



City of York Branch

Response to the proposed merger of Young Peoples Services and Youth Offending Team at City of York Council.

As Young Peoples Services (YPS) delivers both a 'universal' and a 'targeted' service, Unison * recognises that young people who are the client group of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) will also fall within the remit of YPS. As a general principle, Unison is in favour of professionals liaising, sharing relevant information and working together to provide a 'young person-centred' service, and this way of working currently takes place.

In the case of any future merger, however, Unison believes that all parties involved, including the elected members, would need a genuine commitment to address the seven points listed below. Unison does not support the principle of a merger without such a commitment being in place.

1. Maintain the level of the workforce

Unison sees no scope for reducing the number of posts in YPS or YOT as a result of a merger. While there is a small overlap of the 'client groups', it must not be assumed that specific work is duplicated. YPS has been subject to severe cuts in the recent budgetary savings which have already compromised delivery. This point applies to support roles such as administration and line managers as much as to face to face workers.

2. Protect professional specialisms

While different workers share much of their skill set, it is vital to maintain distinct roles for which they have been professionally trained. There needs to be a clear strategy for Continuous Professional Development for all roles.

3. Work towards fairness in pay and grading

There currently exist anomalies in pay and grading between certain posts within YPS. A merger with YOT would further complicate this situation. Unison insists that discussion on how to resolve these anomalies should begin at the soonest opportunity, whilst understanding that this will be complex and time consuming. However, both staff morale and the obligation to address equalities issues make this essential.

4. Protect the delivery of the full range of services

All aspects of the services delivered by YPS and YOT are of value. Unison would not support any assumption that non-statutory services are automatically more dispensable in the event of budgetary pressures.

5. Ensure adequate management support

Unison does not see scope for reducing management posts in the event of a merger, beyond perhaps the possibility of a single head of service. Face to face workers are entitled to adequate levels of supervision, and to preserve quality it is essential in a combined service that the management team includes a cross section of professions. Good Health and safety and Child Protection depend on adequate numbers of managers.

6. Maintain clear, open communication between all parties

Unison is grateful for the opportunity to make its views known at this early stage of the process. It is self-evident that the integrity of any merger and the operation of a combined service require good communication and also adequate facility time for Unison representatives.

7. Ensure an adequate budget

Unison is mindful of budgetary pressures for City of York Council, but a merger cannot be viewed as a money saving exercise. Unison will resist any 'merger' that is simply staffing cuts by another name. In view of all points listed above, Unison believes the budgets of the two services *cannot* be reduced in the event of a merger.

* 'Unison' in this context refers to the views of accredited Unison representatives who are involved in consultations on the proposed merger, and in addition the general view of Unison members across YPS and YOT.

Author: Adrian Fayter, Unison Steward Young Peoples Services.
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