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<b>Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods and Housing</b>
<b>Meeting: Scrutiny Board (Children’s Services)</b>
<b>Date of meeting: 14 December 2006</b>

**SUBJECT: Inquiry into Youth Services – Leeds Community Safety response**

<b>This Report is for;</b>			
Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/>	Information Only <input type="checkbox"/>	Advice/consideration prior to taking a Key or Major decision <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Decision to be taken by:</b>			
Full Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Governance and Audit Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	Standards Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
An Area Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Member Management Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Regulatory Committee	<input type="checkbox"/>	A Director using delegated authority	<input type="checkbox"/>

**1.0 Purpose Of This Report**

To provide the inquiry with a community safety perspective on the delivery of Youth Matters and the content of the forthcoming youth offer.

**2.0 Issues identified by Leeds Community Safety**

- 2.1 Leeds Community Safety are approaching the provision of youth services from a particular perspective – that is, their contribution to preventing young people becoming engaged in crime, disorder or illicit drug use and diverting young people from such activities.
- 2.2 We are somewhat hampered in our recommendations in that the relationship between preventing youth crime and youth work is not sufficiently understood (nor are we intimate with the youth work provision in the city):

“There has been little systematic research on the potential influence of youth work in general on crime, whether in terms of overall levels of provision or specific interventions. Little is known about which kinds of provision are most likely to attract or repel those young people most at risk of offending and there is no evidence that providing youth clubs on housing estates reduces crime or criminality... Similarly,

there has been little research on the preventive effects of other forms of youth work, such as information, counselling and advice centres, drop-in centres, skill centres and detached and outreach work... Despite the common belief that diverting youthful energy into creative, constructive and legitimate activities reduces boredom and a tendency to engage in illegal or criminal activities, there is little empirical evidence in support of this belief. What evidence there is suggests that the impact, if any, is likely to be no more than quite minimal... The integration of marginalised young people into the community is unlikely to be successful without attempts to influence their economic, social and material circumstances.” [J Graham & T Bennett, *Crime Prevention Strategies in Europe and North America* (1995)]

2.3 Acknowledging the above, there has been further research since 1995 (particularly with offenders), and we would suggest the following would help deliver the city’s community safety strategy:

- **Universal youth provision** aimed at preventing entry points into anti-social behaviour and crime;
- **Targeted youth provision**, particularly detached work.

2.4 We would not wish to decry **universal youth provision**. Again, quoting Graham & Bennett:

“The importance of providing diverse and imaginative forms of leisure and cultural activity in a world which increasingly values and encourages passive consumption and creates for many young people unattainable expectations, should therefore not be underestimated. Young people need to feel they are useful, appreciated and of value. Special projects initiated and managed by young people themselves can help them gain a sense of self-esteem and independence. Activities such as sport, music, theatre, dance and literature, can all help young people to gain insights into themselves, their worth and their ability to relate to others. Such activities can also help to counter ethnic and racial ignorance and prejudice and to integrate young people into the wider community”.

2.5 All this is valuable and we would wish to see resources going into such work. At the very least, even if such activities do not prevent individual criminality, they provide legitimate and supervised outlets for youthful energies that might otherwise impact negatively on the wider community through low-level anti-social behaviour. Of particular concern for us is where such provision is only supported for a target age range of 13-19, when the benefits of engaging in positive activity would surely have a greater impact on a younger age group. We would also wish basic crime prevention/personal safety programmes (including, for instance, weapons awareness) to be included within universal provision.

2.6 **Targeted youth work**, aimed at the most high-risk young people, will however have a more measurable impact on community safety. This has been a clear message from the Audit Commission [*Misspent Youth... Young People and Crime* (1996)] to the Youth Justice Board [*Prevent and Deter Youth Justice Interventions Operational Guidance* (2006)]. Such activity exists in Leeds and is deemed effective – Positive Activities for Young People and the senior and junior Youth Inclusion Projects, for instance. These are the programmes we would most like to see expanded - currently, there is a patchwork of YIP provision in Leeds (the classic postcode lottery).

2.7 We would also wish to see a corresponding increase in detached youth work that will assertively seek out the most difficult and hard-to-engage young people. Whilst

young people at risk may be contacted by the targeted programmes, this does not necessarily secure their participation (it should also be noted that performance management measures the programmes have to report on – for instance, on the hours young people spend on the schemes - do not necessarily encourage investment in the least engaged.) A similar issue concerns targets for generic youth provision which, if geared towards reaching programme occupancy, do not encourage working on an outreach or detached basis with young people who need coaxing. The provision needs to be highly responsive to the needs of the locally identified crime and disorder problems, in particular to individual and group referrals made by the ASB Panels to address anti-social behaviour.

### **3.0 The Respect agenda**

- 3.1 Leeds is expected to be announced as being a Respect Action Area in January 2007. As an action area, we will be expected to progress all elements of the action plan.
- 3.2 One element of the plan concerns activities for children and young people and covers both universal and targeted provision. This element of the plan involves:
- Implementing proposals from Youth Matters, including piloting Youth Opportunity Cards and expanding the Youth Opportunity Fund;
  - Targeting disadvantaged young people through funding sport and art activities in the most deprived communities;
  - Implementing Britain's first national youth volunteering service;
  - Expanding mentoring projects as an effective way of developing positive role models, and establishing a Sports Champions mentoring programme;
  - Reviewing the impact of youth activities to see how provision meets demand and how far it prevents involvement in anti-social behaviour.

### **4.0 Summary**

Leeds Community Safety appreciates the value to the prevention agenda of a strong base of universal youth provision. We would particularly support an expansion of targeted provision that would impact significantly on those young people either involved in crime and disorder or who at risk of such involvement.