

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 26 JULY 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PEER SUPPORT PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to inform the Cabinet about the recent successful application to Cabinet Office for funding to embed the participation by young people in decision making at a strategic level in partner authorities in Merseyside. The Cabinet is asked to note the report.

1 Background

- 1.1 In 2006, Wirral Council was awarded Beacon Status for Positive Engagement by young people in the Democratic and Community Process. Eight local authorities were successful in being awarded Beacon Status for Positive Engagement. As part of the Beacon Programme, the eight authorities were required to work collaboratively during the Beacon year.
- 1.2 As a Beacon Council, Wirral was expected to leave a legacy and to support that process; the eight authorities submitted a consortium bid to Cabinet Office for funding to support any legacy projects. In April this year, the consortium was informed that the bid had been successful. It is worth pointing out that the consortium bid was the only bid to receive all the funding requested, other bids had their requests reduced.

Summary of the proposal

- 1.3 The programme outlined in the proposal will deliver projects to support Recommendation 9 of the Russell Commission findings, focusing on maximising the potential of young people engaging in volunteering, to shape public services to ensure the relevance of these services to other young people.
- 1.4 The programme aims to:
 - Generate **performance improvement** within 12 recipient authorities in PSA priority regions and 4 recipient authorities in other regions
 - Develop, test and evaluate approaches to youth engagement in volunteering from planning to evaluating public services to inform Cabinet Office **policy development** with regard to Recommendation 9.

- 1.5 The Cabinet Office is a key partner in the programme, and will match fund £200,000 and add this to the £237,000 allocation from the Peer Support Fund. The proposal seeks to deliver a youth-centred and delivered engagement programme. This will deliver both performance improvement for recipient authorities and wider local government as part of dissemination activities, but also inform key Cabinet Office policy development.
- 1.6 In order to deliver a programme with meaningful outcomes for young people, local government and the Cabinet Office, a greater level of resources is needed due to the nature of youth work. The beacons are seeking to match fund their support projects to the potential value of £240,000 through in-kind contributions and external sources of funding. The programme will be delivered between April 2007 and March 2009.
- 1.7 Partners to the bid had to be Public Service Agreement authorities, in Wirral's case these will be Knowsley and Liverpool. The focus of Wirral's peer support project will be young people's involvement in the strategy and governance of organisations. The approach will be to build on existing good practice and to involve young people at all stages of the project from planning, scoping, implementation and evaluation.
- 1.8. Working with priority groups (including young people who are NEET, LAC and Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD), this project will use identified local mechanisms and build the capacity and skills of both young people and the local authorities they can become involved with. Through the use of peer educators, Wirral will introduce new ways of engaging with young people in their governance role. This will include young people directly influencing the strategic development and governance of organisations i.e. Children's Trusts and other local authority departments. It will include training within partner organisations to embed young people's involvement and will be underpinned by Wirral's Charter of Participation.
- 1.9 The outcomes for the recipients will be development of knowledge about decision making processes within different organisations, the development of key employability skills and a better understanding of inter-generational understanding and community cohesion. For Cabinet Office, the outcomes will be the identification of linkages between key policies such as the 14-19 Strategy, Respect and Community Cohesion. A priority group for involvement will be the NEET group with the aim of developing their entry to work skills and active citizenship.
- 1.10 A key principle of the Peer Support Project is partnership working which will support the dissemination of good practice. In this project there will be a number of partners some of who are currently involved in this agenda namely, The Northwest Regional Youth Work Unit, Youth Exchange Wirral and Greater Merseyside Connexions. Liverpool and Knowsley have already been identified as recipient authorities.

1.11 The project will run for two years from April 2007. There are three phases to the project:

- Phase One - Development: Activities in this period will involve setting up a project Board, identifying a research partner, scoping the local projects, and defining the dissemination strategy.
- Phase Two – Delivery: Activities in this period include delivery of support to recipient authorities, research activity to Cabinet Office and ongoing publicity and dissemination activity. Beacon authorities are expected to provide 30 days of support to each recipient authority over a 12 month period.
- Phase Three – Evaluation and Learning: Activities in this period will entail evaluation activities against baseline and success criteria, delivery of research outputs, publicity and dissemination of research outputs and youth – led identification, commissioning and delivery of legacy outputs. The Project will be completed by the end of March 2009.

2 Financial and Staffing Implications

2.1 Wirral receives £20,000 a year to run the programme i.e. a total of £40,000. This allocation is to cover support and running costs. Existing staff will be used to support the project when working with the recipient authorities.

3 Staffing Implications

3.1 There are none.

4 Equal Opportunities Implications

4.1 This project aims to increase the opportunities available to young people including the hard to reach, to be involved in decision making processes at a strategic level.

5 Community Safety Implications

5.1 There are none.

6 Local Agenda 21 implications

6.1 There are none.

7 Planning Implications

7.1 There are none

8 Anti-poverty implications

8.1 This project seeks to tackle poverty in young people through developing employability skills in young people who may be unemployed.

9 Social inclusion implications

This report seeks to promote social inclusion through the engagement of young people at the margins of society.

10 Local Member Support Implications

10.1 This report affects all wards.

11 Background papers

11.1 Application for Beacon Peer Support Bid – Policy Development and Performance Improvement (February 2007)

Recommendation

11.0 That the report be noted.

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