



YOUTH OUTREACH SCRUTINY REVIEW

**A REPORT PRODUCED BY THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND
LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

FINAL REPORT

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL

OCTOBER 2008

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel wishes to place on record its thanks to the staff who provide and support the front-line youth outreach services. The Panel would also like to thank all those people who willingly agreed to contribute and to provide information to this review. In particular, Peter Edmondson (Head of Participation and Inclusion in the Children and Young People Department) is thanked for his role as Lead Departmental Officer during the review. Peter has helped significantly in providing guidance to the Panel throughout the review. Special thanks are also given to two members of the Older Peoples Panel, Sandra Wall and Jack Cuffe, who joined some of the meetings. Their involvement was important as they brought a “non-council” perspective to the review.

The Panel pays tribute to Bill Hawkins, who sadly passed away during the course of the review. Bill was one of the first youth workers that the Panel met during the review, while visiting the Birkenhead Youth Action Project at Bedford Road, Birkenhead. His experience and enthusiasm for the work of the outreach teams was clear to the Panel members.

2. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Panel are:

- Councillor Frank Doyle (Chair)
- Councillor Sheila Clarke
- Councillor Chris Meaden

The Panel invited the Older Peoples Parliament to nominate representatives to the review. These representatives were Sandra Wall and Jack Cuffe.

3. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF

Over a number of years, councillors have recognised the growing concern over youth-related issues, anti-social behaviour and worries over the apparent increase of alcohol and drug issues with young people. These issues were apparent to many councillors in carrying-out their ward duties. It was therefore decided that further scrutiny work should take place to ensure that the Youth Outreach teams are providing a modern service that is giving value for money.

The Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed the Youth Outreach Scrutiny Panel on 12th September 2007. The panel subsequently produced a draft scope for the review, which was agreed by the same Committee on 30th October 2007. A copy of the scope document is attached as Appendix 1.

The main issues for the review were identified in the Scope document as:

- Is the workforce adequately protected?
- Is the existing Youth Outreach organisation reaching the right young people?
- What do the young people want?
- What partnerships / funding are in existence and can they be improved?

At the start of the review, it was agreed that the scope should include the outreach work provided by the Youth Service Outreach Team, the specialist Response team (which is also part of the Youth Service) and the Youth Respect Team (which is part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team within the Community Safety Section of Regeneration Department). Initial interviews included meetings with the Head of Youth Service, Head of the Youth Outreach team, Head of the Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Head of the Response team. Subsequently, the Panel visited a number of outreach teams who were actively engaging with young people on the streets. The high degree of commitment and skill shown by the outreach workers was very evident. One outstanding quality was the ability of the workers to engage with a large number of the young people, many of whom were "difficult to reach".

4. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

The panel has set about gathering evidence in order to find answers to the main issues identified above.

Meetings with officers

Separate meetings have been held with the following Council officers:

Peter Edmondson	Head of Participation and Inclusion, Children's & Young Peoples Department, Wirral Council
Maureen McDaid	Head of Youth and Community Service, Wirral Council
Pauline Miller	Head of Outreach, Youth Service, Wirral Council
Caroline Laing	Head of Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Wirral Council
Lindsay Davidson	Deputy Head, Policy Development, Participation & Inclusion Branch of Children and Young Peoples Department, Wirral Council
Pat Rice	Head of Response Unit, Youth Service, Wirral Council (and team)

Each of the officers prepared a briefing paper in advance of a meeting. Subsequently, the officer made a brief presentation followed by a question and answer session.

Site visits

Several site visits have been undertaken, mostly in the evening when there have been young people on the streets. This has enabled the panel to witness the work of the outreach workers and the relationship they have with young people. There has also been the opportunity to discuss issues directly with the young people.

The visits have included:

Birkenhead Youth Action Project, Bedford Road
Wallasey Young Peoples Project, including a visit to Kontakta Bus
Youth Respect team (Anti-Social Behaviour team), Royden Road, Overchurch
Dig It Project, Bromborough
Moreton Youth Club
Bebington Youth Club, New Ferry
Response outreach workers, Birkenhead
Pioneer People, a faith-based charity based in Wirral

Planning / discussion meetings

A significant number of meetings have been held to discuss progress, plan the next stages and consider the outcomes of the review. The representatives of the Older Peoples Parliament have been present at these meetings. This has been especially useful in order to add a non-council perspective into the review.

Written evidence

Sefton Council
Ofsted Reports

5. EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 VISION FOR THE OUTREACH SERVICE

The panel recognises the skill and dedication of the outreach workers who engage so effectively with many young people. Indeed, for the future, the Panel would wish to see the service given an even higher profile. The Panel has a vision for an outreach service which will be provided by a modern, proactive outreach team which can address the current challenges such as the drinking culture, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour prevalent among some young people. It is suggested that the team would work most effectively if there was a single line of management or if the coordination of activities provided by the different teams was improved. The team should be visible, with a uniform, and should be organised in such a way as to provide the best possible links into diversionary activities for young people.

The Panel has a vision for the outreach service which is intrinsically linked with the Youth Service provision. A particularly good example of a youth club and the outreach workers operating in tandem was evident at Moreton Youth Club. This particular youth club acts as a 'hub' for the outreach workers. In this case the outreach workers offered a direct route for young people from the streets into the youth club; both in terms of offering the youth club activities as a diversionary activity but also in helping to get the young people settled into their new environment. In this respect, outreach is very much part of the integrated whole of the Youth Service offering. However, it is fully recognised that youth club activities are not attractive to a significant number of young people.

Moreton Youth Club was impressive in the way that the club interacted with the outreach workers. It was also excellent in terms of the quantity, quality and variety of activities provided, the standard of the youth workers and leadership as well as the opportunities given to young people to 'lead' in the direction of those activities. This particular youth club also had a high attendance level gathered from a wide catchment area, including Woodchurch and West Kirby. One interesting observation was the strong percentage, approximately 85%, of attendees who were boys; a bias which is apparently often the case with youth clubs.

One of the challenges for the future is to consider the provision of youth activities across the borough. It is in this context that the Panel will recommend that further scrutiny work takes place regarding the Youth Service as a whole. This work should consider a series of difficult issues such as:

- What is the correct approach for youth provision for the future?
- How does the provision of Youth Services in Wirral match against the Government's vision for Youth Services in the future?
- Would the provision be improved by having less youth centres with better facilities or alternatively by providing more, smaller localised centres each with more limited facilities?
- Should all youth services be council-provided or commissioned from alternative providers?
- Are the current youth clubs physically in the best locations for the future?
- Are the current activities in youth clubs appropriate for the future?
- Is the current balance between youth clubs and outreach correct?

It is clear from the work undertaken by the Panel, including visits to a variety of facilities, that the level of provision differs dramatically at various establishments. For instance, the facilities provided on a mobile bus used by a local charity were very much superior to those provided on a similar facility provided by the Council (Kontakt Bus). Similarly, the quality and variety of youth activities offered across different youth clubs is varied. Further work, therefore, needs to be done to ensure that all provision is of a consistently high quality.

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.

5.2 MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

One key issue that has arisen during the review is the coordination and interaction of the three different teams that provide Outreach Services to young people in Wirral Council (that is, the Youth Service Outreach, Response and Respect teams). Concerns arose during some of the visits regarding an apparent lack of coordination between some of the different teams. One example occurred during a visit to Overchurch where teams of workers from both the Youth Service and the Youth Respect team were simultaneously working in the same vicinity. There appeared to be competition between the two different teams rather than a willingness to coordinate their activities. This example is symptomatic of an organisation structure where different strands of workers are doing good work as individual units, but where their impact could be far greater if they were organised as a cohesive unit, giving the function an overall “command and control”. The Panel questions whether there is a sharp enough focus on the delivery of service. This is exacerbated by the lack of a single line management for youth provision in Wirral Council. There is also not a single group of councillors who have an overview for all youth services.

In theory, the aims of some of the services provided by the three teams are different. The aim of the Youth Respect team is to engage with children, young people and communities specifically in order to prevent and reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people. This work will include providing a response to complaints from the public about alleged anti-social behaviour by young people. The work of the Respect team also includes the identification of hot spot locations of anti-social behaviour and the resulting coordination or provision of diversionary activities.

In looking for solutions, the Youth Respect team aim to involve whole communities rather than young people alone. This approach led to assistance being given towards setting up a Community Association in Overchurch; a shop premises being provided as a headquarters. However, in general, an impression of the work carried out by the Youth Respect team is that the team appear to 'blitz' an area for a number of weeks and then move on. The question arises as to whether this approach leads to the most effective enduring legacy. The long-term success is most likely to be achieved by the Respect team enabling projects, such as supporting the local Community Association to raise funding for accredited training for young people at the SoccerDome in Seacombe.

The second provider of outreach work is the Youth Service. The aims of the Youth Service outreach teams are to:

- Offer a broad generic curriculum within a community context, provided through seven geographically based outreach teams. Streetwork and the Kontakta Bus are the means of making initial contact with young people, usually in public areas such as on the streets or in parks.
- Encourage young people to attend three youth centres (Moreton, Leasowe and Fender), who have outreach workers as part of their staffing complement.
- Provide specific support to disengaged and vulnerable young people through the Response outreach workers.

However, in practice, the evidence on the streets suggested that there was very little difference in the work undertaken by the outreach workers of the Youth Service, the Youth Respect team or the Response unit. All of the teams appeared to approach and deal with the young people in a similar way. Therefore, this begs the question as to why the Council chooses to have separate teams. It is these observations that drive a number of the recommendations regarding future organisation of the Outreach service.

The duplication of activities within different teams can be exemplified by the existence of an alcohol worker within the Youth Respect team (albeit a part-time role) in addition to a full-time alcohol worker within the Response unit. The overall impact on the community of these two workers would be greater if their work was coordinated and targeted more effectively.

It is absolutely clear that some coordination between the various teams and agencies involved in youth-related work does take place in the form of multi-agency meetings such as the Junior JAG (Joint Action Group). This forum, organised from within the Community Safety team, enables a number of Council teams and other agencies (including the police) to analyse reports and crime statistics, providing the intelligence to highlight "hotspots". Nevertheless, further improvements could be made to ensure that information is shared more effectively and barriers between organisations are decreased or removed all together. It will often be the case that actions required to resolve problems in "hotspots" will involve agencies / teams working in partnership.

It appears that the demand for outreach teams (on the streets), especially in relation to the identification of "hotspots", will be higher than the current capacity. It is therefore essential that the outreach teams are used most effectively. It is proposed that the Head of Youth Outreach, in partnership with other agencies, should be responsible for the allocation of the outreach workers in order to best match the available resources with the demand. However, the ultimate aim should be to secure long-term impact in the affected

communities. The availability of diversionary activities is therefore a key pre-requisite.

The visits to youth clubs raised a number of observations, which included:

- The relative levels of management and leadership at all youth clubs.
- The great difference in the quality and quantity of activities delivered at different establishments.
- The relative membership levels at different clubs.
- The need to develop and implement an Action Plan for all Youth Clubs.
- The need to ensure the effective use of youth club premises as part of the Council's Asset Management programme.

Recommendations:

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 team-working 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.

5.3 FUNDING

One key issue that repeatedly arose during the course of the review was the ability of the Council to divert sufficient funding towards youth projects or diversionary activities. There was a perception formed by the Panel that there was insufficient funding at the "coal-face". During more than one visit it was clear that the outreach workers felt that they did not have access to sufficient funding to allow them to provide viable alternative activities. There was evidence that, if the outreach workers identify a possible project then it is their task to "beg, steal or borrow" the funding in order to pump-prime such a scheme. The Panel therefore identified the funding of the front-line service as a priority for the future. It is considered that alternative sources of funding for some schemes may already be available through Area Forums, the Community Fund, Your Wirral, Youth Opportunity Programme, and so on. Training on these alternative sources of funding should therefore be given to all those staff involved with youth outreach, obviously including the outreach workers. It is essential that the outreach workers should know how to apply for funding from these sources.

One of the reasons for the Panel recommending that the Council should consider the merging of the Youth Respect Team and the Youth Service is to generate better use of resources. In turn, this will generate savings which can be re-invested in the frontline outreach service. Indeed, the long-term funding of the Youth Respect Team is a major issue as funding is currently only available on a short-term, annual basis. Initially funding was provided through the Safer Stronger Communities Fund. The bulk of funding for 2008/9 will be sourced from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

The evidence suggests that the generation of additional sources of funding is currently not an issue that all members of staff appear to be aware of. The access to additional funding streams will be key to the future success and expansion of outreach opportunities. While this is currently part of the role of key staff within the Youth Service, it is now suggested that one of the priorities for the Head of Youth Outreach should be to enable the Council and other partners to access alternative sources of funding. As funding regimes appear to be constantly changing, it is important that funding applications are given the highest priority.

Recommendations:

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).

5.4 THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

One very noticeable fact from the visits on the streets and to the youth clubs was the willingness of the young people to engage, not only with the youth workers, but with the Panel members. It was absolutely clear from these discussions that the consumption of alcohol by a significant number of young people is now a serious problem across the borough. It was of particular concern that during one visit to an area of Birkenhead that young people aged as young as approximately nine or ten years old were able to conduct a discussion regarding their experience of drinking alcohol. During a conversation on that particular visit the Panel were told that the usual option during the week was cider, with the drink of choice at weekends being vodka. It was also noteworthy that there were young people of such a low age on the streets during dark evenings in addition to their specific experiences of alcohol.

However, alcohol consumption is an issue across the borough and is now established as part of the culture of a significant number of young people. Indeed, in the past, youth leaders at a youth club in Wirral have attempted to hold weekend sessions at the youth club, but attendance was poor because of the alternative priority given by the young people to drinking at weekends. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although alcohol consumption among young people is a serious issue, this limited evidence from Wirral should be seen in a national context, where this issue has dramatically risen in priorities over recent years.

The aspirations of the young people can be best met by the Council (and other partners) ensuring that as many diversionary activities as possible are made available. In this respect, the existing cages which are provided in the borough are a relatively low-cost option to maintain. However, two cages which were visited (New Chester Road, Birkenhead and The Quarry, New Brighton) were found to contain significant quantities of broken glass. Therefore, rather than providing a diversionary activity they had become a health and safety hazard. These cages were visited during the evening in winter. The lack of lighting limits their use for positive activities; meanwhile helping to create a more dangerous environment.

Recommendations:

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.

5.5 STAFF (TRAINING / DEVELOPMENT)

The Panel were very impressed by competencies and dedication of the outreach workers and the skills used to engage with the young people. However, it is clear that there were issues among staff, which is borne out by the high turnover of staff at Level 1 (outreach workers). It is within this context that the Panel recommends that consideration should be given to ways in which training opportunities can be given with an opportunity for staff to develop a career structure.

A key issue is that many are employed on short-term, temporary contracts, often working as outreach workers for only six hours per week. (Many of the outreach staff have additional day-time work). In addition, there are also a high number of part-time manager posts. The management and organisation of this type of workforce obviously has its challenges, particularly as the outreach workers usually work evenings. As a result, communication between staff can be difficult.

During the visits, it has become evident that there are a significant number of staff who are employed on relatively short fixed-terms contracts. However, due to repeated renewal of contracts, some of these staff have been employed by the Council for a significant number of years.

The nature of the work means that the outreach workers are taken to those areas where young people tend to congregate in the outdoors. This can often lead them to dark and relatively risky or dangerous environments. Evidence suggests that the safety of staff is clearly a priority for the Council. As much of the work takes place outside, the weather clearly has an impact on staff. Although the Youth Respect team are currently provided with a uniform, this does not apply to those outreach workers employed within the Youth

Service or the Response teams. In the future, the provision of warm, protective clothing would enhance the comfort and well-being of the staff.

By the nature of the work, the outreach workers come into contact with young people who may exhibit risk-taking behaviour. Therefore, on occasions workers have to make decisions about specific children / young people. Child protection training is compulsory for all outreach workers, and a protocol is in place to enable workers to make decisions on the streets. As part of the child protection role, the outreach workers regularly distribute leaflets to young people on a targeted basis.

Recommendations:

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.

5.6 SPECIALIST AREAS (RESPONSE TEAM)

The Youth Service is supported by the specialist Response team. This team is a Borough-wide service providing specialist support to vulnerable young people and those at risk of substance and alcohol abuse, homelessness, sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, low self esteem, stress, abuse, poor health and poverty. Many of the young people, with

whom Response operate, have complex needs, requiring intensive support from the service.

In terms of volumes of contacts, during a seven month period between April and October 2007, the agency saw 530 individual young people age 13 – 19 years. However, as most of these young people need to come back into Response, usually because of complex issues, the total attendance record shows a total of 2097 visits for the same period.

In addition to these 'through the door' figures, Response has also recorded a total of 3381 young people seen during street outreach work. This figure also includes a large population of the young people seen during educational workshops which are delivered in schools and colleges.

Outreach work plays an important role in targeting vulnerable, hard to reach groups of young people. Not all young people have the confidence and skills to directly access the service. This often leaves many young people feeling isolated, anxious and without support. The work of the Response team addresses this issue by building meaningful relationships with young people, agencies and communities. In turn, this enables the Response team to have a consistent presence in the lives of young people and goes a long way to normalising interaction with a range of other support services. A key role for the Response team is to sign-post young people to relevant services, dealing with each case on an individual basis. Effective outreach and education involves a number of different strategies as it needs to be flexible, responsive and visible. The different forms of activity include:

- Street work
- Crisis work on a one-to-one basis
- Developmental Group work
- Drug and Alcohol Education Workshops in schools, colleges and youth units.

Specific challenges for the Response outreach workers include the habitual risky behaviour of the client group, who often congregate in dark and unsafe locations where there is a prevalence of alcohol. In more recent times, there has also been a risk of violence on the streets due to young people owing drug money. Indeed a significant challenge for the Response team is to provide support to parents who have problems with young people, due to them owing drug money.

The Panel were particularly impressed by the work of the Response team and the results achieved. However, one interesting observation of the Panel during the visits with the outreach workers was that there was little to distinguish between the approach, the method of working and the techniques used by the Response outreach workers as opposed to those from the general Youth Service or from the Youth Respect team. The panel therefore questions whether there is a need for the Response outreach team to operate as 'ordinary' outreach workers. An optional mode of working would be for the Response team to only operate in those areas and with those groups to which they are referred by the other outreach teams. Nevertheless, it is fully appreciated by the Panel that fundamental to the success of the Response team is the need to build contacts and confidence with young people on the streets. It is considered that the Response outreach team has specialist skill areas and it is important that these skills are used most effectively. This will mean that, in future, outreach teams from Response and from the

other teams must work in a more coordinated way. There was evidence during the review that this was not always the case.

Clearly, as stated elsewhere in the report, the availability of alcohol to young people is an increasing problem. The Response team will be a key part of the Council's approach to combat this issue, being one of the strands in a partnership approach. As an example, a new scheme, which commenced in September 2007, has been introduced whereby young people can now be referred, where relevant, from the A&E Department at Arrowe Park Hospital directly to the Alcohol worker in the Response team for on-going support. Indeed, a significant amount of the funding for alcohol workers in the Response team (full-time) and the Youth Respect team (part-time) is already provided by support from the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). A further example of good partnership intervention is the training delivered to shop staff who are licencees in Wirral. This training, to advise on legal responsibilities, is provided through a partnership involving Wirral PCT, Wirral Council Trading Standards and the Response team.

Recommendations:

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.

5.7 PARTNERSHIPS AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

It is clear from the work done by the Panel that there is a significant amount of work taking place in the borough, in which the Council is not directly involved. One faith sector organisation was visited. This group used a mobile bus to visit different sites within the borough. The impressive facilities included a television, music centre, computer games and a 'ships galley' used as a tuck shop. It is significant that these facilities were of superior quality to the equivalent facilities offered by the Council.

In other cases, the Council is working in direct partnership with voluntary organisations in order to help provide activities for young people to enjoy. One such partnership led to the creation of the Dig It project at Bromborough where a group of young people have developed a centre to grow vegetables, making use of a commercial polytunnel. The property and facilities were initially provided by the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (Fire Service). Subsequently, the project was supported by the Youth Service through the local outreach worker, with funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund. This project is recognised as having enabled the young people to make significant changes in their lives. It can be acknowledged as a model on which future projects can be developed. The Panel recognised the superb work that has taken place with the Dig It project. A major challenge for the Youth Service in the future is to be able to support other such projects when the demand occurs.

A further challenge for the future is to enable the public bodies such as the Fire Service, Police, PCT, and schools to work together in a coordinated manner to help tackle some of the problems in the lives of young people. It is essential that mechanisms are in place to ensure effective partnership working. As an example, it is noted that Wirral Council and Wirral PCT do work constructively together on many issues. One recent example, directly affecting young people, is on the issue of alcohol abuse and the proposed Alcohol strategy.

There are many voluntary organisations within the borough with whom the Youth Service works in partnership in order to achieve joint goals. This relationship may mean that an organisation receives officer support / advice or funding in the form of grants. Where this is the case, Service Level Agreements (SLA's) are in place to try to ensure that the organisation achieves jointly-agreed aims. It is essential that SLA's continue to be in place wherever the Council is supporting voluntary groups through grant funding.

Recommendations:

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.

Scope Document for the Youth Outreach Scrutiny Review

Date: 16th October 2007
 Review Title: Youth Outreach in Wirral

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Panel members: Cllr Frank Doyle Cllr Chris Meaden Cllr Sheila Clarke plus possible co-optees (see section 12.2 below)	0151 652 9488 mobile 07734 414789 0151 645 1729 0151 608 1154
Other Key Officer contacts: Maureen McDaid (Head of Youth Service) Pauline Miller (Head of Youth Outreach) Caroline Laing (Community Safety)	0151 637 6348 0151 327 8063 0151 606 5462
<p>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>1.1 Providing educational and cultural opportunities for all</p> <p>1.2 Making Wirral safer</p> <p>1.3 Supporting and Protecting vulnerable people</p>	
<p>2. What are the main issues?</p> <p>2.1 Is the workforce adequately protected?</p> <p>2.2 Is the existing Youth Outreach reaching the right young people?</p> <p>2.3 What do the youngsters want?</p> <p>2.4 What partnerships / funding are in existence and can they be improved?</p>	
<p>3. The Committee's overall aim/objective in doing this work is:</p> <p>3.1 To review the Council's Youth Outreach Services and explore partnership arrangements which are in place, both internally and externally. The work of both the Youth Outreach team and the Community Safety (Anti-Social Behaviour) team will be part of the review, including Response.</p>	

4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:

- 4.1 Improved understanding of outreach services
- 4.2 Improved co-ordination of service providers
- 4.3 Greater understanding of funding regimes
- 4.4 Improved understanding of the needs of young people
- 4.5 Safer communities
- 4.6 Less anti-social behaviour
- 4.7 Satisfied workforce

5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?

To recommend any changes which would lead to the outcomes listed in section 4 above.

6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

- 6.1 Cabinet
- 6.2 Other councillors
- 6.3 Existing / potential partners

7. Duration of enquiry?

Final report to be submitted to Children Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the current municipal year (that is, by 18th March 2008)

8. What category does the review fall into?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Policy Review | Y <input type="checkbox"/> | Policy Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| External Partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | Performance Management | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Holding Executive to Account | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?

The review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers.

10. What information do we need?	
<p>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</p> <p>10.1.1 Briefing paper to cover 'Definition of what we mean by Youth Outreach' - What the Council does? How much does it cost? How many staff? What are the key issues?</p> <p>10.1.2 Ofsted reports - How do other councils compare?</p> <p>10.1.3 Comparitive information (taken from the internet)</p> <p>10.1.4 Organisational chart including location of staff</p>	<p>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</p> <p>10.2.1 'Street interviews' with Outreach workers and youngsters</p> <p>10.2.2 Interviews with key officers</p> <p>10.2.3 Interviews with Outreach Workers and Community Safety (Respect) team workers</p> <p>10.2.4 Visit to Response Outreach</p>
<p>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc). council officers to include:</p> <p>Young people Maureen McDaid - Youth Service Pauline Miller - Youth Outreach Caroline Laing - Community Safety Outreach workers Maria Charlesworth - Response</p>	<p>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <p>10.4.1 Current arrangements and opportunities for development.</p> <p>10.4.2 Current and future needs of young people.</p>
<p>11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits/observations, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc).</p> <p>11.1 Shadow an Outreach worker(s) and talk to youngsters</p> <p>11.2 Visit to Response Outreach</p> <p>11.3 Individual meetings with key officers listed in 10.3 above</p> <p>11.4 Meeting of key officers</p>	
<p>12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).</p> <p>12.1 Young people will be consulted by site visits with the Outreach Workers</p> <p>12.2 A member of Youth Parliament and a member of the Older People's Parliament will be invited to join the Scrutiny Panel as co-optees.</p> <p>12.3 There is no plan to involve public meetings or Area Forum meetings.</p>	