

**Report of – Head of Early Help Services (Children’s Services); Area Leader
(Corporate) Citizens and Communities**

Report to –Scrutiny Board (Children’s and Families)

Date: 18th December 2014

Subject: Youth Activity Funding



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

This report offers a response to the questions raised by Children’s & Families Scrutiny Board in October 2014, a review of the efficacy of the planning, process, partnership involvement, consultation with young people, evaluation and the challenges of implementation of this new way of working.

In summary the delegation of the Youth Activity Fund to Community Committees has been successful in providing a localised offer of a range of activities for young people, influenced by the children and young people themselves. In 2013-14 **126 projects were attended by 9,166 young people**. To date in the first six months of 14/15, **161 projects have been funded**. The number of children and young people benefiting from the activities this year is not yet available.

Although it has taken time to develop, and needs further work, the original intention of involving children and young people in decision-making locally has succeeded in that all areas have had some level of input from them into decisions. The report makes suggestions about how to improve this.

Areas of particular success have been noted in the number and range of applications to deliver activities. Structured timetables have supported the process and in some areas the application process for next year has already begun. School clusters have been involved in the process and the Community Committees and their relevant sub-groups have been prompt in making decisions. The Well-being fund has also been used to fund activities that do not meet the Youth Activities Fund criteria and there are examples of other funding streams being explored to further expand provision.

Ward members and Community Committee Children's Champions were praised for their invaluable local and specialist knowledge in targeting the funds well and for their commitment to the process. Most committees also commented on improved partnership working and engagement of other services as a result of the Youth Activities Fund.

There are, however, a number of improvements that can be made to simplify processes, augment the involvement of children and young people and clarify roles and responsibilities. This report asks the scrutiny board to endorse a series of proposals to be made to the Executive Board and/or the responsible Executive Board Member in this regard as follows:

- To ensure that youth panels are fully functioning and that there is increased representation of young people in decision-making, the 2.8 staff from the Youth Offer Team within Children's Services, responsible for engaging with children and young people, are integrated into the Communities Team with the Citizens & Communities Directorate.
- Establish a cross directorate steering group to oversee the work.
- That the sub-delegation scheme be amended to delegate responsibility for the Youth Activity Fund from the Director of Children's Services to the Assistant Chief Executive, Citizens & Communities. That a service level agreement is produced to clarify roles and responsibilities between staff in Children's Services and those in Citizens & Communities with regard to the provision youth activities and youth services.
- To establish and agree a timetable with members for commissioning and explore the potential for joint commissioning across the city (single application, contract and monitoring form) to manage multiple applications. Introduce a simplified grant process for grants under £500.
- That the business model for the provision of targeted youth services be reviewed to see if greater flexibility can be introduced to accommodate the ambitions of Community Committees in the provision of local youth services.

1. Purpose of this report

To provide Scrutiny Board (Children's & Families) with a summary of progress regarding the Youth Activity Fund since the delegation in May 2013 to Community Committees and to respond to the questions asked in October 2014.

2. Background information

In May 2013 the delivery of the Youth Activity Fund for children and young people was delegated to Area Committees (now Community Committees). The task was to promote, commission and evaluate local opportunities for children and young people aged 8-17 years in line with the needs and priorities of the area with support from the Children's Services. "Activity" is defined as play, sports, arts and cultural opportunities.

The budget for 2013/14 was £250,000, increasing to £500,000 for 2014/15. Each Community Committee has an allocation based on population of young people,

creating a variation of budget and a fair allocation to each committee. The delegated budget is 'ring fenced' to be spent on youth activities and to include the involvement of children and young people in the decision making process and shaping the needs of community activity.

3. Main issues

3.1 Is the Youth Activities Fund successful in providing a localised offer of a range of services, influenced by children and young people?

The Community Committees and City Centre Partnership have commissioned a varied programme of activities for all ages across the city. Each committee took into consideration feedback from children and young people, although the depth and quality of this conversation varied widely. The activities offer a range of play, sports, arts, cultural and youth activities, dependent on the views of children and young people in the areas and sometimes on the availability of providers.

The delivery model has become fully operational over the last 18 months; it is working, although there are a number of points for learning and improvement.

In terms of outputs:

- In 2013/14 **126 projects were funded and 9,166** children and young people participated, see appendix 1 for a full breakdown of how the money was spent by area.
- In the first 6 months of 14/15 **161 projects have been approved** - monitoring on numbers of children and young people is not yet available, see appendix 2 for progress across the areas.

In terms of the involvement of children and young people, all applications are assessed against feedback from consultation with young people. Children and young people feedback on the quality of the provision at each session and this is recorded on the monitoring forms to guide subsequent applications. In most areas the Youth Engagement Panels are now established although there is work to be done to ensure they are representative. Support for the formation and operation of the Youth Engagement Panels has faltered here and there and efforts to support the involvement of children and young people has lacked the coherence wanted. Both the Youth Offer Team and the Area Support Teams have worked hard to ensure there has been involvement of children and young people but this work would benefit by integrating the work of the two teams.

Proposal:

To ensure that youth panels are fully functioning and that there is increased representation of young people in decision-making, the 2.8 staff from the Youth Offer Team within Children's Services, responsible for engaging with children and young people, are integrated into the Communities Team with the Citizens & Communities Directorate.

3.2 Is the delivery and quality of the service offer consistently good across the localities?

The delivery model is based on a level of consultation and understanding of the views of children and young people in the area, this is an area for further

development. An open application is placed on the Breeze Culture Network (BCN) for providers, who may wish to deliver activities. Applications are then submitted by activity providers. These applications are presented for discussion by Area Support Team officers to local elected members through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- Children & Young People's Sub Groups;
- Full Community Committee meetings;
- Working groups of Members.

In most localities the applications are further considered by a group of local young people who make recommendations to the panel.

Approved projects are notified and issued with a Project Delivery Statement and Funding Agreement. It is a requirement that all projects are promoted on the Breeze Culture Network and all monitoring data must be logged online. Registered organisations are required to demonstrate they have the appropriate policies and procedures in place, by doing so, the authority can be more confident regarding the well-being and safeguarding of children and young people.

The majority of the activity providers are now registered members of the BCN. This is a positive step creating a more effective, vibrant network of activity providers for the city, although there are some gaps in the market provision of youth activities across the city.

Accountability for the allocation of activity funds sits with the Community Committees supported by the Area Support Teams who co-ordinate the commissioning/grant application process. The Youth Offer Team support the involvement of young people and the Breeze Team support activity providers to fulfil their monitoring requirements and promote the activity. This has been successful although better integration of the work of the Youth Offer Team with Area Support Teams would be beneficial.

3.3 How is this performance monitored, reported and good practice shared?

The monitoring process is being strengthened to include the quality assurance criteria and a common evaluation form for all providers. Appendix 1 and 2 identify the quantitative data being collected effectively and identifies the distribution of activities across the areas. In terms of delivery, because the delegation in 2013-14 was made quite late there was some unallocated spend at the end of the year. Any underspend was carried over into 2014-15.

It was envisaged that qualitative data measures would be taken through a programme of peer inspections - 'mystery shopper' visits. However this has only been partially implemented and requires further work. Further challenge and monitoring of quality will be ensured through a new cross directorate steering group who will seek to make improvements to quality assurance .

As outlined in the March 2013 Executive Board report, and following a number of meetings with Area Support Teams and the Youth Offer Team an integrated group has been established to review the Youth Activities Fund process and share experience across areas, including engaging children and young people, commissioning and quality assurance. The group includes representatives from Children's Services, Breeze, Arts Development, Sport and Active Lifestyles and Area Support. This will provide opportunities for colleagues to report on success and

challenges from their departments perspective and to support each other to maximise the effectiveness of the fund.

An emerging example of good practice has been highlighted in the Outer South. Here, the Community Committee commission a Breeze event each summer and use this to facilitate a consultation to gain the views of as many children and young people as possible. In summer 2014, 705 children and young people took part in the consultation. This has proved helpful in informing the decision making process and is supported by the Area Support Team, Youth Offer Team, school clusters and the Youth Service.

Proposal:

Establish a cross directorate steering group to oversee the work associated with the Youth Activity Fund.

3.4 Is the localised determination of Youth Activities Fund improving service?

There is a wider programme of activities available, particularly during the summer holidays. This is evidenced by comparing information dissemination by clusters and youth service providers (where available) during 2012-13 and the data presented in appendix 1 and 2. There is some evidence that the changes are improving the Targeted Youth Service in terms of better directing support to more flexibly meet emerging priorities at a local level. The Area Support Teams, through neighbourhood improvement structures and children and young people sub groups, are evidencing that the Targeted Youth service is more flexible to meet emerging local priorities for youth work.

There has been some confusion concerning roles and responsibilities between Children's Services staff and the Area Support Teams and introducing greater clarity in this regard will help keep a focus on the improvement agenda and ensuring staff are clear on their respective contributions to this. A service level agreement between service areas that contribute to the youth activities agenda could be produced by the proposed cross directorate steering group to achieve the clarity required.

Although the Youth Activity Fund is delegated to Community Committees and the budget holder is the Assistant Chief Executive, Citizens & Communities, currently the sub-delegation scheme still leaves responsibility with the Director of Children's Services. An appropriate amendment to the Director of Children's Services' sub-delegation scheme is proposed.

Proposal:

That the Director of Children's Services sub-delegates responsibility for the Youth Activity Fund to the Assistant Chief Executive, Citizens & Communities. That a service level agreement is produced to clarify roles and responsibilities between staff in Children's Services and those in Citizens & Communities with regard to the provision youth activities and youth services.

3.5 Is the localised determination of Youth Activities Fund saving money?

All applications were assessed by ward members and Children & Young People sub groups for value for money. The groups looked at similar projects and price per session / target attendance. In many cases, the Area Support Team negotiated project costs down to increase the number of projects the committee was able to

fund. The monies allocated in 2013/14 are detailed in Appendix 1. Surplus from 2013/14 was carried forward to 14/15. Although it is difficult to give total figures, it seems that the Youth Activities Fund is able to achieve better value for money, with the potential for more buy in, or joint funding from voluntary groups, clusters and other community funds.

Proposal:

To establish and agree a timetable with members for commissioning and explore the potential for joint commissioning across the city (single application, contract and monitoring form) to manage multiple applications. Introduce a simplified grant process for grants under £500

3.6 Clarity on whether the Youth Activities Fund can be used to commission more targeted youth services?

There has been a lack of clarity around spending Youth Activities Fund on 'Targeted Youth Work' by youth workers employed by Children's Services. It is agreed that Youth Activities Fund can purchase additional youth work targeted to specific priority groups as determined locally. However the Targeted Youth Workers employed in Children's Services are deployed through negotiation with social care, school clusters, local members and voluntary sector colleagues. Deployment and use of the Targeted Youth Service provision is agreed outside of the Youth Activity Fund process.

Targeted Youth Workers therefore cannot be commissioned to deliver Youth Activity Fund provision as staff are fully committed in core business working with vulnerable young people. If Community Committees wish to buy youth activities from Children's Services support is available through the Youth Offer projects arm which includes Herd Farm, Lineham Farm and the Lazer centre. Staff from this projects team can work in communities or on the sites referred to. Also the Breeze out of school team can be commissioned to deliver youth activity locally and additional youth worker support can be purchased through Commensura.

Proposal:

That the business model for the provision of targeted youth services be reviewed to see if greater flexibility can be introduced to accommodate the ambitions of Community Committees in the provision of local youth services.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

Young people's engagement is demonstrated throughout the process and is referenced in response to the questions raised. Children and young people have been involved in the decision making process of when, where and what type of activity will benefit their community. They are also involved in the evaluation of all Activity fund applications and making recommendations to Community Committees. Combined with Community Committee member's knowledge and experience of their localities this results' in an effective way of securing successful programmes of activities for children and young people.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

2014/15 delivery is proportionate across the city in the delivery of the number of projects delivered to date. Each area is considerate to existing delivery of events and activity to ensure a broad variety of activity across the community.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

The delivery of the universal youth activity fund supports the Children and Young Peoples Plan with a particular focus on; children and young people have fun growing up; and are active citizens who feel they have voice & influence.

4.4 Resources and value for money

The Universal Youth Activity Fund resource for 2014/15 is £525,000 this includes £500,000 across the ten Community Committees and £25,000 for city centre delivery. Community Committee allocations are based on populations of children and young people age 8-17 years across the city.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

Each director receives their delegations through the council's constitution and may sub-delegate to any officer of appropriate experience and seniority through their sub-delegation scheme. This is not limited to officers in their own directorate.

5. Risk Management

The risk of missing data, due to some organisations not using the Breeze Culture Network management information system has been addressed. Providers have started inputting from August/September 2014. Capturing the data for 2014/15 will be collated from BCN and area support teams. The monitoring for 2015/16 will all be through BCN this will enable immediate access to attendance and session data for all areas and citywide.

Appendices

1. 13/14 performance data
2. 14/15 performance data – as at 30th September 2014