

Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services – 12th March 2009

Report of the Interim Chief Executive

Initiatives with Young People to tackle Anti-Social behaviour

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the Select Committee of the various initiatives, over and above normal mainstream service provision, that are currently being undertaken with young people by Dudley MBC and by its partner agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour.
2. To outline national policy recent developments regarding young people and anti-social behaviour.

Background

Recent National Developments

3. In October 2007, the Youth Taskforce was created from the Respect Task Force (previously within the Home Office) and the Targeted Youth Support Team (in the DCSF). The Youth Taskforce was presented as a natural progression from the work of the Respect programme; reflecting the Government's drive to prevent problems at an early stage and to tackle the root causes of anti-social behaviour. Focused on improving opportunities for young people to "give and get respect in their communities", the Youth Taskforce aims to drive improvements in delivery for young people.
4. It is now generally recognised that the vast majority of young people behave well and make a positive contribution to society - anti-social behaviour is often committed by adults, and in fact young people are more likely to be the victims of it. It is also generally recognised that engagement in structured activities can have a real impact in supporting and reinforcing young people's resilience to becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. This in turn can enhance their social and emotional skills as well as improving their chances of positive outcomes in later life.
5. One national initiative is the Youth Opportunity and Capital Fund. These provide discrete revenue and capital budgets for young people to control and with which to decide how money should be spent on positive activities and youth facilities in their area. Such funded activities must support the five Every Child Matters outcomes, benefit the local community and offer good value for money.
6. "Aiming High for Young People" is the Governmental ten-year strategy for young people, published in July 2007, and which sets out the Government's plans to help all young people -particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds- to take part

in enjoyable and purposeful activities in their free time. Developed in response to new evidence that participation can help the development of social and emotional skills, and to address a recognised demand from young people for greater access to activities, the strategy makes 55 commitments focusing on increasing young people's participation in positive leisure-time activities.

7. In July 2008, the Government published its Youth Crime Action Plan, designed to approach this issue from a number of different perspectives. Better and earlier prevention is presented as a prominent aspect to its "triple track" approach to reducing youth crime.

Local Developments

8. Within Dudley, the highest area of public concern about anti-social behaviour is over young people "hanging around". This was borne out in previous LGUSS findings in Dudley (65% of respondents in 2003, and 64% in 2006 seeing this as a serious or very serious concern) In some areas, this reflects entrenched anti-social behaviour problems; in others, it can also sometimes reflect negative attitudes towards young people.
9. Work with young people in Dudley is undertaken by a variety of agencies. The main agency involved in structured programmes with young people is DMBC Youth Service. Its business is chiefly divided between its Universal programme (typically carried out by full-time and part-time youth centres and neighbourhood detached youth work projects) and its Targeted provision. These have just recently been the subject of a Consultation process with stakeholders. In terms of its Targeted Provision, the preventing of young people from offending and re-offending is one of its strands of activity.
10. This report will however concentrate on actions that are either undertaken in partnership between different agencies, or else on activities that go beyond the normal every-day functions expected from each agency.
11. One of the key initiatives in Dudley is Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP). PAYP is a national Government programme for young people aged 8-19. It offers arts, sports, cultural and educational activities for young people at risk of social exclusion, crime or anti-social behaviour. In the Black Country PAYP is run by Connexions in conjunction with other local organisations. There are two elements to the PAYP; its Intensive programme, and its Area-Based programme. Individuals are referred by agencies such as the Youth Offending Service, schools, Community Renewal, and the Police. Though each individual has a programme tailored to individuals' needs, popular activities are art, boxing (increasingly very popular with young women) and motor mechanics at the Cradley Wheels project.
12. The PAYP Area based programme has focussed entirely on three key hot-spot areas during 2008 / 2009; Lower Gornal, Wollescote, and Gammage Street, Dudley. Each of these areas received £20,602 to spent upon positive activities for young people that would achieve a significant reduction in anti-social behaviour. The programme varies between each area, but activities and events have included regular deployment of a Cyberbus, residential, half term programmes, music and DJ based workshops, and an extensive fitness programme using Wii technology at a nearby Leisure Centre. The Wollescote programme has been running the

longest, and is showing a dramatic reduction in incidents reported to the Police involving young people.

13. The Youth Offending Service are becoming increasingly involved in preventative work with young people. A youth worker is now seconded to the YOS. Her role is two-fold:
 - To enable young people on community orders to engage more positively in constructive activities;
 - To reduce the risk of non-offending peers from being drawn into the criminal justice system and from committing acts of anti-social behaviour.
14. The work will be supported by ten Youth Workers employed on a sessional basis (the combined total of which is the equivalent of a full-time post), essentially two per township. The Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP) played a significant role in addressing risk factors early and preventing the escalation of anti-social behaviour. The programme is in transition, following a hand-over from Action for Children (formerly National Children's Homes) to the Dudley Youth Offending Service. Once these arrangements are completed, and a restructure implemented, young people identified early as being at risk of offending will be engaged with a range of preventative programmes specifically geared towards addressing behaviour. The YOS also hosts the "Circles" Project, which fully uses restorative justice tenets and techniques to resolve low-level disputes amongst young people in school and care settings.
15. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are increasingly linked to efforts to positively engage young people in more worthwhile activities. Although they have been used in the borough for several years, their take-up has increased at an accelerating rate over the last year. A procedure has now been developed in order to ensure an effective and coordinated approach across all agencies and neighbourhoods / townships. There are at present 10 'live' ABC's within the borough (8 of these are young people) with another 10 are currently going through the consultation process, (again, 8 of these are young people). The recent upsurge in their use has been combined with simultaneous efforts to link the individuals to existing youth programmes and family support, particularly involving the Integrated Youth Support Team.
16. Neighbourhood agreements can be used as a mediation tool to resolve neighbourhood tensions caused by low level Anti-Social Behaviour in a localised area, usually involving allegations against residents of that area and / or people visiting residents of that area.
17. Neighbourhood agreements are particularly useful where children and young people are involved in the ASB and in cases where the significant issue is the perception of possible or actual ASB, and where low tolerance of young people appears to be a possible factor. This is a relatively new ASB prevention tool in Dudley (though successfully trialled in Woodsetton and in Wordsley). A common procedure has been developed with partner agencies that will ensure a joined up approach.
18. The Police too have increasingly become involved in supporting and, in some cases, being directly involved in the preventative agenda. Reprimand clinics (featuring in previous reports to Community Safety Select Committee- see *20 May 2008*) are now commonplace across the borough, recalling every young person to a subsequent meeting at a local police station two weeks after the administering of

a formal Reprimand. As well as brokering involvement in constructive activity, the police are directly involved in organising a “Twilight” football league on the Priory Estate on Friday evenings. This remains popular amongst many local young people (between 30 and 40 youths regularly participate) and augments the programme run locally by Wolverhampton Wanderers FC. Through the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) work is delivered within local primary and secondary schools (a specified two hour slot has been utilised within Priory Primary / Wrens Nest/ Foxyards / and Milking Bank Primaries, as well as Castle High, plus Bishop Milner school on a more ad hoc basis. 8 youths from the local area are jointly funded by Police to take part in a horse riding project to interact with community officers. With the work of local PCSOs with the young people on pro-social behaviour and solution focussed approaches to problems, combined with collaboration with locally based youth workers, these efforts have had a palpable impact in significantly reducing anti-social behaviour without any discernible displacement effect.

19. Elsewhere, Sedgley Police Station hosts “Team Challenge”, an initiative organised through the Prince’s Trust and which has successfully engaged groups of older young people in adopting a fresh approach to their lives, eschewing situations which place them at further risk of ASB and offending in favour of a more mature, socially skilled and practical approach to everyday life. This is recognised regionally as a model of excellent practice.
20. “Coffee in the Dark” is the delivery of mobile outreach provision to identified young people, centring- as the name might suggest- around the provision of hot refreshments. The venue is an identified public space (usually a park) in an area where there are concerns of a large number of young people engaging in anti-social behaviour and potential violent / criminal activities, often relating to peer group pressure and alcohol and drug use. This has been particularly well trialled across the south of the borough. It has been pre-dominantly the work of the Police and PCSOs, with strong support from Barnardo’s, though in some areas e.g. the successful Huntingtree Park programme, the Youth Service has had a significant input. In some areas, it has also been closely aligned to the development of the “Youth4EM” youth group. The value and potential of this initiative has been recognised by a number of organisations, as has the issue of the Police having to carry a disproportionate burden of the work. A multi-agency steering group has recently been meeting in order to ensure a coordinated borough wide approach, with delivery of the programme being undertaken by a combination of agencies, depending upon the identified issues.
21. Dudley Lifeskills Partnership is an initiative coordinated by Barnardos, though also involving the Police, various schools, Connexions, Fire Service and Community Safety. The project has been running for several years, each year focusing in different areas of the borough and is funded by various streams such as Connexions and the West Midlands Police Building blocks fund.
22. The Lifeskills project is a lifelong learning and crime prevention initiative, providing young people from 13 – 19 years old, living in Dudley, opportunities to gain relevant knowledge and life skills which will encourage independent living and active citizenship. The 2007/ 08 programme delivered over 100 themed workshops to over 2000 young people in both school and community settings. Workshops are often predominately run with young people from areas that display high levels of ASB and low-level crime (such as criminal damage). It operated in targeted

residential areas that included Lye, Cradley and Brierley Hill. The 2008/09 programmes have yet to finish.

23. The Fire Service has a long history locally of involvement in positive youth activities. The F.I.R.E Programme engages young people aged 12 - 18 years who are referred from the Youth Offending Service, Pupil Referral Units as well as young people who are at risk or who are on verge of offending. The Fire Service also delivers Youth Fire Safety Courses to Looked after children, as well as those leaving care. It also works with young people not in employment, education or training, and provides judicial crime awareness workshops are delivered at Dudley College, along with Fire Safety Tutoring. The Fire Service has extensive involvement in schools based initiatives such as "Survive Alive" and "Safety Town"
24. An important development is that of inter-generational work projects. An Intergenerational Themed Action Group meets as part of the older people's strategy. Members of the youth council are active members of this group. The aims of the Themed Action Group are to: encourage two-way respect; reduce perceived barriers between older and younger people; increase awareness of mutual support; recognise commonalities rather than differences; strengthen communities and community cohesion. The objective of the Themed Action Group is to assure that opportunities are in place to enable younger and older people to gain a greater degree of understanding about each other. The group are presently mapping out the range of activities and projects that are already underway in the Borough. They are also in the process of putting together a promotional campaign that will highlight the above aims and objectives.
25. There is currently one Youth PACT running within the borough (St Andrews Ward). A pilot project will however be taking place in the next financial year that will involve providing training for community volunteers in order to properly enable them to support young people within their neighbourhoods and form their own Youth PACT. It is envisaged that these Youth PACTs will run in a similar way to the current St Andrews PACT, whereupon young people meet up and decide on issues that are important to them and then present these issues (along with showcasing their own efforts to address these problems) to their local PACT meeting. This should have the effect of both increasing positive perceptions of the local young people and of enabling young people's views on community safety and other issues to be heard.
26. Attention also needs to be drawn to the efforts of the voluntary sector and, in particular, the faith sector in providing informal yet structured activities for local youngsters. Many such organisations engage very effectively with large numbers of young people, often from disadvantaged areas, and often at peak times such as Friday evenings. Champions Church at Netherton, Chawn Hill Centre at Stourbridge, Amblecote Christian Centre and the Phase Trust at Halesowen are amongst many successful examples from the sector. There is scope for future effective collaboration with these groups without compromising their independence.
27. Effectively engaging with young people and developing relevant diversionary activities is a key component for any local strategy aimed at reducing ASB. As such, it is an area of considerable potential where the crime reduction and the children's agendas overlap. It is one area where common ground between the CDRP and the Children's Trust can be productively developed.

Finance

28. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

Law

29. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act places a statutory duty on the local authority to work with partner agencies, and to do all it reasonably can to reduce crime and disorder within its jurisdiction. The 2006 Police and Justice Act amended this to also include the reduction of anti-social behaviour as a statutory responsibility.

Equality Impact

30. This report is in accordance with the council's equality and diversity policy.

Recommendation

31. It is recommended that the committee note the information contained in this report.

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