

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 November 2011

Subject: The future development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS)

Cabinet member: Councillor Lionel Grundy – Children's Services

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

The Young People's Support Service (YPSS) is currently responsible for providing educational provision for permanently excluded pupils of secondary school age. This is one of the Council's statutory responsibilities. In May 2011, the YPSS was inspected by Ofsted and placed in special measures.

Radical and robust action is therefore required to bring about the required change. Closure of the existing service would make a complete break with the past and enable a new approach to delivering provision to be implemented. In order to do this a request for closure needs to be made to the Secretary of State. It is highly likely that this would be agreed given the need to transform the current service. Our aspiration for this group of young people is high and the status quo is not an option.

Different proposals have been considered for the future organisation of provision. The Department for Education (DfE) has invited Wiltshire to take part in a trial of 'Alternative Provision' for secondary school pupils excluded from, or at risk of exclusion from school. It is proposed that the Council under the "power to innovate" would delegate to secondary schools its current statutory obligation for the provision of education for permanently excluded pupils with appropriate devolved funding for a pilot three year period. The Council would retain its responsibility for the overall well-being of young people and this would be fulfilled by ensuring that schools delivered provision against a clear specification based on success criteria with robust monitoring and quality assurance processes. The Council would in effect be commissioning schools individually or in groups to deliver this provision.

If secondary schools are directly responsible for the provision for permanently excluded pupils it is likely that young people will follow programmes that are better suited to their needs and therefore secure better achievement, progression and outcomes. This proposal is in line with the current direction of travel as set out in the Education Bill currently before parliament. Taking part in the trial would enable Wiltshire to be in the forefront of national developments.

Proposal(s)

1. Wiltshire accepts the invitation from the Department for Education to join the Alternative Provision trial and, for a three year period, delegate the responsibility for making educational provision for permanently excluded young people to secondary schools, with devolved funding.
2. A request is made to the Secretary of State to close the existing Young People's Support Service from 31 August 2012.
3. Secondary schools are supported in using the devolved funding either individually or in groups to provide high quality alternative provision. The Local Authority provides robust quality assurance of the provision.

Reason for Proposal

This proposal will support better outcomes for the young people who are permanently excluded.

Carolyn Godfrey**Director, Department for Children and Education**

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Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable measures to be taken to increase the attainment and secure better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable young people within our communities by implementing more effective provision at secondary level. It will make a significant contribution to the Council's goals of "Providing high quality low cost customer focused services," and "Working together to support our communities." It relates particularly to the priorities of "working in partnership to support vulnerable individuals and families" and to "increase opportunities to help young people achieve their potential."

The objective of the project is to create an effective provision for permanently excluded pupils and those at risk of permanent exclusion. The expected outcomes are;

- a. To effect immediate improvements to the existing service (whilst work to develop the new service is underway)
- b. To acquire the Power to Innovate from the Secretary of State for Education
- c. To develop with secondary schools an innovative and effective service specification and delivery mechanism
- d. To close the existing service and launch the new arrangements on the 01 September 2012
- e. The specific expected outcomes from the new arrangements will be:
 - To increase the number of young people with identified behavioural issues making good progress and the numbers achieving 5 grades A*-C (including English and Mathematics) at GCSE
 - To reduce the number of young people permanently excluded
 - To improve progression rates into either further education, for this training or employment

Background

- 2.1 The council has a statutory requirement to provide all children who have been permanently excluded from school with full-time education. Local authorities must provide facilities dedicated to this provision which have the generic title of Pupil Referral Units (PRU). In Wiltshire the facilities and service are referred to as the Young People's Support Service (YPSS). The overall aim of the service is to provide the young people referred to the service with as good a standard of education and appropriate opportunities in life as if they were in the regular school system.
- 2.2 The YPSS consists of four centres: Bridge Centre in Chippenham, Trinity Centre in Trowbridge, Kennet Centre in Devizes, and The John Ivie Centre in Salisbury. The Centres cater for young people who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of being excluded from their mainstream schools.
- 2.3 The Council has recognised that for some time the service required attention and improvement in some areas. In autumn 2010 the Council carried out a full review of the whole service. The conclusions contained a range of long term options for the service, including delegating responsibility for the provision of education for excluded pupils to secondary schools.
- 2.4 In May 2011, the YPSS was inspected by Ofsted. The service was placed in special measure. The report raised concerns in relation to the breadth of the curriculum, attendance and reintegration opportunities.
- 2.5 From a national perspective, PRUs struggle to provide similar performance standards to the mainstream education system and very few achieve good or satisfactory Ofsted assessments.
- 2.6 The Department for Education is keen to promote creative and progressive thinking in the provision of services for excluded young people and those at risk of permanent exclusion. It has launched a trial in order to develop improved alternative provision. The trial involves the participating Local Authorities delegating the responsibility for providing education for permanently excluded young people to their secondary schools. This will be done by using the Power to Innovate to enable Local Authority to work beyond existing regulations. Funding to support the provision will be devolved to secondary schools. The purpose of the trial is to engage secondary schools in taking greater responsibility for the education of permanently excluded young people. This is in line with the proposals in the Education Bill that is currently before parliament. Local Authorities will, however, retain responsibility for the overall wellbeing of young people by quality assuring the provision being made.
- 2.7 It is considered that the current position with the YPSS and the change-potential offered by the DfE initiative represents a clear opportunity to radically improve the service and the outcomes for the young people it serves. The Power to Innovate will enable the Council and schools to design and implement a new and more effective service.

- 2.8 In line with the DfE's preferred direction for this type of service, the project will deliver a fundamental shift by delegating responsibility for securing provision for this group of young people to schools. Either singularly or collectively, working to an agreed framework, with specified outcomes, schools will receive the funding currently used by the Council and provide directly for permanently excluded young people. This approach has been welcomed by the headteachers of secondary schools and endorsed by Schools' Forum. Schools Forum has agreed in principle to the devolution of the funding of YPSS to individual secondary schools on the basis of a formula to be agreed at a future meeting of Schools Forum. Different formulas are currently being analysed.
- 2.9 The YPSS Project will cover all aspects of the work required to close the existing service and launch the new arrangements, with a target completion of 31 August 2012.

Main Considerations for the Council

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the rationale for a proposed model of service delivery to increase the achievements of some of the most vulnerable young people within our communities. The existing provision is not securing good enough outcomes for young people and in order to meet out aspirations for this group of vulnerable young people a prompt, innovative and sustainable response is needed
- 3.2 A range of options have been considered and analysed and these are set out in section 9 below. There has been extensive consultation with stakeholders and with the DfE.

Environmental and climate change considerations

- 4.1 There is currently no specific environmental impact within this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

- 5.1 This project is likely to have a positive impact on equality by;
- a) Improving the provision for those young people permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion. These young people tend to come from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups with the lowest attainment and the poorest academic progress. Enhanced provision will improve the attainment and progress of these young people.
 - b) Although provision will be developed by individual secondary schools or groups of schools this will be done against a service specification to ensure that there are not significant differences across the county that could lead to inequalities. The service specification will be supported by a rigorous monitoring process to ensure that quality is maintained.
 - c) Alternative providers from the private and voluntary sector will be

invited to join a register to improve the regulation and quality of provision.

Risk Assessment

6.1 The main risks are set out below:

- The Secretary of State does not approve the closure of the existing YPSS because he does feel that there will be improvements to the Service. This risk is mitigated by the engagement in the DfE trial and the forthcoming changes in the Education Bill.
- The Secretary of State does not award the Power to Innovate and the Service does not improve. Ofsted will find that the Service is inadequate and through this route the Secretary of State is asked to close the Service. If YPSS fails its monitoring visit the DfE could decide that it should be taken over by another provider
- Staff leave YPSS because it is going to close and the Service becomes unsustainable. This risk is mitigated through regular communication with staff, staff 1:1s and development of a new role for staff with schools or other providers.
- Some schools fail to deliver provision of sufficient quality or there is inequality of provision. This risk will be managed through the quality assurance measures currently being developed including a framework agreement and service specification documents. The Local Authority will also support schools to facilitate the new arrangements.
- A full risk register is in place and is being managed by the Project Group.

Financial Implications

7.1 There are the following financial considerations

- a. Funding for the delivery of provision will be devolved to secondary schools and will be based on the existing budget of £2.3 million. Schools Forum will agree the preferred methodology for the allocation of funding to schools and the final level of funding to be devolved in the 2012/13 budget setting process. This will not be less than the current budget for the service.
- b. Funding will need to be identified to meet the cost of any redundancies as a result of the closure of the existing YPSS. This cost will need to be borne between the Council's revenue budget and the Dedicated Schools Grant and there is currently provision across both areas to enable costs to be met. The full cost of any redundancies cannot be finalised at this stage.

- c. Any need for any suitable offsite provision will become clearer once schools have produced their detailed proposals. In the long term some or all of it may be addressed through the Workplace Transformation Project and the development of community campuses.

Legal Implications

- 8.1 The transfer of the responsibility for the provision of permanently excluded young people from the Local Authority to schools will be a change to the current legal position. This will be done through an application for the power to innovate which will be submitted in November 2011 if Cabinet approves the proposal.
- 8.2 The Human Resources and Legal departments are fully involved with the project group to manage any personnel implications.

Options Considered

- 9.1 Consideration has been given to maintain the existing service with an internal manager leading the service. The complex nature of the service operating over four geographical dispersed centres means that this would require substantial long term management capacity. As the direction within the Education Bill is for schools to take greater responsibility for all pupils it seems more sensible to lay the foundations for a more sustainable solution directly involving schools. This is not therefore the preferred recommendation.
- 9.2 The option of a single special school taking over the running of the service was also considered. Following discussion it was agreed that no single school had the capacity to manage the whole of YPSS. Whilst this option is therefore not the preferred option, our special schools are likely to play a key role in the development of improved provision.
- 9.3 A third option considered was the devolution of funding to the existing secondary school federations. However, the Federations were developed largely to implement the 14-19 strategy and in particular the introduction of diplomas. The existing Federations are not necessarily the right configurations for making provision for permanently excluded young people, and therefore devolution of funding to individual schools is the preferred option. Schools can then have flexibility in terms of making their own provision or joining with others.
- 9.4 A fourth option considered was to outsource the service. There are clearly a number of organisations who have developed some expertise in this area. However, the time involved in outsourcing would take at least twelve months and would cause a significant delay at a time when prompt action is essential. It is however likely that schools will either singly or collectively work with the private and voluntary sector in securing provision.
- 9.5 Option 5 is the preferred option. This option proposes that funding is devolved to individual secondary schools to enable them to take

responsibility for securing provision for young people who have been permanently excluded and those at risk of exclusion. Schools could decide to operate as an individual school or operate as a partnership. It would make it possible for one school, for example Springfields, to offer to make provision on behalf of a group of schools. Equally a school, or a group of schools, could decide to employ a private or voluntary sector provider, or, providers, to deliver all or some aspects of the service. It also makes it possible for the existing YPSS Centres to continue to operate by providing traded services. There could be a risk in such an approach of provision being inconsistent across the County. This would be addressed by secondary schools being asked to submit their proposals individually or as groups against a clear service specification. | Proposals would be scrutinised and modified if necessary to ensure both consistency and quality.

Conclusions

10.1 Overall, therefore, closing the existing YPSS, accepting the DfE's invitation to be part of its trial and transferring responsibility for the provision for permanently excluded young people directly to individual secondary schools as in option 5 is the most effective way to improve the quality of provision. It represents a move to greater local control which is in line with Wiltshire Council's business plan. It does so in a way that creates the maximum flexibility underpinned by sufficient safeguards to protect quality and consistency. It will also enable Wiltshire Schools to begin to prepare to take on the responsibility which is likely to fall to all schools nationally under the current Education Bill.

Proposal

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Reason for Proposal

This proposal will support better outcomes for young people who are permanently excluded.

Carolyn Godfrey, Director, Department for Children and Education

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Background Papers

None
