

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

YOUTH SERVICE PLAN WORKING GROUP

13 MAY 2003

Members Present

Councillor Williams
Councillor Nana Asante
Councillor Mitzi Green
Councillor Versallion
Mr Russell Sutcliffe (Co-opted Member)

Officers Present

Mark Gillett (Education)
Sam Johnson (Committee)

1. Issues Discussed: -

Background of the Youth Service Plan

- Draft Youth Service Plan – to be produced every three years but updated annually. It is the first time that the plan has been drafted and will be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 20th May 2003.
- The draft plan has also been sent to Government Office for London for comment.
- The context and background to the plan and the rationale for developing a plan to a Common Planning Framework across local authorities in England.
- Government consultation and policy documents ('Bridging the Gap' report, Connexions – 'The best start in life for every young person').
- Connexions London West Partnership co-terminus with the West London Learning and Skills Council area (partnership 'live' from September 2002).
- Government's strategy to focus on 13-19 year olds, especially those who have disengaged from education, employment and training.
- Launch of 'Transforming Youth Work' Government Papers, which highlighted the role of the local authority youth service in the delivery of the Connexions Service and the provision of personal and social development opportunities for young people. The publications also highlight the important contribution made by the voluntary sector in delivering youth work.
- 'Resourcing Excellent Youth Services' Government Paper which launched a specification for local authority youth services linked to increased funding through the creation of a Youth and Community Work Block within the EFS settlement for local authorities.
- Local issues addressed by the plan: the organisational structure of the Youth and Connexions Service, service delivery, resourcing, strategic objectives and targets, the role of the Youth and Connexions Service, equality, diversity and staff development, and action plans for the forthcoming year.

Funding

- Council funding of the Youth and Connexions Service – medium term strategy – 80% of resources need to be focused on 13-19 year olds (the Service previously incorporated 5-25 years olds).
- Changes in funding (block spending plans, 'Invest to Save' bid (e-government initiative) etc).
- The Grants Advisory Panel – the support provided to voluntary organisations by the Youth and Connexions Service (filling in application forms for grants, explaining the grants process).
- Review of the Council's Grants process in 2003/04.
- Members requested that a breakdown of where funding was being spent be provided in next year's plan.

Assessment of the Youth and Connexions Service

- Inspections (OFSTED are the inspectorate for Youth Services). There are no scheduled inspections - the Service is given 6 weeks notice before a visit takes place).
- The residual powers of the Secretary of State to intervene in the plans of 'failing' services.
- National Standards against which Youth and Connexions Service should be benchmarking itself.

Organisational Issues

- Current staffing levels. The need for an increase in nationally qualified Youth and Connexions Service staff. Members discussed the difficulties of recruiting highly skilled staff due to national competition in the job market for employees skilled and qualified in youth work and the cost of living in London (London weighting issues). The funding of youth work training for current employees was also discussed.
- Recruitment issues for the voluntary sector, particularly in recruiting management/leader positions.
- Identification of more Youth and Connexions Service locations in Harrow to provide services for young people (budgetary impact, etc).

Young People with Disabilities

- There was concern that young people that did not fall within the 13-19 age category would miss out on support from the Youth and Connexions Service and that this needed to be addressed in the Youth Service Plan. Members felt that it was important that these young people were not socially excluded in any way.
- Work that the Youth and Connexions Service has carried out with Harrow Association of Disabled people (HAD).

Work with the Voluntary Sector

- The role of the Youth and Connexions Service in promoting voluntary work with young people.
- Government and Council-funded summer vacation programmes ('Splash' and 'Positive Activities for Young People') and the extension of the programmes to cover all school holiday periods (Easter, Christmas, etc).
- The Harrow Voluntary Workers Forum – issues: registration (130 Groups registered) and representation: the support given to the Forum by the Youth and Connexions Service (initiatives in action plan, small grants budget, access to training facilities, sponsorship of events/skills training, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award).
- Links to the work of the Corporate Parenting Group.

IT Developments

- New IT facilities within the administrative set-up of the Youth and Connexions Service (Youth Base Management Information System developed by the National Youth Agency. Implementation will be phased in so that it is fully operational by March 2004. Also PCs for young people – located in the youth centres and the training and resource base (to enable voluntary organisations to produce newsletters and also aid the development of relevant web sites and similar Internet initiatives).

Consultation with Young People

- Members discussed 'the views of young people' on pg. 57 of the draft report. The high percentage of young people interested in sporting activities was noted.
- 'Teenage Friendly Zones' and their impact on the local community.
- Consultation with young people in relation to planning applications and proposals that could affect facilities for young people (i.e. the re-development of parks and open space).
- Involving young people in the decision-making processes of the Council and raising awareness of the functions carried out by the Council ('Hear By Right' democratic initiative developed by the Local Government Association and the National Youth Agency).
- The effect of young people participating in personal development, sport, social and other activities/initiatives (consequent impact on the levels of offending by young people).

Equality Issues

- Members commented on the categories of young people that had been victims of crime.

2. **Provisional Recommendations:** -

1. That the Lifelong Learning and Youth Service Manager be consulted on the new grants applications process in order to make the process more accessible for voluntary sector organisations.
2. That the Youth and Connexions Service support voluntary sector organisations in applying for grants.
3. That young people with disabilities, who did not fall within the scope of the 13-19 age category, receive adequate support from the Youth and Connexions Service and that this provision be highlighted in the plan.
4. That Members' involvement with the work of the Corporate Parenting Group be highlighted in the plan.
5. That it be recognised that young people need access to parks and open spaces in order to carry out leisure pursuits and for this to be taken into consideration in relation to future planning applications.
6. That young people be included in the consultation process for the redevelopment of parks and open spaces.
7. That young people be consulted on facilities being developed exclusively for them and that future developments consider a range of age appropriate facilities.
8. That the Sub-Committee receive annual updates on the plan.