

OPTION: YOUTH CHALLENGE

BUDGET SAVING: £400,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The current budget for Youth Challenge (Positive Activities for Young People) is £605,800. The service provides universal and targeted services to Young People – outreach, risk taking behaviour (alcohol, substance misuse), Big Nights, Arts and Drama.

The option is to reduce the budget for Youth Challenge services.

A budget reduction of two thirds is proposed over two years.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

DfE Benchmarking data indicate that services for Young People are high cost compared to statistical neighbours – with a spend per head of £101 compared to the average of £78.

Work with other local authorities to jointly commission services has already been piloted and this will be reviewed.

IMPACT

The impact of this reduction would be to reduce preventative capacity. As the commissioning moves to target young people with a higher level of need existing service users may not meet the required threshold to access this targeted support, meaning a reduction in the number of young people taking part in positive activities and achieving accredited outcomes. It may therefore result in more young people's needs not being addressed at a lower level, resulting in referrals to high cost services operating at greater levels of need, an increase in anti-social behaviour and number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System. A positive issue will be improved prioritization for targeted and specialist services.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment benchmarking data indicates that currently:

- “Alcohol is a significant problem for children and young people in Wirral”.
- Wirral's teenage conception rate in 2010 (47.3/1,000) was higher than both the North West average.
- The number of young people in Wirral who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is higher in Wirral compared to national and regional averages).
- The most recent NEET figure for Wirral was 8.8% (September 2012).

The proposed reduction will result in less money being invested within the voluntary sector and this could affect our current providers of services which are Involve Northwest, Birkenhead Youth Club, The Bank, and Grange Baptist Church. Statutory Partners affected are Merseyside Fire and Rescue. Council departments affected by these proposals are Sports Development and Integrated Youth Support (YOS and Universal Support).

This proposed budget saving would impact on one member of staff who has been seconded from a partner organisation.

MITIGATION

Consultation has already taken place with commissioners such as the Youth Offending Service to identify and agree priorities.

The Council would seek to ensure that services are accessible by continuing to target the more vulnerable and at risk young people. Referrals to services will be managed centrally through Area Teams to ensure that appropriate young people in need of support are accessing the interventions. Access to any service will be based on need. The current round of commissioning already seeks to provide targeted Youth Challenge services in those areas that are most in need i.e. high levels of child poverty, teenage pregnancy.