

Select Committee on Lifelong Learning – 7 September 2005

Report of the Director of Children's Services

DfES Green Paper – 'Youth Matters'

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee about the Green Paper recently published by the DfES regarding services for young people.

Background

2. The DfES *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (July 2004)* announced a forthcoming Green Paper on Youth which would offer "*more young people more things to do and places to go*" in their communities, provide improved careers guidance and volunteering opportunities, and promote the integration of support for young people in greatest need. The strategy document also proposed that emerging Children's Trusts should co-ordinate the offer to young people.
3. 'Youth Matters' carries forward these proposals, filling in the details. The main addition is the piloting of the 'Opportunity Card', a mechanism to enable young people to access a range of activities and to receive discounts.
4. 'Youth Matters' develops the important themes of 'Every Child Matters' on which the Children Act 2004 is based. The central theme concerns the integration of children's services to meet the educational and social needs of children and young people, providing, where possible, a single point of contact for those in need, in parallel with a single line of accountability.
5. 'Youth Matters' confirms the central role of the local authority/children's trust in making services work for young people. The exact age range of young people is not defined but 'Youth Matters' focuses on the teenage years, with references to 11-15 for smoking and drug use, to under 18 for teenage pregnancy, and 'contributing' for 16-24 year olds.
6. The Director of Children's Services is the central point of accountability within the area covered by a local authority.

7. The Green Paper covers all services and facilities for young people outside the formal provision of education in schools and colleges, NHS acute and primary care (although some NHS services will be included in what is termed as 'direct support') and youth justice services. There is an expectation that the work of the Youth Offending Team on crime prevention will integrate closely with the new arrangements.

Empowerment

8. It is proposed to give teenagers *"real influence over the range and nature of services on offer locally, particularly those that provide positive activities for young people"* and some specific initiatives are aimed at putting this into effect:
- **Opportunity Cards**, allowing authorities, government and families to contribute to support take-up of locally-provided activities and providing concessions and discounts for wider range of activities (to work in synergy with the locally-developed Black Country Smart Card);
 - **Opportunity Funds**, a government-funded budget allocation to local authorities to be spent as determined by young people locally;
 - clarifying local authorities' duty to *"secure positive activities"* for young people. (It is not clear whether this will replace the Positive Activities programme currently managed through the Connexions Service);
 - a set of national standards for positive activities;
 - a *"local offer"* for young people, including details of local activities and use of the Opportunity Card, with linked sanctions and rewards;
 - £40 million capital funding (nationally) for youth facilities;
 - development of a network of local youth sport development managers;
 - further consideration of developing investment in summer activities; and
 - a clear role for young people in designing and evaluating services.

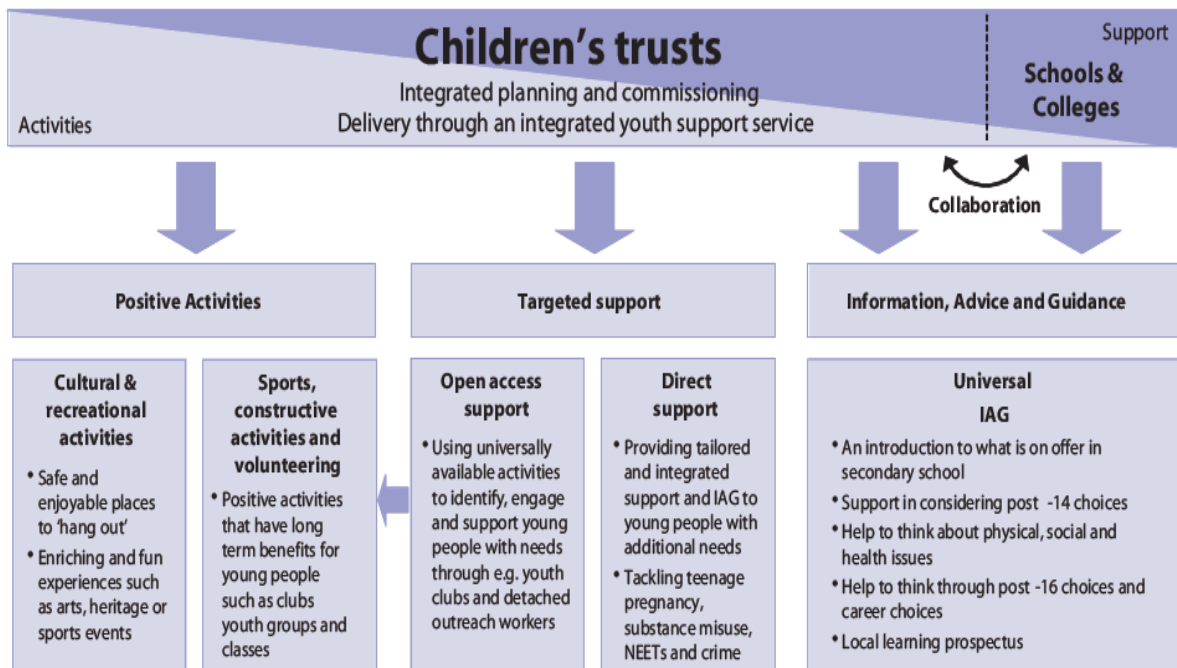
Making a contribution

9. The body responsible for implementing the Russell Commission on Volunteering will have the task of developing ways to achieve a step-change in volunteering, with the aim of developing *"a strong sense of rights and responsibilities"* and to

improve “mutual understanding between young people and the wider community”. There are proposals for expanding volunteering, and for exploring the way in which rewards could reinforce volunteering. (These developments will build on our already successful engagement programmes through the Millennium Volunteers programme and the Active Citizens in Schools pilot work.)

Proposed Management Arrangements

10. It is proposed that local authorities working through children’s trusts will take the strategic lead in delivering the Green Paper proposals. Arrangements are set out in the diagram below taken from the Green Paper. While children’s trusts are centre stage, it is proposed that individual schools and colleges will be able to opt out of a collectively-arranged careers advice. There is no proposal that existing funding for the youth service should be delegated to schools.



Mapping of Services to the New Arrangements

11. The following is an approximate mapping of current services to the proposed arrangements.

- Positive Activities

These include two sets of activities as follows:

- Cultural and recreational activities will cover services that are funded by local government but are not normally part of the traditional youth service, namely facilities in open spaces and parks, but not sports activities, youth music, youth theatre etc and youth focused library services.
- Sports, constructive activities and volunteering will include local authority leisure and sports facilities as well as activities provided by the traditional youth service such as youth clubs, volunteering activities and Duke of Edinburgh Awards.
- Targeted Support

There are two forms of targeted support as follows:

- Open access support will cover targeted youth service work provided through youth clubs, and outreach and detached work. This work is provided through the youth service and in partnership with the voluntary and community sector;
- Direct support will cover work targeted at vulnerable or at risk young people and in particular 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET):
 - Connexions Service personal advisers;
 - Youth Service;
 - Health Service (such as teenage pregnancy);
 - Drug Action Teams;
 - Youth Offending Teams.

It is proposed that young people receiving direct support will have a nominated lead professional.

- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

This covers the universal and targeted personal adviser work of the Connexions Service, formerly known as the careers service, and contracted to Connexions Prospects in the Black Country. Funding for local Connexions services will be devolved to the local authority/children's trust but where schools and colleges believe existing provision is poor they will be able to withdraw from collective arrangements for the provision of universal (not targeted) IAG services and make other arrangements. There

is a presumption that high-performing Connexions Services will be preserved. There is a stated intention to preserve the Connexions 'brand'.

12. The local authority/children's trust will be responsible for targeted IAG work, particularly for re-engaging 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
13. In addition, the DfES wishes to explore the development of a '*personal health MOT*' for 12-13 year olds and improvements in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for children who are too old to use child services but too young for adult services. Work on involving parents in the lives of adolescents and developing the parenting skills of young people is also described. The DfES is considering statutory powers to secure engagement in parenting support or skills training programmes or interventions.

Opportunity Cards and Funds

14. In addition, the Government intends to ask a small number of local authorities to pilot the Opportunity Card, building on the experience of the Connexions Card, with a view to setting up a national scheme across the country. It is proposed that the Opportunity Cards would be 'topped-up' (that is, be allocated funding) by young people, parents and local authorities. The Government would provide a subsidy to top-up cards of disadvantaged 13 –16 year olds which could be withheld if their behaviour was judged to be unacceptable. The Green Paper does not acknowledge that many local authorities already have such cards for access to library and sports services).
15. An Opportunity Fund of up to £30,000 per year will be established in each local authority to be spent on projects which young people want.

Local Authority Youth Work

16. The state of local authority youth services is described in the OFSTED report *Effective Youth Services* (July 2005). Although OFSTED found some good or very good practice in six of the 31 inspections, around a quarter of the services were judged to be inadequate. The high expectations in the Green Paper about improving the range and quality of youth services and opportunities provision will therefore present a challenge to some local authorities. The Green Paper proposes to "*legislate to clarify local authorities' duty to secure positive activities for young people, as both commissioners and providers*". Local authority youth work is found in both "positive activities" and "targeted support".

17. The existing statutory basis for local authority youth work is found in section 508 of the Education Act 1996. The 'Youth Matters' proposes to codify and formalise this to include:
- access to two hours per week of sporting activity;
 - access to two hours per week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups and classes;
 - opportunities to make a positive contribution through volunteering;
 - a wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences and more safe and enjoyable places in which to spend time.
18. Some of these activities go well beyond most local authority youth services. In recent years the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda has steered away from recreational activities towards outcome-based personal, social and educational activities often directed to improving participation in education, training and employment of the hardest to reach young people. Clearly there will have to be much discussion over management responsibility for these services which have been funded outside the traditional youth service if there is to be a single point of commissioning and contracting. Developing a budgeting and reporting framework which enables all local authority expenditure on these activities to be reported in one place would be a major step.
19. The Government's objective is for local authorities/children's trusts (the terms are often used interchangeably in the Green Paper) to develop these services into a "Youth Local Offer". (Again, this is something which many local authorities already have in place.) This appears to be in addition to the Prospectus of 14-19 provision proposed in the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper.

Accountability Framework

20. The reformed youth service will form part of the revised accountability framework within Annual Performance Assessments and Joint Area Reviews of Children's Services.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

21. The Green Paper recognises that many services for young people are funded publicly but provided by the voluntary and community sector. Local authorities, through children's trusts, are asked to invest in building the capacity of voluntary and community organisations as part of their overall strategy for shaping and developing the 'market' for young people's services.

Workforce Issues

22. The Green Paper acknowledges that the proposals would have implications for the workforce as the responsibility for Connexions work moves to local authorities; however the Green Paper states that this is unlikely to result in immediate changes to individuals' work or conditions. Changes would also arise as roles and practices develop due to more integrated working generally. It is suggested that local authorities and their partners would need to help staff make these transitions. A reinvigorated role is envisaged for youth workers. Personal advisers would also have an important role in integrated support services, youth services or targeted support programs.

Engagement

23. The Green Paper makes powerful proposals for involving young people in making a real contribution to the planning and delivery of the services that they receive. (Dudley Council has already adopted the 'Hear by Right' standards developed by the National Youth Agency and the Local Government Association and a paper will shortly be going to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to encourage other partners to adopt the same standards.)
24. We will be engaging with young people to encourage them to respond to the consultation questionnaire prepared by the DfES for young people and we will use these responses to inform future further developments.

The Connexions Service

25. While there is some lack of clarity about the way Connexions Services would work in the future, it is clear that the intention is to transfer progressively responsibility for securing universal information, advice and guidance services for young people from the current Connexions Partnerships to local authorities, working through children's trusts, schools and colleges. Arrangements would differ depending on local circumstances but high-performing Connexions Services are expected to be preserved. This transfer will start in 2006 and be completed by April 2008. However, it is less clear how other aspects of Connexions Partnerships work will be covered, for example their work on providing information on the education, training and employment of young people after leaving school and relationships with employers. It is possible that some of the Connexions work could be absorbed into the coterminous local Learning and Skills Councils, and clearly there is a task to be done in support of the "prospectus of options" for 14-19 education and training provision which the Local Authority and local LSC are charged with producing (see pages 83/84 of

the DfES White Paper, *14-19 Education and Skills*, (2005). There is also a link between the Connexions Database and the developing accountability arrangements for schools whereby 11-16 institutions will be responsible for the future progression and success after young people have left compulsory education.

The basis of youth work

26. The commitment to reform and clarify the statutory authority on which youth work and provision for recreation is based is welcome, but this will have significant implications for the management and commissioning of youth services provision. The activities outlined in the Green Paper go beyond the boundaries of the local authority youth work services as envisaged in the *Transforming Youth Work* initiative. Developing a budgeting and reporting framework which enables all local authority expenditure on these activities to be reported in one place would create greater transparency.
27. Overall the Green Paper represents an important opportunity for Dudley to demonstrate its local leadership and ability to secure excellent services for young people. Clearly there are issues which will need to be tested during the consultation period including the relationship between children's trusts holding the commissioning and contracting role as well as a quality assurance role, and the local authority which is still likely to be the provider of many of the services described in the Green Paper.

Finance

28. An Opportunity Fund will be established in each local authority to be spent on projects which young people want and young people will be at the forefront of making these decisions regarding allocation and use.
29. In addition the DfES will be providing a £40 million capital over two years from April 2006 to upgrade existing youth service facilities. As this equates to an average allocation of £260,000 per local authority, additional funding will need to be found for any real impact.
30. The Green Paper also states that the proposals will be funded from within available resources during the 2004 spending review. Within this context, specific resources will be made available and this combined with more effective use of existing resources would mean that there would not be a pressure on council tax.

31. Specific grant funding will be rationalised and moved into the Local Authority Formula Spending Shares or into the unallocated grant, using Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

Law

32. The consultation on the Green Paper closes on 4 November 2005. There are as yet no indications on whether or how these proposals will be enshrined in new legislation. However 'Youth Matters' does follow the themes set out in 'Every Child Matters' which have been given statutory force by the Children Act 2004.

Equality Impact

33. The Green Paper sets out a framework for both a personal entitlement and targeted support for young people who are vulnerable or at risk.

Recommendation

34. It is recommended that:

- the Committee considers the report.
- forms a working group to consider and to prepare the local authority response to the consultation document.
- the working group support the development of the strategic direction for services to young people.



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List of Background Papers

The Green Paper – Youth Matters, (July 2005)

DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (July 2004)

Green Paper – Every Child Matters (September 2003)

Children Act 2004

Effective Youth Services (July 2005)

Hear by Right Standards (2005)

White Paper - 14-19 Education and Skills (2005)