

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

24 January 2024

**Executive Response to the Final Report of the
Youth Provision and Area Board Youth Funding Task Group**

Purpose of the report

1. To present the response of the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills and Cabinet Member for Governance, I.T., Broadband, Digital, Licensing, Staffing, Communities and Area Boards to the Final Report of the Youth Provision and Area Board Youth Funding Task Group.

Background

2. On 21 September 2023 the Children's Select Committee endorsed the Final Report of the Task Group.
3. The Committee resolved to refer the following Task Group's recommendations to the relevant Cabinet member for response at the Committee's next meeting on 31 October 2023.
4. The discussion about the report at the committee emphasised the importance of partnership working with the youth sector and the need to make the most of the budget to support youth provision. While no amendments were made to the report, the committee agreed that as the subject of the report encompassed support to young people and the role of Area Boards, the report needed to be considered by the cabinet members responsible for both those areas.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

Recommendation No.1	The Council develops an overarching youth strategy to bring together youth provision from within the Council with Area Boards, youth providers and external agencies. A 'product owner' could be used who is not responsible for delivery but could be responsible for co-ordinating the different strands of activity, connecting back to the strategy.
Reason for recommendation	There is currently no one single team or individual with oversight and tasked to ensure that the Council is meeting its responsibility with regards to s507b.

	<p>The Council's focus is on its targeted services for young people. Part of its statutory duty is the communication of a Wiltshire-wide offer to young people.</p> <p>Youth service providers are asking for a longer term, strategic approach from the Council to provide a sustainable future for the provision of youth services.</p>		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action		Success criteria	
<p>There is widespread support for an overarching strategy that responds to the needs of young people and this is also highlighted in the statutory guidance to local authorities. We can confirm that a strategy will be developed that looks at the role of Area Boards, youth providers and external agencies. This will be developed in collaboration with key partners such as the Wiltshire Youth Partnership.</p> <p>Lucy Townsend, Corporate Director People (and DCS) is the responsible officer for young people. The Lead Member for Children, Education & Skills is the appropriate statutory Lead Member for this area of policy.</p> <p>Two Wiltshire Council leads are in place as the key links between Communities and Childrens Services; Rhys Schell, Service Manager for Engagement and Partnerships and Andrew Griffiths, Service Manager for Young People.</p>		Implementation of strategy	
Target date			
September 2024			

Recommendation No.2	<p>The Council sets out a timeframe to meet the incoming statutory guidance to local authorities. It should ensure, with the support of stakeholders, that the needs of young people and current provision is mapped and an annual plan for young people in Wiltshire is developed. In doing so, it may want to seek guidance from the NYA on developing this approach. There would be benefits too in learning from the FACT project in developing a single source of information.</p>
Reason for recommendation	<p>One expectation in the statutory duty is for local authorities to take a strategic lead and the new guidance is likely to consolidate this</p>

	<p>expectation by outlining a process and structure for councils to take this forward.</p> <p>Effective partnerships should be developed with other providers and community partners to plan and deliver activities.</p>		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
<p>The beforementioned strategy will address and review the statutory guidance for local authorities, the needs of young people and current activity provision. Conversations with the DCMS and NYA will form part of the formation of the strategy. There is a concerted effort to increase the linkage between the work of the FACT programme and the work delivered with young people through the Area Boards. A conversation has been held with the FACT steering group regarding the task groups recommendations.</p>			<p>Implementation of strategy</p> <p>Increased link up between FACT programme and Area Boards</p>
Target date			
September 2024			

Recommendation No.3	<p>The proposal by the youth partnership to develop a tiered system for youth grants should be considered, as it complements the work already being piloted by the grant assessment panel to allow for differences in provider capacity and geographic cover.</p>		
Reason for recommendation	<p>A change in approach to allocating the Area Board youth funding budget is needed to ensure that money allocated for youth activities is spent effectively to make the best use of limited resources.</p> <p>An underspend of £105,479 of allocated youth budget in the 2022/23.</p>		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
<p>The council will be reviewing the grant criteria in line with the new statutory guidance and the recommendations from the OS task panel. This will take place alongside the youth strategy development.</p>			<p>Introduction of new grant funding criteria</p>

A tiered system would be incredibly challenging to introduce, however, the functionality sought can be picked up through existing, effective processes. The Grant Assessment Panel can enable applicants to work across more than 3 areas, submit more than 2 applications or request in excess of £5k minimum. This has already enabled multiple organisations to receive exceptions to apply multiple times across more than 3 areas.	
Target date	
September 2024	

Recommendation No. 4	The criteria for Area Board youth grants is amended to remove the requirement for organisations to apply for funding for a ‘new’ project and allow for repeat funding of ongoing projects that are meeting the needs of young people effectively.		
Reason for recommendation	The Area Board youth grants have a short term, project-based focus. This restricts applications from organisations that are providing ongoing, open access youth provision. There could be more value in having greater flexibility in funding arrangements.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O’Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action		Success criteria	
Linked with recommendation 3, there will be a review of the Area Board grant criteria which will consider this. Area Boards are unable to guarantee year on year funding due to the annual budgeting process, however, successful projects that are able to demonstrate delivery to council and local objectives will be able to apply for funding support across consecutive years. Projects should not be reliant upon Area Board funding and ongoing core operational costs will remain ineligible.		Introduction of new grant funding criteria	
Target date			
September 2024			

Recommendation No.5	The requirement to promote funded activities should sit with the grant holder who is more likely to have stronger local communication networks than the Council does.		
Reason for recommendation	There is a weakness to the approach of relying on Area Boards to disseminate information to young people when some Area Boards do not have good community links.		

	The Council communication outlets are not really aimed at promoting individual activities (but could increase general awareness of the Area Board funding).		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
<p>The All Together platform provides the opportunity for all locally delivered young person activities to be added and communicated. All successful Area Board youth grant applicants will be requested to add their projects and activities onto the website through the terms and conditions of their grant. This platform is being promoted through the Area Boards and the Engagement and Partnerships service.</p> <p>Whilst we can encourage the applicants to promote their activities to young people, the statutory duty for this remains with the council.</p>			All Together platform usage figures
Target date			
April 2024			

Recommendation No.6	Consideration should be given to funding or part funding the development and infrastructure of Wiltshire's youth sector, through the youth partnership. This would be an investment with longer term aims of supporting the development of this sector and increasing the likelihood of drawing down external funding for the county.		
Reason for recommendation	The reason is incorporated into the recommendation.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
We have been really encouraged by the introduction of the Wiltshire Youth Partnership and we will continue to support its development through Officer support. We are happy to provide support funding that helps to build the resilience of the Wiltshire Youth Partnership, however, further conversation needs to take place between the authority and the partnership to understand what is needed. The council is awaiting a better understanding of			Support funding in place, with agreed outcomes

<p>how the funding would be used and the extent of the support that is needed.</p> <p>The Area Board youth funding needs to be protected to fulfil the vital role of supporting projects at a local level that support young people in their communities. Any funding for the partnerships would be in addition to this.</p>	
Target date	
April 2024	

Recommendation No.7	Area Boards need to be actively encouraged to work with a LYN (Local Youth Network), Youth Forum, or partner-led multi-agency group, perhaps identifying an elected member for each Area Board to take the lead in setting up or maintaining community involvement in the provision of youth activities.		
Reason for recommendation	The Area Board Youth Engagement Strategy sets out how Area Boards should develop their youth funding investment approach. It details three key mechanisms to enable Area Boards to understand the needs of young people. Six area boards are operating without a LYN or Youth Forum, one of the key mechanisms identified in the strategy. The impact of this variance is an inconsistent offer for young people across the county.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action		Success criteria	
Agreed and this is a current requirement for each Area Board as found within the Area Board handbook. Reiteration of this position can be issued to Area Boards at the start of the new financial year.		All 18 Area Boards with an active youth working group	
Target date			
April 2024			

Recommendation No.8	Explore with the Youth Council how to best support the Area Boards in ensuring the voice of young people is represented in decision-making.
Reason for recommendation	Young People's voices are not always being heard when funding impacting young people is being decided.

Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
<p>There are new Youth Council elections taking place in February/ March 2024. Conversations have already started to better link the Area Boards with the Youth Council. It is proposed that the Shadow Youth Council roles for Children's and Communities are asked to support the linking and communication between the Youth Council with the Area Boards.</p> <p>At an Officer level, there is currently recruitment taking place in the Youth Voice team and the requirement for updating and communicating with the Area Boards will be considered as part of these emerging roles.</p>			Increased engagement between Youth Council and Area Boards
Target date			
September 2024			

Recommendation No.9	Explore how to facilitate increased engagement between officers delivering services for young people and Area Boards when community issues have been identified.		
Reason for recommendation	There is scope for further integration between the youth work being provided in the community and supported by Area Boards and the targeted provision for young people delivered directly by the Council. There were examples of officers working closely with Area Boards on issues relevant to their area and it might benefit Area Boards and officers if this could become standard practice.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ashley O'Neill, Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Lucy Townsend
Action			Success criteria
<p>A closer working relationship has been established between Childrens Services and Communities. The teams will work collaboratively on the strategy referred to in recommendation 1 which will support this to happen and regular meetings are in place between key officers.</p> <p>Additionally, it is proposed that each Area Board Councillor lead for Young People should have regular meetings with the Portfolio</p>			

holder for Children's Services and the Portfolio holder for Area Boards to improve the communication between areas.	
Target date	
September 2024	

5. We welcome this report from the Overview and Scrutiny task group and are already working towards implementing many of the recommendations provided. The development of an overarching strategy that focuses on the provision of services and activities that are available to young people across Wiltshire will facilitate the delivery of many of these recommendations. A review of the Area Board grant funding will take place alongside this strategy.

Proposal

6. To note the executive response to the Final Report of the **Youth Provision and Area Board Youth Funding Task Group**.

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills

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