

ANNEX A

POTENTIAL MERGER OF THE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Staff and TUS Consultation Paper

Outline

1. This paper explains briefly the reasons why we want to recommend to the Council's Executive that the Youth Offending Team and Young People's Services be brought together under a single Head of Service.
2. Staff will already be aware this possibility as it has been discussed informally for some time. It was also mentioned in Pete Dwyer's paper on the overall restructuring of the Adults, Children and Education Directorate. This paper represents a more formal opportunity for consultation on the principle of a merger, ahead of the Executive's discussion on 6 July. It will also enable the Trade Union Side (TUS) to canvass their Members' views and convey these to the Executive.
3. The paper is necessarily short on detail, in particular on the structures below the Head of a combined YOT/YPS Service. These issues will need much further debate over the course of the coming months, and there will be further opportunities for consultation on them. We want to proceed initially by creating a combined Head of Service position, and inviting the individual who is appointed to fill this role to work with us on developing the more detailed proposals. In other words, the processes will proceed sequentially, in a similar manner to the Council's overall restructuring.
4. Some might argue that we should wait until these details are clearer before initiating consultation. However, as the TUS have pointed out, the decision to create a position of a combined Head of Service is in itself a significant step, and we think it is right to consult you in two stages: first on the principle of a merger, and at a later date on the details.

Background

5. Both the YOT and the YPS are high performing and highly regarded services. Our Youth Offending rates have reduced significantly in recent years, and our NEET rates are some of the lowest in the country. We also run an impressive range of targeted intervention and support services such as the Network 2 mentoring scheme and the Alternative Learning Programmes. Our community youth clubs and skate parks are well used, and the Castlegate drop-in centre is seen as an exemplar facility.
6. Two years ago the Connexions service was incorporated into Young People's Services: a transfer that worked extremely smoothly and which has opened up new possibilities for integrated working.

7. There are, though, inevitably challenges on the horizon and things we could do better. There's no denying that one of the major challenges is the financial position. Even before the current public expenditure reductions, the Council has been obliged to make substantial savings in its budget, some of which have impacted on Young People's Services. Meanwhile York's YOT, which is small by national standards, has for several years faced a structural deficit in its funding which has been met through a variety of temporary measures.
8. Combining the YOT and the YPS will not make these issues go away or change the wider financial climate, but we believe a combined team will be more flexible and resilient in the longer term. A significant number of local authorities have already gone down this path.
9. We are also mindful of the More for York programme and the Council's stated need to reduce management posts (grades 10-12 and their equivalent) over the next year. Combining the two teams would contribute to this by deleting one of the Head of Service posts. The reason for looking at this now, rather than waiting until a later phase in the organisational review, is that the current Head of YPS, Paul Herring, has stated his intention to retire at some point in the next twelve months, and it is sensible to factor this into the planning.
10. However, the financial arguments are not the most important ones. We also believe that a merger such as this will create an opportunity for a fresh look at the entirety of services for young people in York, whether they be specialist, targeted, or universal. There is arguably a need for a fresh vision for the future of Youth Services which sets out the balance between these elements in the light of the changing policy environment. Such a vision needs to incorporate the role that community groups and partner agencies can play in helping to meet the demand for universal services. Bringing together all of the current services for young people under one Head will help to move this debate forward. We can also explore further the relationship with schools and with the Behaviour Support Service.
11. At this point in time we have no fixed ideas about the structure of the combined service underneath the new Head; that will be the subject of further debate. It is however important to reassure staff that we do think it will continue to be important to retain distinctive professional specialisms within the umbrella of a united service, in much the same way that (for example) careers guidance specialists currently exist within YPS.
12. A unified YOT/YPS team will include staff on many different sets of terms and conditions, including three for employees of CYC. It is likely that management will want to look at this in due course and make proposals for discussion with the TUS; this will however take time and will not feature in our debates over the next few months. We recognise that such matters would need to be the subject of substantial consultation.

Next Steps

13. We intend to invite the Council's Executive on 6 July to approve in principle the decision to merge the two teams. We will take into account any views expressed as a result of this consultation and will convey the TUS response to the Executive.
14. If the decision is made on that date, we will then commence the HR processes necessary to achieve a combined Head of Service in post before the end of the calendar year.
15. We will also establish a formal Project Board to oversee the next stages of the process. This will include TUS representation. The Board will develop more detailed proposals during the Autumn, which will be the subject of widespread debate and consultation. We currently envisage that any further changes that are agreed at this stage will be implemented from 1 April 2011.

Consultation Questions

If you would like to comment on the issues outlined in this paper, please send an email to:

paul.murphy@york.gov.uk

Please head the email "YOT/YPS Consultation"

If you have already commented to Pete Dwyer about on this issue in response to his paper on the wider restructuring of the new Adults, Children and Education Directorate, please rest assured that your comments will be taken into account; there is no need to submit them again.

Your trade union representatives will also be asking for your views, and reasonable facility time will be allowed for consultation meetings.

You might like to think about the following issues:

What opportunities do you think might emerge from a combined YOT/YPS team?

What concerns do you have about a combined YOT/YPS team?

Do you agree there is a case for a new, unifying vision for all services for young people in York, and what should be its components?

Do you agree that it is important to maintain specialist skillsets within a combined service?

Do you have any other matters you want to raise?