

Children and Young People's Plan: 2007 - 2010 Consultation document

Background

The *Children and Young People's Plan* is a partnership plan, produced every two or three years, which covers all of the services that are provided for children and young people in the city. That means it is about the services, such as schools, that are provided for everybody, as well as the services that are targeted on particular groups of young people that may need special attention.

The first *Children and Young People's Plan* for the city was produced in 2005, and was organised around the five outcomes for children identified as national priorities by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). These are:

- Being healthy,
- Staying safe,
- Enjoying and achieving,
- Making a positive contribution,
- Achieving economic well-being.

Although the outcomes were nationally determined, the activity in the plan was locally decided and the same approach is proposed this time. Running through everything in the plan are some important principles, all of which are about removing the barriers to progress that leave some young people struggling whilst their peers move on with increasing confidence. These principles are that:

- Inclusion is not a luxury, it is what the services provided for children and young people are all about,
- Work on equalities is about encouraging and developing talent that might otherwise be overlooked,
- Early intervention gives some children and young people a first chance,
- Nothing will last unless it is sustainable, both financially and environmentally.

Some of this is captured in the vision statement for the Children's Trust that remains unchanged from the first plan.

In York we recognise that our children are our future. We want to help children achieve their potential and enjoy life as active participating citizens free from poverty, ignorance, neglect, crime, harm, abuse and distress. This is part of the wider vision of the City Council and its partner agencies' commitment to creating a future for the people of York that ensures that everyone has the opportunity to lead a full, healthy and satisfying life. We share a long-term vision, led by the YorOK Board, to make York a place where:

- children and their families live in safe, secure communities, empowered to have the skills and knowledge to be protected from abuse, harassment, exploitation and neglect;
- families develop the confidence and capability to love, protect and care for their members:
- the needs of the most vulnerable and socially excluded children and families are met in a timely and effective way;
- families know how and where to get help when they need it;
- services share a common understanding and commitment to our preventative strategy so that children and families can get help promptly to deal with difficulties when they first arise;
- trusting, flexible and innovative partnerships develop between the statutory and independent sector and local communities;
- information, methods and responsibilities are shared, for example, for managing risk or assessing the impact of services;
- multi-disciplinary and cross organisational working enhances the range of skills, experience and expertise of individual workers, as well as valuing the contribution of different practitioner groups; and
- children, young people, their families and communities are involved in the development of preventative services.

A lot has happened since the first plan was agreed. The Partnership Board responsible for the Plan (called *YorOK* or the Children's Trust) has increased its membership to embrace a wider range of partners and a new directorate of Children's Services has been established by the City Council, with responsibility, amongst other things, for leading the production of the *Children and Young People's Plan* on behalf of the Board. The DfES has introduced a system of 'Annual Performance Assessment' (APA) to monitor the progress that is being made locally in improving the outcomes for children and young people and the Local Strategic Partnership ('Without Walls') is producing a Local Area Agreement (LAA) which has children and young people as one of the top four priorities. In order to cope with this explosion of activity, the new CYC directorate also produced its own Children's Services Plan.

All of this work will inform the Children and Young People's Plan for 2007 – 2010, which will be a wide-ranging and comprehensive document. The Board is keen that the plan does not simply gather dust on shelves but is used to make real improvements for children and young people. To achieve this, it needs to be based on reliable statistical data and informed feedback from all interested partners. However, the Board is not starting from a blank sheet of paper. A number of important issues have already been identified about which further advice and guidance is being sought.

These issues have emerged as particularly important for one or more of a number of reasons:

- They are what children and young people have been saying is important to them,
- They are what the data we collect is saying about where there is room for improvement,
- They are what has been identified as needing further attention in the Annual Performance Assessment.

This consultation document outlines the nine most important issues where fresh ideas and additional help might make a difference. All ideas are welcome, but particularly those that don't need more resources than are currently available! The intention is that the local authority and all its partners should be smarter about the way in which existing resources are used.

The consultation

The deadline for responses to the consultation is Friday 27th October. During September and October, there will be a number of events to gather views from as wide a range of people as possible. A form is also provided with the consultation document for written responses. A parallel consultation is taking place with children and young people, asking them to say how well their needs are met in York. Comments have been invited on postcards, through the "Schools Out" newspaper, and through specially arranged events. A DVD will also be published alongside the Plan in which children and young people will have the opportunity to speak for themselves about the issues that matter to them most.

Date	Activity
Wed 13 Sept	YorOK Board discussion
Wed 13 Sept	Briefing for Chairs of School Governing Bodies
Wed 20 Sept	Headteacher briefing
Sat 7 Oct	CVS Children and Young People's Conference
Wed 11 Oct	Public Open meeting
Wed 11 Oct	CYC Staff consultation event
Mon 16 Oct	LCCS: Service and Group Managers Meeting
Mon 16 Oct	Children's Services EMAP
Tue 17 Oct	Governors' Viewpoint: special event
Wed 18 Oct	Joint Consultative Group (JCG)
Fri 15 Sept	PCT – Start of consultation process
Fri 15 Sept	Acute Trust Consultation – Start of consultation process

Please find the time, either to attend one of these meetings, or to write in to the Children's Trust using the consultation response form.

What do we want to achieve?

1. Success for all

The statistics tell us that children and young people from families in the city with the lowest incomes achieve less, at every stage in their lives, than those that are born into families that are better off. They are more likely to have a turbulent home life, to miss school, to find learning difficult and, as they grow older, to become disaffected and anti-social.

A lot of time and effort already goes into providing support for these children and young people:

- Support for children in the early years, such as Sure Start, is focused particularly on the poorest areas of the city,
- Schools serving areas of disadvantage receive extra funding,
- Local authority services, like the Education Welfare Service tend to be most heavily involved with the poorest communities,
- The city's Children's Centres are being established in the areas that have most need of them,
- The Youth Service and Connexions Personal Advisers work particularly closely with young people who are most at risk of becoming marginalised and excluded.

There is some evidence that this is making a difference, but so slowly that the gap between the *haves* and the *have nots* may never be bridged.

Is there anything else that can be done to provide a better deal for children

and young people in the city who face the kind of difficulties associated with living in poverty?

2. Healthy living

Compared to some parts of the country, York is a reasonably healthy place in which to grow up. But there is also some evidence that today's young people could be the first generation to be less healthy than their parents, sometimes because of the things they are doing to themselves.

The warning signals are about:

- The growing numbers of young people who are seriously overweight,
- The effect of air pollution on the rising number of children with breathing difficulties,
- Drug and alcohol misuse,
- The increasing number of young people with mental health problems (sometimes arising from family breakdown),
- The number of young women below the age of 18 who are becoming pregnant.

Action is being taken to tackle all of these problems. The quality of school meals is improving, more opportunities are available for sport and physical activity than ever before, a team of mental health workers specialise in support for young people, and advice is available to promote healthy lifestyles.

But have the right priorities been identified and is enough being done? Could a different approach make more of a difference?

3. Fewer young offenders

Contrary to popular belief, the crime statistics in York are all moving in the right direction and some very successful work is being done with a group of young people who have been identified as potential offenders. Where there is a problem, however, it is with the number of young people who, having been convicted once, go on to re-offend, and with the number of offenders aged between 16 and 19 who are not in education, employment or training.

Following a recent inspection of the Youth Offending Team, efforts to tackle this problem are being redoubled:

- More opportunities are being provided for education and training,
- Local youth support services are being targeted on named young people to help them spend their time more positively,
- The families of young offenders are receiving additional support,
- Young offenders are being encouraged to make amends through community service,
- Offenders are being confronted with the consequences of the behaviour by learning about its effect on their victims.

Is this working and is it enough to make a difference to the kind of anti-social behaviour that is blighting the lives of people living in some parts of the city?

4. Freedom from bullying

If there is one consistent theme that runs through everything that young people say would make the biggest difference to their lives, it is for something to be done about bullying. The statistics, and the stories that young people tell, suggest that fear of bullying is often as big a problem as the experience itself. Indeed, the annual survey of 12 year olds in the city tells us that there has been a decline in the actual level of bullying in the city's schools in recent years.

The council has had an anti-bullying strategy for a number of years, which includes:

- An annual survey to establish some facts and figures about bullying,
- Regular anti-bullying campaigns, including this year's 'Beat the Bullies' campaign involving local rock bands,
- The healthy school scheme and work to provide peer support for all young people.

But the truth is that the level of bullying in and out of schools is stubbornly resistant to the best efforts of everybody working with children and young people.

Is there a different approach that would make a bigger difference or is it a matter of sustaining the existing policies with absolute determination?

5. A good deal for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

The city makes some of the best provision available anywhere for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Included in this are:

- The two new special schools,
- High quality respite care at the Glen and through the Sharing Care scheme,
- Improved provision in mainstream schools, including the creation of the specialist unit for Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) attached to Fulford secondary school,
- Specialist support services provided by the local authority and other partners,
- The appointment by Connexions of specialist personal advisers to help disabled children aged 13+.

However, the local authority is still being told that there are gaps and overlaps in provision, and that sometimes the professionals can not agree about what to do for children with complex needs.

A new post as *Head of Integrated Services* is being created to bring together all of the teams working on behalf of children and young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities.

What should the Head of Integrated Services be asked to do? How can the

provision that currently exists be deployed more effectively?

6. More active involvement in neighbourhoods

There is widespread agreement, nationally and locally, that it is important for young people to make a contribution to the communities in which they live, perhaps as volunteers, if they are to become responsible and mature adults. It seems almost to be a statement of the obvious that they need to be actively involved.

A lot has been done, over the last couple of years, much of it through the Involvement Strategy established by the Children's Trust, to make a reality of this. Amongst the schemes that have been established are:

- The Youth Achievement Awards,
- The Millennium Volunteers,
- The election of the Children's Champion,
- The establishment of School Councils and School Council days,
- A range of consultations on individuals issues such as the 14 19 strategy,
- The YorKash scheme which invites young people to bid for funds to provide new facilities and services for young people in the city.

Is this strategy working so that more young people have the opportunity to

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7. A safer place

Young people will only be able to flourish, and make good decisions for themselves, if they feel safe from any harm that could be done to them. A local *Safeguarding Children's Board* has been established to co-ordinate child protection work in the city, and the local authority and its partners have a strong reputation for its work to prevent children becoming vulnerable to abuse.

Particular achievements include:

- Effective sharing of information between professionals about children at the early stages of concern,
- Multi-agency training on child protection and a 'safeguarding' website giving easily accessible advice,
- A history of responding swiftly to cases of serious concern,
- A choice of good childcare provision available across the city,
- School travel plans in place for a majority of schools in the city.

However, concerns have been expressed particularly about the impact on children and young people of drug misuse by their parents and about the effect of domestic violence. The local authority is also checking out procedures for the recruitment of staff working with children and young people.

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8. Support for families

The best support for any child is provided by effective parenting. The Children's Trust has established a programme of parenting education and support, and has recently been asked by the government to become a pathfinder for a new support programme aimed at the parents of 8 – 13 year olds who are beginning to get into trouble.

There is a national advice service for parents called 'Just Ask', which is supplemented by a number of local initiatives:

- A programme of Positive Parenting courses running in schools,
- The development of a website offering advice and guidance,
- Parenting forums to develop best practice,
- Support groups for parents with particular problems, such as former substance misusing parents.
- Parenting programmes for parents looking for more effective ways of supporting their children

Despite this, it continues to be difficult to involve parents, especially fathers. Sometimes this is because they are not aware that help is needed, sometimes it is because they are reluctant to admit that they may need help and sometimes it is simply because they don't know about the help that is available.

What, in your view, should be done to support parents and how can the kind of obstacles described above be overcome?

9. The best advice and guidance

In almost every aspect of their lives, from what they eat, to how they relax, to what they might want to achieve, children and young people are faced with more choice than ever before. Sometimes that choice can become bewildering.

York has a good record of providing advice and guidance for young people through the Youth Enquiry Service (YES) as well as in schools, colleges and through the Youth Service and Connexions. More recently that has been complemented by:

- A network of Personal Advisers in schools, colleges and other settings to provide help for all young people but particularly those that are struggling,
- Plans for a new city centre 'one stop shop' providing guidance and support for young people,
- The appointment of a 'voice and influence' youth worker with responsibility for involving young people
- A targeted youth support scheme in the west of York,
- Health advice at the walk in centre.

Although the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is lower than most parts of the country, it is a constant struggle to keep the figure as low as it is.

What else can be done to improve the advice and guidance provided for children and young people? Do young people know where to go when they

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Any other comments

This consultation has asked for your views on a range of issues. But were they the right issues? Please add any comments on this and anything else you want to say about services for children and young people in the space below. We are always keen to know not only your views on the issues but your ideas on solving them, so if your organisation can assist in the solutions please let us know how.

Please return to Patrick Scott, Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services at Mill House, North Street, York, YO1 6JD by Friday 27th October.