

Rapid Scrutiny Exercise Final Report:
Response to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy Consultation

Purpose and Background

1. On 9th June 2011, the Children's Services Select Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise to respond to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation document, with the results of the exercise to be presented to the Committee at its next meeting. It was also agreed that, at its July meeting, the Committee would agree arrangements for future scrutiny of the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation results and subsequent proposals to Cabinet on 13th September.

2. The Rapid Scrutiny Exercise was held on 6th July 2011 with the following attendees:

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| Cllr Jon Hubbard | Councillor (Chairman) |
| Cllr Russell Hawker | Councillor |
| Cllr Helen Osborn | Councillor |

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| Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE | Cabinet Member for Children's Services |
| Cllr Richard Clewer | Portfolio Holder for Youth Skills |

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| Julie Cramp | Joint Director, Commissioning & Performance |
| Jane Shuttleworth | Interim Head of Commissioning |
| Kevin Sweeney | Area Manager (N&E), Integrated Youth Services |
| Henry Powell | Senior Scrutiny Officer |

3. As well as receiving verbal evidence, the Rapid Scrutiny Group considered the following documents:

- Commissioning Strategy for Young People aged 13 to 19 – April 2012 to 2015 (draft for consultation – May 2011)
- A report on the Process for Developing and Consulting on the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy
- An indication of the potential impact of the four suggestions based on the consultation responses already received

Summary of Discussion and Conclusions

Consultation process

4. The Chairman reminded all present that the Group's remit was to agree a response to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation, and not to scrutinise the consultation *process*. Members agreed, however, that there were a number of concerns regarding the consultation process and that a separate exercise should be undertaken for looking at this (see **Recommendation 2**). The concerns included:
 - That the consultation document and some consultation events may have given the impression certain campus projects were more likely to go ahead than was actually the case, which may have skewed responses to the consultation questions.
 - The current consultation is valuable in that it is broad, it engages the public at an early stage and encourages innovative ideas. However, it contains little indication of what the future of the youth services might be, particularly as the eventual service configuration is likely to be a hybrid of the four suggestions contained within the consultation document. Scrutiny members felt there was a need for a second consultation stage where people had the opportunity to give their views on specific proposals, and this had not been allowed within the proposed timescale (see **Recommendation 4**).
 - One member commented that the consultation seem biased towards questions about the merits of potential new buildings. The consultation included no question asking if and how existing buildings could be improved or used more efficiently.

Summary of discussions from the rapid scrutiny meeting

5. The Cabinet Member reported that any savings found in other areas of 13-19 services could conceivably be used to reduce the proposed £600k cut to the Youth Services 2012/13 budget. However, many of these areas have already seen significant reductions, so the potential for further savings was limited.
6. The Cabinet Member stated that this was not a 'cuts-led' process as there had been a need and intention to build a sustainable youth service prior to the need for significant budget cuts.
7. In Wiltshire, services within the 13-19 Strategy were being looked at in the round, unlike many other local authorities who were simply slicing funding from youth services.

8. The Portfolio Holder for Youth Skills reported that 38 young people, including representatives from each CAYPIG (Children and Young People's Involvement Group) had been involved in designing the consultation process.
9. It was confirmed that Wiltshire's Children & Young People's Needs Assessment was currently being updated, but it was unlikely that the new version would contain any significant surprises.
10. Members discussed the framework for categorising services ranging from universal services that are available to all, to Tier 3 and 4 services dealing with the most serious issues. Universal services might be more accurately described as 'open access' services because not all young people would want or need to access them. 35% of young people in Wiltshire have contact at some point with youth services, compared with the national average of 25%.
11. Following a member query, the Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder did not agree that young people's services were taking a disproportionate hit in terms of cuts to departmental funding. The huge investment being seen in certain services for older people was an essential step that will make savings in the future. The size of this investment reflected Wiltshire's rapidly increasing older population, which is in contrast to its relatively stable population of young people. Also, the Commissioning Strategy aims to save 19% from the Youth Development Service budget whilst the overall reduction to the Council's budget is 28%.
12. Following a member query, it was confirmed that some officers had expressed initial interest in taking over the youth development service as a service mutual. However, there had been little enthusiasm from other staff and the idea had not proceeded.
13. The relative importance placed by young people on buildings versus youth workers was discussed. The Group was informed that Wiltshire has a 'mixed economy' of both building- and street-based youth activities, but is relatively building-heavy compared with other authorities.
14. It was confirmed that the staffing funding formula brought to the Children's Services Select Committee in 2010 would continue to be used.
15. Members suggested that the provision of some qualifications within the QCA framework can offer funding and this might be an opportunity for income generation for youth centres. Officers advised that although this was an interesting idea, youth centres were very limited in what qualifications they could due to the necessary resources. Also, the government was looking for larger contracts for providing these qualifications than youth centres could provide. More likely sources of income were the subsidies paid by young people to access youth

services and involving young people in more fund-raising activities (e.g. washing cars) in order to help pay for the services they use.

Proposed responses to the consultation questions

16. The Group recommends that the Committee submits the following response to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation (**Recommendation 1**);

Q1. Do you have any comments on the purpose of the 13 to 19 commissioning strategy outlined in section 2.1 including the specific age range covered by the strategy?

No.

Q2. Do you have any comments on or additions to the scope of the 13-19 commissioning strategy outlined in section 2.2?

No.

Q3. Are there any other strategies or plans which cover the 13-19 age range to add to the list in section 2.3?

No, not to our knowledge.

Q4. What is your vision for Wiltshire's 13 to 19 year olds?

No issues with the vision stated (*this was not within the remit of the Group*).

Q5. What values do you think should underpin the 13-19 commissioning strategy and services for 13 to 19 year olds?

Q6. From your knowledge and experience what are the top 5 types of need which the 13 to 19 commissioning strategy must address?

During the rapid scrutiny meeting, the Portfolio Holder advised that he could not confirm whether provision of youth services would continue to be weighted towards areas of greater deprivation, because the results of the consultation would decide the eventual service configuration, and this was still ongoing. However, the Cabinet Member added that the Business Plan 2011-15 had made clear that protecting vulnerable people was the Council's highest property.

The Group feels that deprivation should continue to be an important indices when allocating resources for youth service provision.

Q7. Do you have any comments, amendments or additions to the suggested outcome indicators noted in section 4.6?

No.

Q8. Do you have any comments or anything to add to the analysis of the current position outlined in section 6.1 and 6.2?

No. (*The Group did not feel it was in a position to undertake any analysis of the current position*).

Q9. Do the commissioning priorities outlined in section 7 below take into account the analysis outlined in section 6? If not, please suggest amendments or additions to the commissioning priorities noted in section 7.

Nothing to add.

Q10. Should there be space for young people in each campus and if so what size and type of space is required by young people?

The Group has concerns regarding the relevance of the campus programme to this consultation, given the disparity between the required timescales for making savings and the projected timescales for the campus projects (as well as uncertainty around some of the campus projects).

Q11. Bearing in mind the direction of government thinking how can we best meet the information and advice guidance of vulnerable young people? How can we most effectively prevent young people from becoming NEET ie. not in education, employment or training?

This was not discussed.

Q12. Do you agree with the commissioning priorities identified in section 7.2? Do you have any comments, amendments or additions? Can you select your top 3 commissioning priorities?

This was not discussed.

Q13. Do you agree with the youth work principles outlined in section 7.3.2? Do you have any comments, amendments or additions?

This was not discussed.

Q14. Which, if any, of the service suggestions do you prefer? Could you give your reasons why? Do you have any alternative services or savings ideas?

Suggestion 1 – Testing the Market for Youth Work Services

- a) The Group are concerned regarding whether the tendering of a £2.5M contract can be achieved in the timescale proposed (i.e. from Cabinet decision on 13th September to implementation in April 2012). Officers provided assurances that this was not the case and that the proposed timescales are achievable though challenging. However, the advice given in a recent procurement member training event suggested that the timescale described would not be compliant with EU procurement rules for this size of contract.

The Group remain concerned that the proposed timescale for transferring youth services to the market place is unachievable. Any gap in provision during a transition period could lead to a perception that the cuts have been more severe than is actually the case.

- b) The Group agreed that town and parish councils could potentially bid to take over elements of local youth services. However, this could result in there being inconsistent provision across urban and rural parts of the county, as well as young people seeking to access services in neighbouring town or parish council areas.

Suggestion 2 – Developing Local Partnerships with the Voluntary Sector or Secondary Schools or Colleges

- c) The Group are concerned that transferring youth service provision to the voluntary sector could lead to a reduction in the quality of youth worker leadership.
- d) During the meeting, it was confirmed that that many young people responding to the consultation had indicated they would not want youth services based within schools. The Group has considerable concerns, therefore, that such a move would reduce take-up of youth services.
- e) If the use of existing Council Youth Development Centres is to be reduced, the Group are concerned at the lack of suitable alternative premises and at the reduction to the number of 'safe zones' for Wiltshire's young people to go to.

Suggestion 3 – Local Management and Closer Alignment with Campus Developments

- f) This contains a suggestion that the management of youth work provision could transfer from DCE to another part of the Council, and officers have confirmed that this would most likely be to the Community Governance team. The Group are concerned that Community Area Managers have not been recruited on the strength of their staff management skills and they might therefore be unsuited to taking on this responsibility.

- g) The Group discussed the possibility of youth services being funded centrally but managed locally. The Group have concerns that local management of youth services could reduce the ability to use staff flexibly (i.e. youth workers working flexibly across different areas to maximise provision). It could be a general impediment to taking a strategic approach to youth services, making it difficult to provide a consistent countywide service.
- h) Due to the differing timescales of the various campus projects, careful thought needs to be given to how and when the necessary savings could be made (if this suggestion is taken forward). Campus projects cannot form a part of the proposals to save £600k in 2011/12, when the first projects come online in 2013 and the last ones not until around 2020.

Suggestion 4 – Changing Local Youth Work Offer through Reduced Reliance on Existing Buildings

- i) The Group suggests that work is done to maximise, rather than reduce, the use of existing Youth and Community Centres. The ‘community’ element of these buildings’ function may have reduced over the years and could be looked at again, potentially through phased handovers to the community.
- j) The Group are concerned that reducing the use of buildings will make providing a year-round youth service difficult. Reducing the use of buildings to only those in major population centres will necessitate providing a large amount of transportation, which would carry a significant cost.
- k) The Group notes that some young people are territorial and may not be prepared to travel to another locality to access their youth services.
- l) The Group wishes to note that, in its view, Wiltshire’s youth workers have been thoroughly professional and nondirective while conducting this consultation.

Concluding remarks

- 17. As stated in paragraph 4, the Group welcomes the consultation to date and the opportunity to provide feedback at an early stage of the process. However, it has concerns at the very short timescale allowed before the closure of the consultation and the adoption of specific changes to service provision that won’t have enjoyed any public consultation. It therefore recommends that thought is given to extending the timescale for implementing these changes to allow for a second stage of consultation and for ensuring all internal and potential external processes are in place before any changes are made (**Recommendation 4**).
- 18. The Group agreed that the wellbeing and safety of young people in our communities is paramount to any decisions made in this process should be.

Recommendations

That the Children's Services Select Committee:

- 1. Submits the above response to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation;**
- 2. Undertakes scrutiny of the consultation process followed for the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy, paying mind to the concerns detailed in paragraph 4 of this report;**
- 3. Undertakes scrutiny of the consultation results and subsequent proposals for the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy, prior to their consideration by Cabinet`;**
- 4. Makes the following recommendation to Cabinet:**

“In light of the issues that could be experienced in bringing about substantial change to services in such a short period of time, thought should be given to extending the timescale for implementing these changes to allow for secondary consultation and for ensuring all internal and potential external processes are in place before any changes are made.

Thought should also be given to whether the £600k expected to be cut from the 2011/12 youth development service budget could be funded from the £733k outturn underspend that was ringfenced into earmarked reserves at the end of the 2010/11 financial year.”

Cllr Jon Hubbard – Chairman of the Rapid Scrutiny Group

Paul Kelly – Designated Scrutiny Officer

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Appendices

Appendix A – Commissioning Strategy for Young People aged 13 to 19 – April 2012 to 2015 (draft for consultation – May 2011)

Background documents

- A report on the Process for Developing and Consulting on the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy
- An indication of the potential impact of the four suggestions based on the consultation responses already received