

Report of the Director of Adults, Children and Education

Proposal to merge the Youth Offending Team with Young People's Services

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - a. invite the Executive to agree in principle to the merger of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) with Young People's Services (YPS) under a combined Head of Service, and to commence the HR processes associated with this; and
 - b. convey the results of TUS consultation on this issue; and
 - c. invite agreement to examine a range of subsidiary structural, cultural and HR issues through a Project Board, with subsequent decisions being taken by the Executive Member for Children and Young People.
2. The reason for putting the fundamental decision to the full Executive is that responsibility for these areas to some extent straddles Directorates, in that the YOT Management Board is Chaired by the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods, and there are important links also to the strategic agenda of the Safer York Partnership.

Background

3. **York YOT** is a statutory partnership service required for each local authority under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, with City of York Council as the lead partner. The key performance outcomes that the partnership is in business to achieve are:
 - reducing the number of children each year who enter the formal criminal justice system (NI:111) ; and
 - reducing the number of further offences committed by children in the youth justice system (NI19).

Both of these PIs are rapidly improving.

4. The YOT's annual running costs are currently around £1.1 million. Funding is pooled from a variety of sources, including police, probation, health and the

Youth Justice Board (YJB); City of York Council provides approximately half of the funds. A number of funding streams are not guaranteed beyond March 2011. Despite investment decisions made as part of the council's 2010/11 budget round, the team has historic funding pressures which make it poorly equipped to deal in isolation with the present challenging financial times.

5. York's **Young People's Services** were formed in April 2008 by combining the former Youth Service with the Connexions Service – which was at that time brought in-house by transferring in around 37 staff under TUPE. The four main elements to YPS are:
 - Universal Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), including a statutory duty to provide careers advice to young people in partnership with schools and colleges. Counselling and intensive support for those who require specialist intervention is also provided;
 - Access to a wide range of positive activities, including an appropriate offer of “places to go and things to do”;
 - Empowering young people to influence services and facilities that are available to them and facilitating opportunities to volunteer and contribute to their local community;
 - Targeted support for vulnerable young people experiencing difficulties in their education, health, behaviour, or relationships, with specialist services for disabled young people or those from different ethnic backgrounds.

The YPS is a well-regarded service with many successful programmes including the Network 2 mentoring scheme, the Alternative Learning Programmes and many others. Our Castlegate drop-in facility is regarded as a flagship. YPS has also overseen the creation of the Youth Council, and the City's first Festival of Youth. Our most recent “NEET” (Not in Education, Employment or Training) figures are the lowest in the North of England and amongst the best in the country.

6. YPS running costs currently stand at approximately £4 million pa. The majority of these funds come from the General Fund; however, £1.4 million comes to the Authority in the form of an Area Based Grant. In common with all DfE Area Based Grants, this has just been subject to an in-year cut of 24%, making the medium term financial outlook for this service extremely challenging. The YPS had already committed to finding significant savings in the current financial year through a range of measures.
7. We consider that the financial challenges affecting both services would benefit from being addressed in tandem, allowing for possible management and administrative efficiencies.
8. In addition to financial considerations, however, a number of other authorities that have chosen to combine their YOT, Connexions and Youth Services have done so for strategic reasons: to encourage a holistic approach to this age group, and an appropriate interaction between universal, targeted and specialist services. A combined team can also give priority to measures and interventions

aimed at preventing poor outcomes such as NEET, homelessness, substance abuse or offending.

Consultation

9. The proposal in principle to merge the YOT with Young People's Services has been the subject of initial consultation with staff and with Unison. The consultation paper which was used to initiate this is attached as **Annex A**. Unison have submitted a written response which is attached at **Annex B**; this sets out seven points that they believe would need to be addressed in order for any merger to be successful.
10. Overall the response to consultation with staff could probably be summarised as one of "acceptance", rather than either enthusiasm or outright hostility. The specific concerns that have been raised include:
 - Concern that any merger should not proceed for financial reasons alone;
 - Concern about significant cultural differences between different elements of the combined service;
 - Concern to preserve individual professional specialisms within a combined services;
 - Uncertainty arising from the fact that staff in the combined service would be employed on a variety of different terms and conditions.

Many of these concerns are similar to those that existed before the incorporation of Connexions into YPS; we believe that they can be addressed in a similar way, through open debate and discussion with staff. The issue of terms and conditions will undoubtedly need to be addressed in the longer term, but it is not proposed to start looking at this at the present time. Clearly in the present climate it is not possible to give any guarantees about future job numbers or staffing levels.

11. Some staff have acknowledged that a combined service would provide opportunities for more "joined up" working across the full range of services to young people.
12. We have also consulted a range of external partners about the proposals. No specific concerns have been raised.

Options

13. The basic options are to merge the two services or to retain them as separate entities. Once the principle of a merged service has been agreed, there are then a number of subsidiary options for the structure and scope of the new service; we suggest that these are issues for another day.

Analysis

14. The arguments for merging the two services are, briefly, as follows:

- A combined service will have more flexibility and resilience to rise to the challenges of the next few years;
- Economies in management and administration should be possible, and one senior post will automatically be deleted;
- A new Head of Service can be invited to construct a holistic vision for young people's services in York, embracing universal, targeted and specialist services;
- We can re-examine the relationship with schools and with community groups, with possible options for re-assignment of current roles and responsibilities.

15. It is proposed that this *future* work incorporates:

- the development of a new vision statement that addresses:
 - a commitment to both a universal and targeted Youth Offer
 - the desired balance between universal and targeted services
 - the role of local councillors in delivery on the strategic vision
 - the priority need groups for targeted services
 - the expectations of integration between the business processes and services of both the universal and targeted provision
- recognition of the discrete professional contributions of those providing and promoting Young People's Services;
- maximisation of the use of integrated working practices;
- promotion of youth inclusion by the development of a wider range of community based support activities and facilities;
- engagement of an even wider range of partner agencies in the provision of youth support and positive activities.

16. We believe that this work can best be developed by a single Head of Service reporting to a Project Board and ultimately to the Executive Member for Children and Young People. We propose to establish a formal Project Board to take this work forward over the Autumn, and we are exploring the extent to which this can be supported by More for York. There will need to be further consultation with staff and stakeholders. We have also commissioned some external advice to ensure we draw on best practice from other authorities that have already gone down this path.

17. The arguments against merger are mainly around the creation of organisational uncertainty (but this exists already, given the public expenditure position) and the staff's concerns about loss of professional specialism (which we believe can be allayed). We will also need to ensure that any revised arrangements are accepted by external stakeholders, especially the Youth Justice Board.

Corporate Objectives

18. The work of the YOT and the YPS helps with the following corporate objectives:

- Reductions in levels of NEET and first time entrants into the youth justice system;
- Promotion of positive activities for young people;
- Promotion of active citizenship by young people.

Implications

Financial

19. The overall financial position was covered in the “background” section. We consider that a combined service will be better able to cope with the financial challenges that lie ahead. Deletion of one of the two Head of Service posts will achieve a full year saving of approximately £65k.

Human Resources (HR)

20. The immediate HR consequences of this decision concern the two Heads of Service. Subsequent issues may of course arise through the further decisions that will flow through the Project Board. We propose that Unison are invited to have a representative on the Board, and further discussions are planned to determine key dates for the merger process to ensure that briefing for staff groups and their relevant Associations continues in a timely manner. All decisions with an HR consequence will be handled in accordance with the Council’s established Change Management procedures.

Equalities

21. There are no specific equalities implications.

Legal

22. The Council has a statutory duty to establish a Youth Offending Team in co-operation with police, probation and health services. As a minimum the Team must include a social worker, a police officer, a probation officer, a health and an education representative. The Team has the statutory function of coordinating the provision of youth justice services and of undertaking responsibilities assigned in the multi agency Youth Justice Plan. We will need to ensure that any revised arrangements reflect these legal requirements.
23. The mainstream functions of the Young People’s Services are governed by a range of Acts of Parliament, including the Education Act 1996 which places a statutory duty on local authorities to secure youth provision in their area. A local authority must also, under section 68(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, make available such services as it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist the effective participation of young people and relevant young adults in education or training. This covers 13-19 year olds and those aged 20 and over but under 25 with an assessment of a learning difficulty and/or disability under section 139a of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Crime and Disorder

24. The work of the YOT is obviously at the heart of crime and disorder strategies in the city, and links closely with the work of the Safer York Partnership. As already indicated, we will have to ensure that external partners continue to have confidence in the revised arrangements; they have raised no concerns so far.

Information Technology (IT) and Property

25. There are no IT or property implications.

Risk Management

26. There are some risks to the continuity of services to young people in contemplating any organisational changes, and consequently to the reputation of the Council. However, such risks are more likely to arise from the challenging financial position than from the specific proposals in this paper, and we believe that the overall risk is LOW. It can continue to be monitored via the proposed Project Board.

Recommendations

27. The Executive is invited to:
- agree in principle to the merger of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) with Young People's Services (YPS) under a combined Head of Service, and to commence the HR processes associated with this; and
 - agree to the examination of a range of subsidiary structural, cultural and HR issues through a Project Board, with subsequent decisions being taken by the Executive Member for Children and Young People.

Reason: To further the Council's strategic objectives in relation to young people, and to ensure organisational resilience at a time of financial challenges.

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**Report
Approved**



Date

18 June 2010

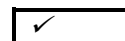
Specialist Implications Officer(s)

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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A – Consultation paper issued to staff

Annex B – Unison Response