

Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 December 2010

Report from the Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning

Young People's Services in York

Summary

1. This report allows members of the Scrutiny Committee a further opportunity to consider the future of Young People's Services in York in the light of the Executive's decision to merge it with the Youth Offending Team, and in anticipation of challenges that are likely to arise from the reductions in central government support. Even without that challenge, we would have been keen to explore whether the balance between local authority and voluntary/community sector provision was right and to increase our shared understanding of the type of youth provision that makes a real difference.

Background

2. At the October meeting, the Committee considered a proposal for a scrutiny topic in this area from Cllr Watt. This originated from a sense that different Ward Committees were funding local youth work to a different extent, which was not necessarily equitable. Officers suggested that some differences in provision were an inevitable consequence of devolved local budgets, but that a dialogue about the direction of youth services was timely in view of the emerging national debate about the balance between universal and targeted services. There was also uncertainty about future funding. Officers were invited to bring a further report to the December meeting, setting out the key questions for discussion.
3. At the time of writing, the detail of the financial settlement for local authorities is still unknown; we may be in a position to give an oral update at the meeting. What is already clear, however, is that we are unlikely to be able to maintain the current pattern of provision in the years ahead, and we may therefore need to look for new ways to provide "things to do and places to go" for our young people.
4. However, funding is not the only driver. In York we have already taken the decision to merge our Youth Offending Team (with its targeted focus on individuals) with Young People's Services (which works with a much wider range of young people). In the report considered by the Council's Executive in July, we explained that such a merger would initiate a work programme that encompassed:

- *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.*

This work programme has now started.

Options and Analysis

5. Youth work in York takes many forms – from running the Duke of Edinburgh scheme though to intensive, targeted work with very vulnerable teenagers. In terms of the most prominent performance indicators, York can point to some spectacular successes:

- Our rate of “NEET” 16 and 17 year olds is the lowest in the North of England, and one of the lowest in the country;
- Our rate of teenage conceptions, expressed as a rolling quarterly average, has fallen for seven successive quarters and is now lower than at any point since the present statistical series began in 1998;
- Our YOT team has significantly reduced the number of young people entering the criminal justice system, as well as those re-offending, and earlier this year achieved an inspection result which confirmed its position as one of the most successful in the country;
- York is the leading local authority in Yorkshire for Duke of Edinburgh outcomes.

These achievements are a testament to the dedicated work of staff from the Council and its partners. They helped contribute to the authority's beacon status for early intervention work, as well as to its high national ranking for children's services.

6. However, much youth work cannot be measured through conventional performance indicators. For example, a teenager who attends one of our youth clubs may develop self-confidence and social skills that will benefit them immensely in later life – but this is not something that can be counted in conventional terms
7. The current national debate has focused particularly on the future of such “universal” provision. A wide range of opinions has been expressed, from those who regard such youth work as old-fashioned, or “nannying”, to those who feel it plays a vital part in helping young people to find the right path. Members who

would like to get more of a flavour of the national arguments might like to look at a very recent Parliamentary Debate on the topic, available via the Hansard records for 23 November 2010, or by following this link:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101123/halltext/101123h0001.htm#10112319000002>.

8. A further interesting piece of background reading is a recent joint publication from the LGA and the National Youth Agency entitled "Valuing Youth Work". This is available on the National Youth Agency Website or by following this link: http://nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/policy/Valuing%20Youth%20Work%20lo%20res%5B1%5D.pdf . The report contains a number of case studies of innovative practice by local authorities. It includes a definition of youth work which is reproduced at **Annex A**.
9. There has been a more specific national debate about the future of the Connexions Service, ie the combined careers and personal advice service, which in York sits under the umbrella of Young People's Services. On 4 November, the Government announced the establishment of an all-age Careers Service, to be fully operational by April 2012. This effectively means the end of the Connexions brand. When the all-age service starts, local authorities will no longer be expected to provide careers guidance to young people. However, authorities *will* still be responsible for providing support to encourage and enable young people to participate in education and training.
10. It is clear that the Government is placing the emphasis on targeted support services, particularly to prevent young people becoming NEET. Consistent with the localism agenda of the Coalition Government, we are unlikely to see constraining national policy directives – the Government will expect LAs to determine locally what services need to be provided and by whom. Until we know the detail of the financial settlement, we will not fully understand all the parameters of the debate; however, officers anticipate that we may be faced with some difficult decisions in the months ahead. We will need to review all aspects of the current provision of youth services in York.
11. In order to prepare for this, we have drawn up the information attached in the three annexes:
 - **Annex B** is an updated map of provision in the city.
 - **Annex C** shows how the funds are spent, grouped under the major headings.
 - **Annex D** sets out the work programme that is currently under way to merge the YOT team with Young People's Services, and to bring forward proposals to reconfigure the combined service in the light of the available budget.

Officers would welcome a continuous dialogue with this Scrutiny Committee as we conduct this review.

Questions for the Committee

12. It will be for the Committee to determine how best to engage in this debate: ie, whether to conduct their own Scrutiny review or to respond to reports from

officers as their own review progresses. Whichever route we take, we see the key questions as being:

- If resources are very tight, which elements of the current youth services should be the highest priority for us to preserve? Is the emphasis wholly on preventing young people becoming “NEET”, or should we have a continuing role in supporting/preventing a range of other issues including homelessness, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy? Or do these issues so overlap that the distinction is not possible?
- What approach to developing a more targeted service should be taken – targeting particular communities or individuals across the city?
- Should the Council continue to have a role in providing universal, open-access youth services (including youth clubs, skate parks, the URBIE bus and others)?
- If the Council is obliged to withdraw some or all of its open-access provision, would we want to encourage the third sector (including voluntary and faith-based groups) to fill the gap? What should our relationship be with this sector?
- What would be the implications for services funded or part-funded from other sources eg ward committee resources?
- How should we engage young people in this debate?

Recommendations:

13. Members are asked to:

- agree whether or not to proceed with a review of Youth Services in York.
- agree which areas would be a suitable remit to review if a decision was taken to proceed with the review.
- agree a timetable for the review.

Reason: In order to progress the work of the committee.

Contact Details

Author:

Paul Murphy
Assistant Director, Integrated
Commissioning,
Adults, Children and Education
Tel No. 554000

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Paul Murphy
Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning,
Adults, Children and Education
Tel No. 554000

**Report
Approved**

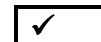


Date

25-11-10

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: See the references in paragraphs 8 and 9

Annexes:

Annex A – “What is Youth Work” (from the LGA/NYA Report)

Annex B – Map of Provision of Youth Work in York

Annex C – How the funds are spent

Annex D – YOT/YPS merger – Overview of Work Programme