

Report from Cllr Jon Hubbard

Area Board Champion for Children and Young People

Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

Melksham's YAG continues to thrive and it is great to see young people stepping up to the mark and taking an active role in helping make decisions that affect our Community Area. I'm pleased to be able to support this group by being one of the 'older' representatives on the group. The group itself is chaired and run by the young people and those of us to sit on it from the 'older' generations are there in an advisory capacity.

The Area Board has received regular updates from the group over the past year and I look forward to continuing to work with them for the next year.

Melksham Extended Services

I'm delighted to sit on the Board of Directors and to be a Trustee of Melksham Extended Services. This not-for-profit company which is also a registered charity was set up jointly between the community and local schools to continue to do some of the work previously undertaken by the Government funded Extended Services Co-ordinator and Steering Group.

I'm honoured to Chair the Board of Directors and in that role have been able to broker several joint pieces of work between the charity and the Board over the past year. These have included the Youth Awards and You Choose event, details below, as well as the successful Opportunity Melksham Jobs Fair held in March this year.

Youth Awards and You Choose event

This year saw the second of the Melksham Young People's Awards events organised by Melksham Extended Services. This event celebrates some of the marvellous achievements of our young people and I was delighted that the Area Board was closely involved with the event again.

Also at this event is the You Choose funding activity where we saw almost £3,000 of funding from the Area Board distributed for work on projects with Children and Young People from across the community area. The exciting part of this event was that the final decision on how the funding was spent was in the hands of the young people themselves as they had the opportunity to vote for the projects they thought would be best.

Young People's Counselling

Melksham Area Board jointly funds a counselling service for young people in Melksham with Extended Services and this provides one of the few opportunities for young people to self-refer to ask for help.

The service has been over-subscribed for the past year and has made a very real difference to the lives of young people in our community.

A challenge for future years will be continuing this service as the Area Board will only have capital funding available for supporting projects.

Street Youth Work

The Area Board has contributed towards to the cost of the Youth Worker team based at Canberra reaching out and undertaking street based youth work in the town. This work has helped a number of young people and also contributed to reducing complaints about anti-social behaviour.

Young People's Area Board

This year saw us hold a dedicated Young People's Area Board meeting, where we asked the YAG to help run parts of the meeting.

This was successful with many reports from 'adults' attending the meeting that it was both informative and that it was good to see the young people so involved.

I am hoping to repeat this again but maybe expand it so that the whole meeting is run by the young people and the agenda is even more geared towards their needs.

MAF (Multi-Agency Forum)

In the past year the Multi-Agency forum in Melksham has only met a couple of times as several of those who were heavily involved through the Children's Centre has moved on and the administrative support that had been delivered through Extended Services has not been possible due to the post being vacant.

I am hoping that we can relaunch the MAF in the next year, probably by linking the MAF with the new Community Network Group that I am hoping to get up and running.

Youth Review

As many people are aware there is a review of how Open Access Youth Services are delivered across the county, with a financial saving of £250,000 needing to be found.

Whilst this review is challenging in many ways, with the 'preferred' option identified by the Cabinet calling for far greater delegation of funding to communities, it also offers some real opportunity for Melksham to continue to develop its youth offer and build on the very successful delivery of services that we have seen over the years.

Significant change will happen in our town anyway on the next 2 years with the opening of the new Campus and the subsequent closure of Canberra YDC as services are relocated. This could be a great time for us to get the Community Network Group together of all those who are involved in the delivery of services for Young People and forge a new way of working that further enhances youth delivery in our town and the surrounding villages.