
Meeting: Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 17 June 2014
Subject: Youth Audit Action Plan
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report provides an update on progress towards responding to the recommendations contained in the Youth Audit report.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Peter Fraser, Head of Partnerships, Engagement and Youth Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. The Youth Audit Action Plan contributes to achieving the following CBC priorities:
 - Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
 - Improved educational attainment.
 - Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
 - Value for money – freezing council tax.

Financial:

2. All activities contained in this report are to be delivered through existing budgets.

Legal:

3. There are no legal implications associated with any of the actions in the plan.

Risk Management:

4. The key risks associated with non delivery of the actions will be that the voice of young people will not be heard. As well as damaging the reputation of the Council and its partners, it means that young people will not see the improvements to the way the Youth Offer is delivered they have asked for. This could also result in vulnerable young people not fully accessing the services available to them.

Health and safety matters are to be considered through existing arrangements within the Council, schools and commissioned providers.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. There are no considerations from a Human Resources perspective.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. National research highlights that:

- Many young people are unable to understand the breadth of ultimate job opportunities across the economy leading them to potentially identify unrealistic career aspirations
- Young people particularly value information on jobs and careers if obtained in a real workplace and through contacts with working people
- Being NEET for six months or more between ages 16 and 18 is the single most powerful predictor of unemployment at age 21
- Teenage parents and their children are at increased risk of living in poverty and experiencing poorer outcomes across a range of factors

The variety of actions identified in the Youth Audit Action Plan will help to address the above issues and ensure that all young people in Central Bedfordshire receive appropriate levels of advice and support and are better able to succeed in adult life.

Public Health

7. As a result of the audit the provision of Sexual and Relationship Education (SRE) services will be commissioned differently to meet the health and wellbeing needs of young people.

Community Safety:

8. There are no direct implications for community safety.

Sustainability:

9. There are no implications for sustainability

Procurement:

10. There are no specific implications for procurement; though this will depend on the course of action decided upon to develop a young persons' website.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is asked to note and comment on progress against the Action Plan.

Background

11. The Positive for Youth Agenda, published late in 2011, combined all previous policies from nine government departments that focussed on young people. Two key elements of Positive for Youth were:
 - the requirement for local partnerships to publish a Youth Offer detailing all services available to young people; and
 - a much stronger emphasis on giving young people a voice in public policy and local services.
12. The Central Bedfordshire Youth Audit was the first in the country to examine the commissioned Youth Offer services, which are provided on behalf of and by Central Bedfordshire Council. In particular, the Youth Audit was asked to assess to what extent the Youth Offer translates from policy into practice.
13. A group of young people representing the local Youth Parliament, Young Inspectors and Youth Commissioners programmes were offered additional training and support to become Youth Auditors, as well as ongoing support from the British Youth Council.
14. The Youth Auditors met with senior Council officers including the Director of Children's Services and Chief Executive, elected members, commissioned providers, Council staff, partners and other young people. The Youth Audit report identified a total of 24 recommendations against nine key areas. These were presented to partners and representatives of the Children's Trust Board on 10th December 2013.
15. In response, a detailed action plan containing 43 separate actions was submitted to the Youth Audit on 31 March and progress was monitored at the Children's Trust Board on 13 May. A copy of the action plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
16. Central Bedfordshire Council is seen as a leader in the region in relation to Youth Engagement and other local authorities have asked us for copies of our work.

Progress

17. Progress against the actions has been assessed using a RAG rating where Green is on track/action completed, Amber is off track (the intended completion date may be missed) and Red means the completion date has passed. Progress is as follows:

- Green – 23 (62%)
- Amber – 5 (14%)
- Red – 9 (24%)

18. All of the actions rated as Red relate to two key themes:

- **IAG (Information, advice and guidance) minimum standards adopted in all middle and upper schools**
- **Developing a young persons website**

18.1 **IAG minimum standards** - Progress towards the development of minimum IAG standards for both Middle and Upper Schools was delayed due to the anticipation of new statutory guidance on IAG from the Department of Education and potential implications for the development and maintenance of minimum standards. This was not published until the end of April 2014.

18.1.1 There is commitment from partners who attend the NEET Strategy group to develop minimum IAG Standards with a working group to be convened in July. This group will support the implementation from the Autumn Term onwards and ensure appropriate links with all school support services. This work will be combined with the development of a coherent offer from local authority support for schools that would enhance IAG for Young People; including youth support, public health, employment and skills.

18.2 **Website development** – One of the general themes throughout the audit process was that whilst there were many opportunities for young people in Central Bedfordshire, in most cases there was a lack of promotion. The Youth Audit believed that young people would benefit from a youth-led, young persons website and social media.

18.2.1 The existing web presence for Youth Support Services in Central Bedfordshire has been identified as too corporate by young people and not engaging enough to meet their needs. It is disjointed, unfocussed and spread across multiple areas of the corporate site. The November 2013 'Website Inspection' carried out by young people found that; *'The Inspectors were disappointed that the home page of the Central Bedfordshire website does not include anything relevant to young people and does not have a clear message as far as young people are concerned. It was felt that the website was totally directed to adult services'*.

18.2.2 The challenge is to create something that appeals and engages young people whilst also effectively promoting youth service provision to partners. Following discussions with young people involved in the audit process, they have requested that a website and social media presence, designed with their needs in mind, be developed and maintained. Several options have been explored, including combining a site with those of other service teams and partner organisations. A business case has

been developed to establish a standalone website and social media presence for young people (aged 13-19) in Central Bedfordshire that:

- promotes the needs and interests of young people;
- provides an up-to-date picture of provision and services for young people; and
- provides a further opportunity for young people to be meaningfully engaged in influencing local service delivery.

Conclusion and Next Steps

19. The Youth Support Team will continue to work with schools, commissioned providers and internal teams to progress actions.
20. The Youth offer will be subject to a re-audit in the summer; dates to be confirmed.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Youth Audit Action Plan