

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd April 2010

REPORT ON THE PHOENIX PROJECT

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive a presentation by John Ord, Watch Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service on the Phoenix project in Sunderland.
- 1.2 The presentation will provide Members with an understanding of the programme and the impact it has on young people who participate. Members will also hear a young person talk about their experiences on the project, as well as having the opportunity to ask questions.
- 1.3 The work of the Committee in delivering its work programme, will support the Council in achieving its Strategic Priority of Learning City.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 14th January 2010, the Scrutiny Committee proposed inviting a representative from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service to attend the meeting to provide a brief presentation on the Phoenix programme.
- 2.2 The Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee has within its remit the overview of the Children and Young People's Plan, which includes the five Every Child Matters priorities of Being Healthy; Staying Safe; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Well-Being.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The Phoenix project was originally designed to address specific offending issues related to fire setting and associated anti-social behaviour. Since its implementation the project has captured the attention of young people, has been recognised through various awards, and praised by the media.
- 3.2 The project offers young people an intensive fire fighters course, providing work experience and education in the consequences of fire incidents/malicious fire setting. It provides first hand experience of working as part of a team and tasks include training to extinguish a fire using a hose reel, search techniques and hose running. The course

ends with a passing out parade to which parents are invited, where the young people are presented with several certificates of completion.

- 3.3 Courses have been targeted at specific groups including a course specifically for girls; children looked after by the Local Authority; and for parents who have expressed an interest in learning more about educating their children in fire safety.
- 3.4 The appeal of the project has enabled engagement with some of the most disaffected young people in the City and the project has high attendance rates. There is significant evidence that the project results in increased self-esteem, promotes positive attitudes to education, training and employment and reduces re-offending. Remarkable attitudinal and self-perception changes have been identified through the use of pre and post course testing of those involved with young people.
- 3.5 The Phoenix project has been evaluated by two separate academic studies, one of which found that of 58 young people attending the Phoenix project:
 - 50 participants (86%) showed a substantial decrease in the seriousness of their offending.
 - The number of offences committed after completing the course decreased by 70%.
 - Almost half (48%) of the young people who completed the course desisted from offending altogether in the year following their attendance.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The presentation will provide members with an overview of the Phoenix programme and its impact on young people.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members consider and comment on the presentation made by the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

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