

SOUTH AREA COMMITTEE

7th January, 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

IMPACT OF 'THE YOUTH WORK COMMISSIONING STRATEGY'

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The restructure of the Youth Development Group was implemented in August 2004, which facilitated a shift from a delivery model to a commissioning model of youth services that retained strategic and corporate responsibilities in the control of the Sunderland City Council.
- 1.2 The restructure was informed by the emerging national policies through the Every Child Matters agenda that provided the commissioning challenge. This provided the opportunity to strengthen working arrangements with Voluntary Sector partners and to release increased resources to frontline delivery.
- 1.3 With the restructure key functions were retained, enhanced or introduced by Sunderland City Council through the Youth Development Group that ensures accountability, development and support covering quality assurance, training and accreditation, partnership development, and youth participation.
- 1.4 Sunderland Youth Service was inspected by Ofsted in September 2004. The subsequent recommendations provided the focus for an action plan containing 6 key actions and 44 milestones designed to continue to strength youth work in Sunderland. External monitoring of the plan was undertaken by Government Office North East and the plan was signed off by them in March 2006. As part of the annual planning and review process for the Youth Service, some of the key actions contained within the action plan continue to influence the shape and design of service delivery. This is reflected within the Youth Development Operational Plan 2007-2010.
- 1.5 Sunderland Youth Development Group Commissioning Strategy and the new model of good practice for youth work were implemented April 2005. It aims to provide a firm foundation that will set the delivery of youth work in all its forms through direct and contracted delivery within a strategic framework promoting quality assurance, partnership working (commissioning and brokerage) and excellent youth work standards and a high level of achievement and outcomes for young people. At the same time, ensure corporate responsibilities and leadership are maintained and developed.
- 1.6 The new approach is a three-part model ensuring the delivery of innovative and creative youth work across the City. Provision of frontline generic youth work meeting identified needs of young people aged 13 to 19 years is supported, underpinned and driven by a small, efficient and effective team:
 - Quality Assurance, Commissioning and Brokerage
 - Training, Accreditation and Awards
 - Participation and Democracy

- 1.7 There are fourteen different contracts held by twelve different youth projects. The delivery of youth work in Sunderland has been segregated into twelve geographical contract areas and two citywide contracts. The geographical areas are set around Wards which give manageable areas of delivery in response to the Resourcing Excellent Youth Services objectives. The amount for each contract is calculated on the demographic spread of 13–19 year old young people in each area. There is an additional weighting towards those areas that fall into the top 5% of deprivation as shown on the English Indices of Deprivation 2004. There are two citywide contracts responding to youth work around BME work, and Health and Sport.
- 1.8 In order to ensure that standards of youth work in the City are monitored and consistently improved the Quality Assurance Team has a comprehensive and robust quality assurance framework. Within this are Quality Standards in line with Joint Area Review criteria for youth services to ensure all contracted providers of youth work achieve national and local benchmarks for all aspects of youth services. Contracts are monitored through Inspection Visits, Six Month and Annual Reviews, process which also involves young people through the Young Persons' Inspection Team. Outcomes from this inspection process are fed back to Youth Development Group Management Team, The Director of Children's Services and Contractors.
- 1.9 A map of contracted areas throughout the City is located in Appendix 1.

2.0 PERFORMANCE

- 2.1 The 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' agenda lays down the expected standards of youth work to be achieved by Local Authorities across the country. Within these standards are a set of key performance indicators relating to outcomes for young people. These include Contact, Participation, Record Outcomes and Accredited Outcomes. On an annual basis figures are produced for Government through the National Youth Agency and for Best Value. These results are published nationally. For the service, we use these indicators to monitor progress of the commissioning contracts.
- 2.2 Citywide Key Performance Indicators have been exceeded every year. As illustrated in the table below detailing the key indicators for 2006/07.

Youth Development Group Targets			
	Target	Actual	Actual
Contacts	6800	9488	140%
Participation	4080	5584	137%
Recorded Outcomes	2448	2803	115%
Accredited Outcomes	1224	1285	105%

- 2.3 In Comparison with other local authorities for the year 2005/06 we were Ranked 5th out of 138 in delivering Accredited Outcomes. In other categories we were 7th in Contact, 58th in Participation and 33rd in Recorded Outcomes. So there is still improvement to be made.

3.0 GENERAL REVIEW FEEDBACK

3.1 Through the inspection and review process carried out by the Youth Development Group's Quality Assurance Team and the Young Persons' Inspection Team the following are some key features across the City:

- There are a number of new projects that continue to develop and other funding accessed to support youth work in the city.
- Partnership arrangements and links with other agencies enable further opportunities and experiences for young people. The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund is well used.
- The standard of young people's achievement and the quality of youth work practice within the contracted areas ranges from adequate to very good within the provision available and continues to improve.
- The quality assurance process has improved over the last two years. Resourcing Excellent Youth Service targets continue to improve also as a result of this.

3.2 The Young Persons' Inspection Team, who are young people trained in carrying out inspections of youth projects, undertake a questionnaire with young people accessing youth projects and the 18 month period to 31.03.07 190 young people from 32 youth projects were asked a series of satisfaction based questions. 98.4% thought the youth premises were warm, safe and easy to get to, 90.5% are asked about what they would like to do at the youth project, 86.2% feel that they learn new skills and knowledge through activities they engage with, 92.1% feel that they can have a good chat with the youth workers and 95.2% feel that they are treated fairly by their youth workers, 92.6% are happy with the days and times of youth work sessions, and 87.8% stated that by going to their youth club and doing activities their confidence had increased and are developing as a person.

4.0 AREA SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

4.1 In terms of specific feedback in relation to work carried out through the contracted providers in the East area of Sunderland the following are some key features:

4.1.1 Workers generally have a good rapport and supportive relationships with young people and are regularly involved in discussions about a wide range of issues. The staff at the Box Youth Project have developed trusting relationships with young people who attend allowing them to be open to discuss issues, have the ability to challenge effectively and develop work around a range of issues. Through Inspection it was noted young people felt at ease to ask for information, engage in conversation and receive appropriate information.

4.1.2 Youth provision offers a wide variety of opportunities through programmes, activities, projects and access to accreditation. The Box Youth Project offer a number of opportunities for young people to gain skills, knowledge and understanding. This is done in two distinct methods. Firstly through sessions such as the Connect group and school inclusion groups. These structured and well planned sessions work towards set determined targets, detail well the outcomes to achieve and progress young people towards accreditation routes such as ASDAN.

Secondly, in the generic sessions young people are given opportunities to explore skills and information in a more informal setting. These sessions take the forms of generic drop-ins which evolve around issue based work sessions, informal discussions and more structured elements such as keyfund. In other sessions such as young mums, innovative programmes are offered giving opportunities for aspiration raising and developing new skills.

- 4.1.3 The Box are situated within their contract area at the (previously known) Hall Farm Annexe and the staff team encourage attendance from all areas of South Sunderland as well as developing work with local schools and community groups. The move resolved a number of issues essentially over own space and ownership and this has led to the project being able to start to build its own identity and create a space which is fitting with their own agenda. The creation of dedicated spaces for workers, group work and IT suite has increased participation in both structured and generic groups. On-going projects with local partnerships in the garden has developed further learning opportunities for young people. Young People have had say over the design of the centre and the programme. They have contributed financially through successful keyfund and Youth Opportunity Fund bids giving greater opportunities within sessions and expanding the overall programme. Overall there is a definite feeling of ownership at the centre and this is reflected in the treatment of the building.

5.0 CONTRACTORS CONTRIBUTION

- 5.1 A representative from one of the contracted youth projects will be invited to the South Area Committee meeting to contribute to the presentation to Members alongside representatives from the Youth Development Group Quality Assurance Team on the impact of the Commissioning Strategy.

6.0 JOINT AREA REVIEW

- 6.1 The report of the Joint Area Review of Children's Services in Sunderland highlighted the strengths of youth work in Sunderland and the major contribution this work makes in achieving better outcomes for young people. The following points have been extracted from the Joint Area Review Report this:
- 6.1.1 The attention given to ensuring that children and young people are consulted about key developments in services, participate in the delivery of services and are engaged in decisions that affect their lives is outstanding. It is routine and systematic in many services.
- 6.1.2 The range of consultative forums is impressive. Help, advice and information is accessible to almost all children and young people.
- 6.1.3 A higher than average proportion of children and young people initiate or are involved in voluntary and community activities through the youth service.

- 6.1.4 Youth workers establish strong, productive relationships with young people that enable young people to develop high levels of motivation and achieve well through a broad range of voluntary activities.
- 6.1.5 Schools, the youth service and Connexions provide good access to a wide variety of support.
- 6.1.6 Children and young people have been highly successful in bringing about many improvements to services including projects sponsored by the Youth Matters Team. These have led directly to improvements in local facilities for young people for example through the construction of a sensory park.
- 6.1.7 The council has made significant investment in children and young people's projects across the city. The city has some excellent facilities for young people including the highly successful and well used Lambton Fellowship and Pennywell centre which both provide a range of youth services and activities.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Youth Development Group has commissioned an external consultant to review the impact of the Commissioning of Youth Work Strategy for the first two years of three years of delivery. The aims of the evaluation are to:
- To identify the advantages of the commissioning strategy.
 - To identify what improvements would strengthen the Commissioning Strategy.
 - To highlight recommendations to develop the Commissioning Strategy to respond to the Integrated Youth Offer agenda.
 - To highlight recommendations to develop the Commissioning Strategy in relation to the next tendering process.
- 7.2 The review will be carried out by Sharon Evans who was previously the Youth Work Consultant with the Government Office North East. The final report is due to be completed by November 30th 2007.
- 7.3 Kath Butchert has been seconded to develop the Integrated Youth Offer and officers from the Youth Development Group are actively engaged in the development of the Integrated Youth Offer through membership of the Integrated Youth Board and the various working groups that have been established to respond to the integrated services agenda as set out in the Government document Youth Matters: Next Steps.

Date of this draft:	13.09.07	Draft No.
Author:	Karen Lightfoot/Billy Hall	
Status of Document:	Final	
ECM Outcome Link:	Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing	
Date of review:		

APPENDIX 1

