

**YOUTH OUTREACH SCRUTINY REVIEW – OCTOBER 2008**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

R1. The authority should consider a re-structuring of the outreach service, the aim of which should be to provide a “hub” or key point-of contact for young people in several districts of the borough. Each “hub” will provide the focus point from which the outreach team will operate.

R2. The Children’s Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee should undertake a scrutiny review into the Youth Service, in particular to identify the future challenges and priorities for the service as a whole

R3. The Council should re-organise the Youth Outreach team, in order to provide a sharper focus for the service provision and reduce duplication which currently exists among the various outreach teams.

R4. The authority should re-define the post of Head of Youth Outreach, who will be responsible for providing a strategic overview and vision for the service, as well as fulfilling day-to-day management duties for the service. This arrangement will provide a single line of management structure for the Outreach service.

R5. The Cabinet is strongly urged to support the merging of the Youth Respect team into the Youth Outreach Team within the Youth Service (Children’s Services Department). This proposal will result in better use of resources (both financial and facilities, such as the buses), will avoid duplication of work and will enhance teamworking and information sharing.

R6. The panel recognises the efforts of all outreach teams and other agencies in attempting to communicate and to coordinate activities through organisations such as the Junior Jag (Joint Action Group). However, greater emphasis should be given to coordination of the work plans for the outreach workers, including day-to-day contact with the Community Support patrols. This coordination work should include the identification of hotspots and the subsequent plans for the resolution of issues, leaving a lasting legacy for affected communities wherever possible.

R7. The Council is encouraged to undertake a review to ensure that various groups working in similar areas of outreach and the identification of hotspots, such as, Youth Service, Response team, DAAT, Respect Youth team, Community Support patrols are all working on shared information systems.

R8. The authority is encouraged to consider ways in which more effective use can be made of community assets, such as the opening times, community usage and physical location of youth clubs. The panel would encourage the weekend opening for youth clubs wherever possible. As an example of improved asset management, the Council should consider a review of the physical location of the New Ferry, Bebington Youth Club, which appears to be in a poor location. In this case, a more central location could increase youth participation rates.

R9. The Youth Service should consider reviewing Performance Management arrangements to ensure that the process is robust. The Panel's work revealed issues which they felt should have been handled more effectively through the Performance Management process.

R10. The merger of the Respect Youth team to be part of a larger Youth Outreach Team will produce a more effective use of resources and will provide for better use of resources. In turn, this should release additional funds for front-line service provision at the grass-roots level.

R11. The authority should explore ways in which more funding could be made available to assist the outreach workers in doing their job. As a direct result, this will have a more beneficial and lasting impact on the communities that they serve. Greater emphasis should be given to providing the funding for more diversionary activities. This action will hopefully reduce the current practice of outreach workers having to "beg, steal or borrow".

R12 The suggested re-defined role of Head of Youth Outreach would include the task of accessing external funding, working in partnership with potential providers of diversionary activities. The role would therefore give a higher profile to the identification of funding opportunities (especially linking into to regional, national, lottery and European funding opportunities).

R13. The Youth Service is encouraged to explore ways in which more diversionary activities can be developed in a flexible manner that can meet the aspirations of young people in terms of content, time and location. Such activities might involve any of the following:

- current facilities opening for more evenings
- an enhanced use for Kontakta Bus to involve activities for young people such as computer games; music facilities; tuck shop (in addition to the current educational / advice role).
- themed evenings for young people to involve football sessions, bowling, dance evenings.

R14. The Council is encouraged to investigate the greater use of concessions for young people aged 18 and under.

R15. The authority should ensure that all cages are included on a regular cleaning programme to ensure that they are a safe environment for young people.

R16. The authority should investigate the options for providing lighting at the cages. The investigation should include the options of low-level lighting, solar-powered lighting and lighting enabled by a timer-switch.

R17. The authority is strongly encouraged to examine the nature of the permanent and temporary contracts of staff employed in the youth outreach service. In particular, Human Resources are requested to ensure employment policies are being implemented satisfactorily with respect to the use of temporary contracts on a long-term basis.

R18. Children and Young People's Department are requested to ensure that the highest priority continues to be given to the safety of the outreach staff. In particular, safety training should be provided.

R19. The authority should ensure that a uniform is provided for all outreach workers. This approach will ensure that staff are provided with warm and waterproof clothing.

R20. The Youth Service should consider the use of mentoring and temporary swapping of areas to help staff training, knowledge development and motivation.

R21. Children and Young People's Department are encouraged to arrange specific training for outreach workers regarding possible sources of funding. This training could include how to apply for funding to Area Forums, Community Fund, Your Wirral, and other appropriate sources of funding.

R22. Consideration should be given to training opportunities and qualifications for all those workers involved in outreach in order to develop a career structure and an environment in which staff are paid according to qualifications.

R23. Consideration should be given to providing more effective communication facilities to the outreach workers.

R24. As the panel recognises the prevalence and serious nature of the drinking culture among many young people, support should be given to initiatives aimed at tackling the issue of alcohol abuse among young people. In particular, the panel endorses the multi-agency approach adopted in the Wirral Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. The panel recommends that reports, regarding the progress of the Alcohol Strategy, should be presented to the Children's and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Board.

R25. The panel fully endorses the excellent work being carried out by the Response team. The panel concludes that the Response team should remain as a separate entity providing targeted, specialist outreach on request. It is recommended that the Youth Service outreach workers will alert Response to specific problems, who then carry out outreach work when requested.

R26. The panel encourages further work to take place, involving partners such as Response, DAAT and the PCT, to enhance the current advice service available to young people specifically regarding alcohol abuse. This approach will build on recent initiatives such as the practice of referrals for young people with alcohol issues from A & E to the Response team.

R27. Further work should be undertaken to ensure that the most effective mechanisms for partnership working are in place, for example, with the PCT, schools, Fire Service, Police.

R28. The Youth Outreach service is encouraged to explore any partnerships with Extended Schools in order to enhance the future of outreach activities, in particular in the provision of diversionary activities.

R29. The model as developed between the Fire Service and Wirral Council Youth Service in the development of the “Dig It Project” at Bromborough is a model to be supported and recommended as a framework for further partnership working in the future.

R30. The Head of Youth Outreach is encouraged to undertake an audit of all those outreach facilities provided by the voluntary and faith sectors within the borough. This information can then be published on the newly proposed Youth website.