

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

YOUTH SERVICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 27 SEPTEMBER 2005

Impact of 'Youth Matters' on Wirral Youth Service

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with a briefing on the potential impact for Wirral Youth Service following the publication of 'Youth Matters'. The Committee is asked to note the report.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2004 the Secretary of State for Education stated in Parliament that there would be a Youth Green Paper which would be presented to Parliament and which would outline the Government's vision for the Youth Service. In July 2005, the paper was published under the title "Youth Matters" A copy of the Executive Summary is attached as Appendix A. The consultation period runs until 4th November and the Director of Education and Cultural Services is organising the Authority's response.
- 2.2 Youth Matters sets out the Government's vision for youth services and how, with partners, youth services can positively respond to the diverse needs of young people today. The proposals aim to address four key challenges:
- **how to engage young people in positive activities and empower them to shape the services they receive**
 - **how to encourage more young people to volunteer and become involved in their communities**
 - **how to provide better information, advice and guidance to young people to help them make informed choices about their lives**
 - **how to provide better and more personalised intensive support for each young person who has serious problems or gets into trouble.**
- 2.3 A major expectation contained within Youth Matters is the improved and increased participation of young people in local and national decision making processes. Any future arrangements for the delivery of services for children and young people must involve children and young people in the design and delivery of those services. The processes whereby children and young people are engaged will have to take account of needs, cultural diversity and be accessible.

2.4 All organisations and agencies working with children and young people will be affected by the proposals. Eventually there will be a reshaping of services for young people with the commissioning of services by Children's Trusts through an integrated Youth Support Service. It is anticipated that by April 2008, all the reforms will be in place.

3.0 Implications for Wirral Youth Service

3.1 Youth Matters is building on the recent Children Bill, which recognised that children were falling through the net and were being failed by the system. An outcome of the Children Bill is the establishment of multi agency approaches and teams to meet the needs of all children. Youth Services in response to Youth Matters will have to ensure that planning identifies how targeted support is best offered to young people. Wirral Youth Service has a track record of working with a number of partners and through this working it has extended the range of support available to young people in need. The Youth Service will continue to build on this approach but there will be more joint working which will bring together different cultures and approaches. The challenge for managers will be to manage the interface of this work with other organisations while working to agreed priorities and better outcomes for young people.

3.2 The key driver underpinning the proposals is the need for better engagement by young people in decision making and positive activities. Through our schools, youth forums, Connexions, Voluntary Sector there are a number of opportunities for positive engagement. The challenge for the youth service will be to ensure that in future opportunities made available take full account of the diverse needs of Wirral's young people. The recent application for Beacon Status for Positive Engagement provided a wealth of evidence demonstrating varied approaches which were differentiated according to ability. The draft Charter for Children and Young people will, when launched, provide a basis from which to ensure engagement by children and young people.

3.3 The proposals are driven by the need to raise standards in achievement by young people. Services will be expected to deliver to the required standards and to be prepared to engage with other partners to meet the diverse needs of young people. In Wirral, the proposals will mean in many instances, building on existing practice and where necessary, identifying different approaches and new partners.

3.4 There are a number of volunteering opportunities currently available for young people in Wirral. The Duke of Edinburgh, Millennium Volunteers, Youth Achievement Awards and The Prince's Trust are the existing mechanisms whereby young people can access volunteering

opportunities. The challenge for the youth service and other providers will be to build this into a continuum of provision that can take account of less formal volunteering opportunities which can take the young people into the accredited voluntary opportunities. This will provide young people with a route into formal volunteering and a portfolio of volunteering experiences. The success of this work will depend on the ability of services to attract in those young people who are not engaged and this will require the skills of those workers in targeted support work with young people.

- 3.5 Linked to engaging the most vulnerable and at risk young people is the need for information advice and guidance to be available to enable young people to make informed choices. This will impact most on Connexions and the consultation will gather views on how best to respond to this.
- 3.6 What is assured is that in future, Wirral Youth Service will operate through the Children's Services Department and planning will be carried out in line with priorities set by the Department and partners. The Service will be working alongside other partners, voluntary and statutory, to meet national and local priorities. Youth work will be retained as it is the Government's wish to retain and build on youth work skills but the settings for youth work may change. Increasingly, the Youth Service is operating alongside health, social services and in schools. Wirral Youth Service has substantial experience in these areas which will equip the Service to engage with the new developments that result from the implementation of Youth Matters. What is assured is that there will be changes.
- 3.7 In summary the proposals which will have a direct impact on Wirral Youth Service are:
- the roll out of Youth Engagement/Participation
 - the provision of Targeted support within the context of a universal service
 - the continued development of volunteering
 - the future delivery of youth provision which will be operated through Children's Services

4.0 Financial and Staffing Implications

- 4.1 There are none arising from this report.

5.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

5.1 The proposals contained within Youth Matters and their potential impact on the Youth Service seeks to ensure equal opportunity for all young people.

6.0 Community Safety Implications

6.1 The range of positive activities made available to young people will provide young people with diversionary activities and away from crime and promote community safety.

7.0 Human Rights Implications

7.1 The proposals relating to greater Youth Engagement are in line with the promotion of human rights.

8.0 Planning Implications

8.1 There are none.

9.0 Local Member Support Implications

9.1 This report affects all wards.

10.0 Background Papers

10.1 Youth Matters (HMSO Publication) 2005
The Children Bill (HMSO Publication) 2004

11.0 Recommendations

11.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and further reports on developments affecting the youth service are presented to future meetings.

Howard Cooper
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