does not mean young people must stay in school; they will be able to choose one of the following options post16:
 - full-time education, such as school, college or home education
 - an apprenticeship
 - part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering full-time (which is defined as 20 hours or more a week).

32. The CS Commissioning Service has led the development of the local response to meeting the statutory requirements of RPA. This is managed through the multi agency 14-19 Strategy Group, a sub group of the Children's Trust Board. The CS Commissioning Service will ensure that future commissions and services support all young people to remain in education or training in line with the RPA requirements.

Conclusion and Next Steps

33. Over the last year the Government has developed and launched wide ranging policies relating to young people under the umbrella of 'Positive for Youth'. This is outlined in the presentation to follow.
34. The re-commissioning of Youth services currently funded from EIG has started. This project involves a full consultation about the design of services from July to October 2012 and a tendering process which will be completed by January 2013. All new commissions will reflect the new demands on the Council as captured in 'Positive for Youth'.
35. The Commissioning Service will continue to work closely with the voluntary and community sector, representative youth organisations and young people to develop a high quality offer of Youth Services in Central Bedfordshire.

Appendices:

None

Background papers and their location: (open to public inspection)

Positive for Youth national policy [Positive for Youth](#)