

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

7 JULY 2022

STRENGTHENING THE YOUTH OFFER IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Summary

1. The Panel is asked to consider the steps taken to review and strengthen the Council's youth offer and inform the recommissioning of the Council's funded youth services.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health & Well Being and the Interim Director of Public Health have been invited to attend the meeting.

Background

3. The local authority under Section 507B of the Education Act 1996, has a statutory duty to *'...to secure, so far as is reasonably practical, access to sufficient services and activities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, for the positive, preventative and early help they need to improve their well-being and personal and social development'*.
4. The duty covers youth services and activities for young people. This includes responsibilities to involve young people, taking their views in to account, and to coordinate and effectively publicise the local youth offer to young people and their families. The services and activities are not prescribed, rather the local authority is expected to understand the needs of young people. It should determine the mix of open access, targeted, preventative and specialist provision needed, and prioritise those at risk of poor outcomes. Further, it should support capacity building, enable others to fund and provide services, and assure the quality of the local offer.
5. The National Youth Agency (NYA) defines youth work as 'a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person's personal, social and educational development'. As such it is helpful to recognise youth work as an approach with multiple variables that supports young people where they engage voluntarily.
6. There are three general evidence-based domains which encompass delivery of youth work interventions,
 - a. universal open access youth clubs and centres - which young people engage with voluntarily, allows youth workers to build relationships with young people over a sustained period. This enables the identification of risky behaviours and gives the opportunity to offer support 'upstream' before they have a negative impact.
 - b. detached youth work - a more targeted approach and enables youth workers to engage with young people who are unlikely to attend

building-based provision. Agencies, such as the police or schools can use this service to enable interventions to prevent causes of concern from escalating.

- c. one to one mentoring - for young people who are at risk of disengaging from education or who require additional or alternative support. This can bring formal education (schools and colleges) and nonformal education (youth work and youth services) together.

7. In Worcestershire, each of these domains exist. There are a range of statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations who deliver youth services, activities and groups across the county. Funding for these comes from a range of sources including, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), District Councils, community safety partnerships, the National Lottery plus subscriptions and fees.

8. Since 2016, the Council has funded 14 open access 'Positive Activities' contracts across the county and a supporting infrastructure contract, mainly from the voluntary and community sector. The recommissioning of these contracts is overdue. In addition, to support young people who were disproportionately impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional enhanced youth support has been funded for a short-term period from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) via District Councils to deliver detached youth work and some targeted or one to one mentoring.

Reasons for Review of the Youth Offer

9. The local youth offer, which needs to be publicised widely, includes information, advice and guidance for young people in relation to:

- a. health and wellbeing
- b. social and leisure activities
- c. skills for life
- d. supporting communities and making a positive contribution

10. Current Council funded contracts are required to be recommissioned from April 2023. This presents an opportunity to review the youth offer and youth strategy and to review the youth provision funded by the Council.

Engagement and Analysis

11. In May 2022 an [Adolescent Health Profile](#) was published. The main findings from the Adolescent Health Profile were that the health of Worcestershire's young people overall is better than the England average. However, disadvantaged young people and those living in more deprived communities are likely to experience poorer health and life outcomes. The localities where young people are less likely to fare well are located within Redditch, Worcester City and Wyre Forest. The aspects of health most likely to be impacted are mental health, life chances through educational qualifications and obesity, including in deprived rural communities.

12. COVID-19 had a greater impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people who were disadvantaged economically and those with pre-existing mental health problems. Population groups such as young carers, lesbian, gay, bisexual

and transgender (LGBT) young people and young people from some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds were also more likely to have experienced poorer mental health throughout the pandemic. There is emerging evidence to suggest an increased prevalence of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

13. A youth needs assessment has been undertaken including engagement with a variety of stakeholders and young people and mapping of youth services and activities.

14. The views from over 120 young people were collected via 8 focus groups. The focus groups were delivered by youth workers or adults experienced in working with 13 to 19-year-olds. The focus groups collected views of young people from each district in the county plus LGBTQ+ young people, young people with special educational needs and disabilities and young people from Eastern European ethnicities, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) young people and other ethnic minority groups. Feedback was also collected by Public Health from a range of communities in the county, in relation to the impact of the pandemic, including young people, which have also been used in the assessment of need. In addition, the Youth Cabinet were consulted on their experiences, and experiences reported to them, of youth clubs and groups.

15. A range of stakeholders were consulted in relation to youth provision in the County. This included youth service providers, District Councils, County drug and alcohol service - young people's service, sexual health services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, NHS Starting Well services, Worcestershire Children First (WCF), West Mercia Police plus CLIMB¹ Diversionary Activities, Youth Justice Service and Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

16. A mapping exercise was undertaken to provide insight into the distribution of youth services, including Scouting, Guiding and other uniformed youth services plus County Council funded provision.

Needs Assessment Summary

17. The needs assessment concluded that:

- a. There is a need for a mixed model of open access, detached and one to one youth provision; the levels and mix by need differs by District.
- b. There are gaps in open access youth provision in some areas of deprivation and for some minority groups.
- c. Young people report that accessing open access provision in rural areas is difficult.
- d. Young people and stakeholders report difficulties finding information about local youth services and the specific support that is offered
- e. There are fewer numbers of qualified professional and support youth workers compared with NYA guidance.
- f. Youth services and groups are not always joined up with other services. Where localised youth networks are functioning, there is greater collaboration

¹ CLIMB is a service for vulnerable young people who maybe missing from school and at risk of being drawn into criminal activity. It offers them activities and opportunities to recognise risky situations, form healthy friendships and new passions.

- with local services, including schools. Services are more aware of local provision; its role and how young people can be supported by youth workers.
- g. Short term funding can limit the achievement of long-term outcomes and introduces instability within youth services.
 - h. Young people want to access youth provision locally, delivered by trusted adults who can support them.
 - i. There is support for coordination of a county strategy, a youth outcomes framework, shared principles and consistency of quality.

18. The engagement work and needs assessment process will support the development of a strengthened youth offer, refreshed youth strategy and inform the recommissioning of the Council's funded youth provision.

Current planned process

19. A report is being prepared and will be taken to Cabinet, proposing:
- a. a strategy for youth services be developed,
 - b. the youth offer be coordinated and publicised,
 - c. an approach that supports ongoing youth capacity building,
 - d. the Council's funded provision to be recommissioned.

Purpose of the Meeting

20. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:
- Consider and comment on the steps taken.
 - Determine whether any further information or scrutiny is required.
 - Provide any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health & Wellbeing and the Interim Director of Public Health.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)