

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 21 June 2012

Report of the Acting Director of Children's Services

Update on the Youth Service

Purpose of Report

1. To provide information about Dudley Youth Service, the service structure and key priorities for 2012-13 onwards.

Background

2. The teenage years are a period of change, a time of important decision making, exploring life choices and focused on the general concerns associated with growing up. Most young people will find the transition into adulthood relatively straightforward whilst others will be disadvantaged due to factors such as disability, economics and the home environment. However, due to the amount of change taking place it is possible that many other young people will become vulnerable and require support during this period of transition.
3. Youth work delivery supports young people's personal and social development. Through the provision of a range of activities including targeted support, signposting, strong social support networks that develop and strengthen resilience and access to safe and supportive environments to challenge and be challenged, young people are able to raise aspirations and to contribute to decision making amongst peers and the wider community. "Involvement in activities of this nature is having a significant impact on the confidence and self esteem of young people" Dudley Inspection of Safeguarding and looked after children January 2012.
4. Youth work is not bound by time limits and some young people will dip in and out influenced by immediate needs and interests. Others will maintain a long term relationship with the service often volunteering peer support and becoming senior members and part time staff. A total of 7772 young people, 29.97% of the borough's youth population, accessed some form of activity provided by the youth service in 2011-12.

5. During 2011/12 and 2012/13 the Youth Service reduced the budget through a combination of natural wastage, voluntary and compulsory redundancies and efficiency savings. Support to targeted groups of young people remained constant and provision to vulnerable groups was prioritised. Appendix 1 shows the current staff structure.
6. As the Operating Authority for Dudley's Duke of Edinburgh Award, the youth service implemented a more cost effective and efficient model of co ordination whilst still supporting the individual units to meet their responsibilities with regard to safety and assessment. Changes were achieved in discussion with the regional and local Award Association. There are currently 26 groups operating and over 1500 young people working on their awards.
7. Resource management transferred to Buildings and Estates IN 2011 and an agreement established to ensure that youth centres continue to benefit from a value for money maintenance programme.
8. During the same period a review of youth centres was undertaken. Consideration was given to condition, current usage and the capacity to further support the local youth work sector. The following centres are managed by the Directorate Youth Service with regular use by other youth and community organisations in order to promote universal youth work across the borough.
 - Lower Gornal Youth Centre
 - Sedgley Youth Centre
 - Coseley Youth Centre
 - Meadow Rd Youth Centre, Wrens Nest
 - Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre
 - 9 Locks Youth Centre, Brierley Hill
 - The Source, Wordsley
 - Kingswinford Youth Centre
 - Valley Rd Youth Centre, Lye
 - Halesowen Youth Centre
9. A borough wide survey of young people aged 13 to 19 years (25 with learning difficulties) was completed in 2011/12. The contributing stakeholders included West Midlands Police, Dudley Council for Voluntary Services, young people and NHS Dudley. An accessible survey was provided in order to ensure greater response from disabled young people and a total of 1,694 were returned. The questions asked young people to comment on 'places to go and things to do', 'making a positive contribution', 'education, employment, training and transport', 'health services and education' and 'staying safe'.

The results were analysed by Corporate Policy and Research and the finding disseminated to support strategic planning. It is proposed to repeat the survey in 2013/14.

Results can be found at www.dudley.gov.uk/education-and-learning/youth-service.

10. During 2011 a mapping exercise was also carried out across the five area committees in order to gain as full a picture as possible of the activities available to young people whether statutory, voluntary or private. The information in appendix 2 provides an overview of the data gathered which will assist the local authority to determine sufficiency and consider strategies to address identified gaps as it seeks to secure the local youth offer.
11. To support the above and build local voluntary capacity to provide universal youth activities, a Small Capacity Grant was made available in quarter four of 2011/12.
28 local groups received a grant of between £500.00 and £1,000.00 in order to maintain and/or extend the activities that they offered. In addition a further 80 young people's grant requests were funded by the Youth Opportunity Fund totalling £41,777.98 of positive activities. Youth Opportunity Fund panels have been meeting over the last three weeks in order to begin allocating grants for 2012-13
12. As the Service moves forward the priorities listed below will continue to support the development of 'teen' centres that act as a hub for a combination of targeted, open access, health and other support services for young people. Young people will continue to be actively involved in shaping the services delivered. In addition, the Service will continue to facilitate the capacity building of the voluntary youth sector in order that they are enabled to deliver the majority of universal provision.
 - 1) Work with vulnerable and targeted young people
 - 2) Active and suitably resourced youth centres contributing to local communities
 - 3) Young people actively involved in decision making, service design and quality assurance
 - 4) Young leaders- working with peers and the local community
 - 5) To secure a wide range of activities to improve young people's wellbeing.
 - 6) Local capacity building including the management of risk and workforce development opportunities.

Finance

13. The Youth Service is funded via local Authority base budget of £1,872,700 in 12/13.

Law

14. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council is empowered to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

15. Services are provided with regard to disadvantaged young people and all young people's needs. The work carried out promotes and ensures that young people are actively involved in shaping and improving services that are provide for them.

Recommendations

16. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to discuss the priorities that have been identified and provide comments to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.



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