

Cabinet Meeting – 31st October 2007

Joint Report of the Director of Adult, Community & Housing Services and Director of Childrens' Services

Respect in Dudley

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the National Respect Agenda in the Dudley context.
2. Agree the priority areas for Dudley and recommend a plan of action.

Background

3. National Government developed a Respect Action Plan, the key features of which were intended to develop cross agency/partnership working to "tackle anti-social behaviour and its causes head on". The Safe and Sound Dudley Community Safety Partnership was tasked with assessing the Agenda and how it could be incorporated into the Dudley setting.
4. Prior to the introduction of the Plan, Dudley was pro-active in its approach to tackling anti-social behaviour across the Borough. Some examples include the development of a wide CCTV network, the establishment of a successful mechanism obtaining anti-social behaviour orders, the introduction of Police Community Support Officers in local areas and a successful mediation service.
5. Key to the Government Agenda at the roll out of the Respect Action Plan was the formation of the Respect Task Force. A number of its officers had proven track records in successfully tackling anti-social behaviour. Part of its remit was to promote the Agenda itself and share best practice and initiatives that had had successful outcomes across the country. Members of the Task Force co-hosted a Respect Action Day in Dudley in January 2007 and those who attended were able to benefit from being able to discuss initiatives against the Dudley context. It was recognised that the National Agenda needed to be evaluated and scoped to fit the needs of Dudley. It was not considered necessary or indeed advisable to simply import initiatives that were tailored to other Boroughs' needs.
6. To drive the Agenda in Dudley, the Council's Corporate Board nominated Respect Champions, Linda Sanders, Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services, and John Freeman, Director of Childrens' Services. These two Directors through a Respect Steering Group have led the work of the multi-agency Respect Delivery Group including representatives from internal Directorates and external agencies such as West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Housing Associations.

7. The Respect Delivery Group initially undertook a mapping exercise to effectively measure the 'as is' position in Dudley when seen against the anticipated national outcomes. As a consequence of this work and understanding the needs of Dudley itself, the Steering Group was able to identify 5 distinct priority areas, together with lead officers these are:-

- Parenting – Christine Russell, Joint Planning Officer Childrens' Specialist Services, Directorate of Childrens' Services
- Substance Misuse – Richard Carter, Assistant Director Learning Disability & Mental Health, Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services
- Positive activities for young people within schools and colleges – Jane Porter, Assistant Director for Early Years, Youth and Education Services, Directorate of Childrens' Services
- Positive activities for young people outside of schools and colleges – Jane Porter
- Community Cohesion – Geoff Thomas, Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Directorate

8. These priorities are intended to reflect the needs of Dudley and the focus on innovative ways of encouraging people to make a positive change to their behaviour. To do this we need to focus on where good behaviour begins – in the family – and is reinforced – schools and our local communities. These are the environments where most of us learn and develop 'respect'.

9. The following is a brief summary relating to each priority.

A) PARENTING

The Respect Action plan places responsible parenting central to the creation of a strong society. Whilst it sees parenting as primarily the business of parents, it acknowledges that because poor parenting can damage the fabric of wider society there are times when intervention is required. To be effective there needs to be a two pronged approach of enforcement and support.

Why do we need to do something?

Information is available at both a national and local level, which identifies parenting as a concern. The Local Government User Satisfaction Survey (LGUSS), which informs the mandatory target within the Local Area Agreement, found that 66% of Dudley Residents felt that parents did not take responsibility for the behaviour of their children.

What are we currently doing?

Information obtained via the mapping exercise and gap analysis identifies a wide range of initiatives across the borough which works with parents. These initiatives target parents of children across a broad age spectrum from 0-18 years, and with diverse needs. They can be accessed through a variety of mechanisms including family and children centres, schools and colleges and specialist services.

What else do we need to do?

The respect action plan identified two primary areas for effective support with families:

- 'addressing poor parenting at the earliest opportunity'
- Targeting the small number of households who are responsible for a high proportion of anti-social behaviour.

Whilst there are a wide range of initiatives which offer all parents support, the vast majority of these appear to be via self referral. Furthermore, many of these self referral initiatives are there for parents of children with special needs. Only a limited number of initiatives appear to have the scope to offer more intensive, targeted programmes for those families who cause the most concern in relation to anti-social behaviour. In part this is to be addressed through the work of the Senior Parenting Practitioner who is government funded and tasked with helping up to 40 families across the Borough.

With the wide range of parenting initiatives across the borough there is a need for good communication and signposting, both within organisations and in the community. This has been acknowledged and is being addressed through the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Plan. As part of this plan an audit is being undertaken of services across the borough and a parenting strategy is being developed.

B) SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Drugs and alcohol is recognised as a contributory factor within the National Respect Action Plan. The Government have set mandatory targets within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) on reducing peoples concerns with drunk and rowdy behaviour in public places and reducing the perception of drug use and dealing. Also, in June this year a national Alcohol strategy was launched which highlighted the need to address the role that alcohol plays in anti-social behaviour. Again it advocates a two pronged approach of enforcement and advice within support.

Why do we need to something?

There is some evidence both locally and nationally, which demonstrate concerns around the misuse of alcohol and drugs. The LGUSS found that 50% of Dudley residents perceived drug use and dealing as a problem and 32% were concerned about drunk/rowdy behaviour in public places. Whilst both of these show marked improvements from the previous survey undertaken in 2003 (68% and 55% respectively) we do not believe that there is room to be complacent, particularly as this is still a concern raised through various public forums across the borough.

What are we currently doing?

Through a needs assessment exercise and the treatment planning cycle there is a range of treatment and other interventions commissioned for children, young people and adults who misuse substances. This provision cuts across the criminal justice and non-criminal justice client group.

There are a number of strategies and schemes across the borough which address these areas of concern, some of which are not only held up nationally as good practice, (e.g. Alcohol Arrest Referral Scheme and Zone Young People's Service) but also have a strong evidence base to demonstrate their success

What else do we need to do?

It is important that we do not lose sight of the good work that is undertaken across the Borough. This work addresses both the causes, through education and advice, as well as the symptoms through enforcement and counselling. However, there is still a real fear amongst some members of the public, particularly in certain neighbourhoods and town centres. It is therefore very important that we develop focused campaigns which target certain geographical areas and addresses the issues on a local basis. The Safer Stronger strategic assessment will play an important role in identifying where and what issues there are across the borough.

C) POSITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Activities for children and young people is seen as a key part of the national Respect action plan. It sees the provision of opportunities and support for young people as pivotal in the creation of a culture of respect, particularly for those vulnerable young people who for various reasons do not obtain these through their home environment.

Why do we need to something?

The LGUSS found that 64% of residents in the borough identified teenagers hanging around the streets as a concern. This compares to 65% in 2003. Furthermore the recent 'feeling the difference' survey cited the need for improving activities for teenagers as the top issue which needed to be addressed in Dudley (42%).

What are we currently doing?

Both the gap analysis and the mapping exercise identified a broad range of activities which are available across the borough. The gap analysis looked at the key actions recommended through the national action plan. Whilst activities could be identified across all recommended areas within the plan some were more developed than others. For example work in relation to community sport and cultural activities was well established and appears to be strategically managed. However whilst there were some peer mentoring schemes set up this was ad hoc and this is not currently seen as a strategic priority within the borough.

What else do we need to do?

The high level of concern around young people hanging around the streets places this as a priority area for work within the Respect agenda if we want to make an impact on perceptions of anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, despite all the work that has been introduced and undertaken over the past 5 years, there has been little impact on peoples' fears.

There is an opportunity to address commissioning of work within the development of the Children's Trust. Local information needs to be utilised so that 'visible' work can be undertaken in those areas where concerns are highest. The principle driver for this will be the Integrated and Targeted youth support plans which are currently being developed.

It would also be beneficial to look at good practice in addressing this issue by contacting a similar borough which has made an impact on this LGUSS indicator.

School Activity

This is another area of activity identified within the national Respect Action Plan. It features as there is recognition that poor behaviour in school and poor attendance is often linked to anti-social behaviour. The recommended actions within the Respect Programme are largely around enforcement and improving provision for those young people out of school. However, it acknowledges that for many of these young people the behaviour is often a symptom of deeper problems at home, which clearly links it into the 'parenting' agenda.

Why do we need to do something?

Whilst there is not a mandatory target within the Respect indicators within the LAA Dudley's Children and Young People Partnership have identified this as a priority and as such have a number of outcomes within the LAA which aim to improve school attendance. Pre-exclusion support is seen as an important element which can improve this.

What are we currently doing?

Dudley's Behavioural Improvement Programme is the principal vehicle for taking forward this part of the plan. Within this there are a wide range of initiatives which have been introduced or are being developed which will support the objectives within this section of the Respect programme.

D) COMMUNITY COHESION

The fifth priority area identified by the Steering Group is Community Cohesion. Whilst there is no direct reference to this within the National Respect Action Plan, there are links across the framework, particularly in the section on strengthening communities. Also there are currently two mandatory targets within the safer stronger element of the LAA which contribute to this agenda.

Why do we need to do something?

The question around community cohesion within the LGUSS refers to whether the respondents feel that people treat each other with respect. Of those who were questioned in the Dudley borough, 53% felt that people didn't treat other people with respect and consideration. However, as this was the first time this question featured in the LGUSS, it is not possible to assess whether this is an improvement. In an additional question on whether residents perceived that people were attacked because of the colour of their skin, ethnic origin or religion, improvement had been recorded with 11% perceiving this as a problem in 2006 compared to 31% in 2003. However, this figure should be viewed with caution as the sample size is too small to be representative.

What are we currently doing?

Within Dudley Borough there are a number of initiatives which are taking forward the Community Cohesion agenda. These include the commissioning of a regional pilot scheme, the Routes to Roots project in two schools; Neighbourhood work to engage young people on community cohesion issues in Wrens nest and the Greenlight initiative which is held up nationally as a model of good practice.

The Authority is currently working with the Dudley Community Partnership in a review of good practice on community integration and cohesion in order to develop a Community Cohesion Action Plan which will be linked to specific targets within the LAA. This will provide a vehicle upon which to take the Respect agenda forward.

10. It has been necessary to focus on Corporate priorities within the Agenda. It remains the case however that Directorates continue to work separately on other issues as identified in the Respect Action Plan. For example the Respect Standard for Housing Management which is specifically aimed at Social Landlords.

Finance

11. The Home Office has funded the post of the Senior Parenting Practitioner for 2007/08 amounting to £50k.
12. There is no direct funding linked to the Respect Agenda or Action Plan. Projects and initiatives have to be funded from existing budgets.

Law

13. The Respect Agenda and Action Plan built on the Governments drive to tackle anti-social behaviour. Although not legislation in its own right it promotes the use of existing powers such as those contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Equality Impact

14. "Respect is about Government, local agencies, local communities and ultimately every citizen working together to build a society in which we can respect on another – where anti-social behaviour is rare and tackled effectively, and communities can live in peace together" Respect website.
15. The outcome should impact on the more vulnerable in society and help Dudley become an even better place to live in.

Conclusion

16. The Gap Analysis has been completed, it is intended that the lead officers as identified in section 7 of the report formulate work plans and timescales for specific outcomes. They will involve partners and link to the relevant strategies or agreements, notably the LAA and the Strategic Assessment.

Recommendation

- 17. Cabinet notes the contents of this report.
- 18. Agree the priorities as identified in paragraph 9 and to ensure workplans as referred to in paragraph 16 are monitored via the appropriate Select Committee.
- 19. Cabinet receives an update in 12 months time to evaluate progress.



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Linda Sanders
Director of Adult Community & Housing Services



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John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officers: Diane Channings, Assistant Director (Housing Management)
Telephone: 01384 815063

Bridget Brickley, Deputy Director Dudley Community Partnership
Telephone: 01384 811634