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Report of the Head of Youth Service

Scrutiny Board (Children's Service)

Date: 2 November 2006

Subject: Youth Services Inquiry

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

This report provides background information and a strategic context for the inquiry into Youth Services.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 To provide background information relevant to the three aspects which have been identified for the scope of the inquiry:-

- What should Leeds City Council include in the youth offer that it will have to publish next year?
- What can be learnt from the existing patterns of provision across the city?
- What do young people want and expect from youth services in Leeds?

1.2 To provide a strategic context for the inquiry.

2.0 Legislative requirements

2.1 Children Leeds and its constituent partner organizations have the duty to respond to the requirements of:-

- the 2004 Children Act
- the 2006 Children Act
- the Education and Inspections Bill

- 2.2 This legislation governs the nature and extent of the services which need to be offered to children, young people and their families.
- 2.3 In order to shape the Leeds response to the expectations a draft document has been produced called “The Core Offer of Universal, extended services from schools, children’s centres, youth provision, community learning facilities and health.” This core offer will be published as part of the implementation of the Leeds Children and Young Peoples Plan.
- 2.4 The draft core offer includes, for example:-
- Access to information and support to children and young people to improve their own health, including smoking cessation, alcohol and drug misuse, sexual health, health eating and physical activity
 - A menu of positive activities for children and young people beyond the school day and year on school and other sites
 - Access to informal social education programmes within community settings
 - Access to individual support for all young people to plan and review learning and fulfill their career aspirations
- 2.5 The above examples are given in order to give an indication of what is involved. The core offer is one of the foundations for implementing the Every Child Matters agenda.
- 3.0 Youth Matters**
- 3.1 Clause 6 of the Education and Inspections Bill contains the legislation intended to implement Youth Matters as an integral aspect of Every Child Matters. It has progressed through amendment stages and sets out the duty on local authorities to improve the well-being of young people aged 13 to 19 (and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties).
- 3.2 The DfES has produced an interim document called “Youth Matters: Next Steps” which takes account of the responses received to the consultation process related to the original Green Paper.
- 3.3 Clause 6 includes the requirement to provide “sufficient educational leisure time activities and facilities which are for their personal and social development”
- 3.4 The governing principle underpinning Youth Matters is consultation with young people on existing provision and on additional requirements.
- 3.5 The principal items within Youth Matters which require attention and development are:-
- Publication of a youth offer
 - Provision of Information, Advice and Guidance Services (IAG)

- Volunteering opportunities
- Youth Opportunity cards
- Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund
- Commissioning

4.0 The Youth Offer

4.1 The Youth Offer is at the heart of Youth Matters. The requirements are to consult, prepare, publish and deliver annually. Contents of the youth offer will need to reflect the new strap line of Youth Matters “Something to do, somewhere to go, someone to talk to”

4.2 The Bill will give statutory guidance on the production of a youth offer. This is unlikely to be overly prescriptive. Pointers regarding the potential contents can however be gleaned from Youth Matters: Next Steps. By way of example, this document says:-

- 68% of young people would like to help decide how local councils spend money on providing activities for young people
- 71% of young people (responding to the Green Paper consultation) said they would do up to four hours of activities in their spare time if they had the opportunity
- 83% of young people think that a card giving discounts and money to spend on activities would encourage them to do more in their spare time
- 62% of young people would like one professional person to go to for advice and information

4.3 Furthermore, the original Youth Matters Green Paper made it very clear that the youth offer should embrace a very wide range of services including, for example, youth work, information, advice, guidance, sports, arts, libraries, environmental initiatives, and volunteering.

4.4 Consultation with representatives of agencies within the Children Leeds remit has taken place during October regarding the shape of the overall core offer and also the integral youth offer element. This consultation has been in workshops at the six Children Leeds Open Forums. Attendance figures for these workshops are not available at the time of writing but it is likely to be in the region of 600 people. Responses from this large scale consultation process will obviously inform the imminent drafting of the youth offer.

5.0 Some factors to take into account in formulating the youth offer

5.1 Leeds 14-19 Strategy, Learning Entitlement and Action Plan

5.2 The localisation of Connexions services from April 2008 whereby organisations will be commissioned through Children Leeds to deliver Connexions work.

- 5.3 Implications of the current review of the council's strategic and departmental arrangements.
- 5.4 The achievements by a number of local organisations in terms of youth volunteering work.
- 5.5 Evolving commissioning arrangements of Children Leeds.
- 5.6 The strengths of existing partnerships such as Connexions Local Management Committee, Youth Offending Service Partnership, and Leeds Youth Work Partnership.
- 5.7 Local Area Agreements and pooled funding arrangements.
- 5.8 Scope for reviewing the extent to which services are reaching the full 0-19 age range equitably.
- 5.9 Youth Matters seeking a balance between providing universal and targeted services.

6.0 Consultation with and involvement by young people

- 6.1 In Leeds a very interesting and exciting approach has been established as part of Children Leeds developments. A democratic model operates through Leeds Youth Council. This is complemented by a partnership model through Reach Out and Reconnect (ROAR).
- 6.2 LYC and ROAR have already been instrumental and involved in many previous consultation exercises. The young people within LYC and ROAR are very well placed to help shape the youth offer. This consultation and involvement will now be formally instigated. The feedback from the Children Leeds Open Forums provide a very useful starting point for this to take place.
- 6.3 A major element of implementing Youth Matters is to place responsibility in the hands of young people to decide how the Youth Opportunity Fund and the Youth Capital Fund is spent. These funds amount to £925,000 per year in Leeds.

LYC and ROAR have worked well together to set up an appropriate application process and the availability of grants is at present being communicated through key partners and agencies.

7.0 Existing patterns of provision across the city

- 7.1 Implementation of Youth Matters will necessitate commitment and ownership by the full range of organisations which deliver services for young people aged 13-19. The Youth Service will clearly play a pivotal role in progressing matters but the very essence of Youth Matters is that agencies such as Education Leeds, Social Services, voluntary organisations, Health providers, Youth Offending Service, Careers/igen, colleges and schools all need to be fully engaged.

- 7.2 This scrutiny inquiry presents Members with some opportunities to look at the work and role of some of the key providers and, as a result, to focus on the three objectives of the inquiry.
- 7.3 In this context the Youth Service needs to be viewed as just one of the agencies involved. Nonetheless, Members may find it helpful to receive an update of the Ofsted action plan which was signed off by Government Office in March 2006. The update document, as at 17/10/06, is presented as **Appendix A** to this report.
- 7.4 Implementation of Youth Matters (and the production of the youth offer) involves ensuring services are available universally but also that specific targeted provision is prioritised for those young people who are the most vulnerable. The Closing the Gap strategy operating in Leeds is a useful backdrop to addressing this aspect of Youth Matters.
- 7.5 Area Committees have delegated influencing powers regarding the Youth Service. Area Committees also operate a formula by which the amount of money available per area for Well Being grants is determined. That part of the Youth's budget which lends itself to area management is allocated across the 33 wards.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and to debate any matters contained within it

