

Scrutiny Statement

Youth Service surveys

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)
April 2010



Introduction and Scope

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) carried out an inquiry on Youth Services which reported in May 2007. Recommendation 7 of our report was that

"We recommend that the Director of Children's Services ensures that, in addition to existing consultation with service users, specific efforts are made to consult with non service users about their views on the Youth Service."

2. The Scrutiny Board monitored progress in relation to this recommendation until the summer of 2009, taking in the surveys conducted in 2008 and 2009.
3. In considering the 2009 survey, members of the Scrutiny Board were particularly concerned about the consultation that had taken place with non-users.

Scope of the Inquiry

4. The Scrutiny Board established a working group that would have an input into plans for the next survey, in order to ensure that the Board's concerns were adequately addressed, including the potential involvement of schools.
5. The working group met with officers in January 2010. The working group's findings, which were endorsed by the full Scrutiny Board, are presented below.



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2009 Survey

6. In June 2009, the Children’s Services Scrutiny Board considered an analysis of both the Youth Service user and non-user surveys carried out earlier in the year.
7. By way of context, we were reminded that the Youth Service carries out an annual user consultation with young people to canvas their thoughts on a range of issues, from what causes them concern to the quality of their local provision. The requirement to carry out this activity was first established in the government policy Transforming Youth Work in 2002.
8. The user consultation was carried out through the use of questionnaires. These were provided to young people during youth work sessions being delivered by Youth Service staff. A total of 1,726 questionnaires were returned from across the city, up from 864 the previous year. The geographical spread of returns broadly reflected wedge populations.
9. A wedge based analysis was conducted in addition to the city-wide analysis, to assist the Youth Service to identify local priorities in different areas of the city.
10. We learned that the headline finding from the user survey showed high levels of satisfaction with the service. 1,514 young people answered the question “Overall, how do you rate your youth provision?” as follows:

Excellent	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
758 50%	611 40.4%	126 8.3%	6 0.4%	13 0.9%

11. In addition to the user survey, the Youth Service commissions a separate consultation carried out with young people known to be ex-users or non-users of direct Youth Service provision. The purpose of this is to identify whether there are any responses the Youth Service needs to consider in respect of the views of these young people.
12. West Yorkshire Youth Association (The Project) were commissioned to conduct the consultation with ex-users and non-users of Youth Service provision. They reached 148 young people through high schools; the care system; voluntary, community and faith sector partners; and Connexions.
13. The non-user survey was based on relevant elements of the Youth Service user consultation questionnaire and included exploring how young people would like to be consulted in the future.
14. We were told that the full findings of the two consultation exercises would be taken into account by Youth Service staff when planning future activities.
15. We also heard that following the previous year’s consultation exercise Youth Service managers implemented local action plans to respond to key findings. The wedge analysis of the findings highlighted where such action planning had been most successful or could usefully be replicated or improved upon.
16. An example of learning from the previous year’s survey was that some areas raised awareness of the youth worker’s role in providing support with problems. As a result the proportion of young people saying that they would



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turn to a youth worker for support rose from 5-10% the previous year to 21-42%, depending on the nature of the problem.

17. When discussing the survey members initially expressed concern at what was perceived to be a low response rate. However it was explained that, on the basis of the industry norms for similar opinion surveys, a survey response of this size gave a 99% confidence level for its results. In other words, surveying the full cohort of young people would be expected to have a less than 1% impact on the results.
18. Members were reminded that Area Committees could use the wedge-based analysis of results in looking at localised delivery in their areas, given the role of Area Committees in shaping local Youth Service delivery.
19. The Scrutiny Board was also reminded that government funding to the local authority for youth services is based on a target to engage with 25% of 13-19 year olds. Leeds exceeds the target, with a spend per head currently just above the national average.
20. The Board was particularly concerned about the level of consultation with non-users, and resolved to set up a working group to discuss plans for the next survey with officers. In particular the Board felt that there should be scope for greater involvement of schools in the survey, as well as in relation to raising awareness of Youth Service activity generally.

Clarifying the scope of the survey

21. When the working group met, in January 2010, we were reminded that the Youth Service surveys that had been presented to us for the last couple of years were specific to Leeds City Council's direct youth work provision through its Youth Service. This is just one part of the council's Integrated Youth Support Service.
22. It was also important to distinguish this from the wider provision of youth work in the city. This includes council youth workers, but also encompasses a range of other providers, some funded by the council. In addition many young people access activities outside the scope of youth work, for example the various uniformed organisations and sports clubs.
23. The Youth Service survey we have been looking at is essentially a user satisfaction survey carried out by the council in relation to its own direct youth work provision. It arose from the requirements of 'Transforming Youth Work'. It was important to bear these limitations in mind in deciding what kind of survey work was desirable for the future.

Developments in Youth Service consultation

24. We were also told about the developments in user consultation since the Youth Service survey was initially set up. Consultation is now embedded in youth work practice, with



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young people more routinely engaged in service planning on an ongoing basis.

25. The council's Youth Service has also established a core participation group of young people from among its users, set up in October 2009. The membership consists of 5 young people from each wedge and 5 from the city centre. They undertook a training residential at the outset, and will be meeting every couple of months. At their residential they had considered the results of the survey, and they were developing ideas for further consultation such as mystery shoppers and interviewing young people at shopping centres.
26. In addition we were told that in the north west area of the city each cluster was setting up a cluster council, and young people would be included on the cluster councils.
27. We asked how other cities approached gathering the views of non-users. Although we were surprised to learn that there was little evidence from elsewhere of user surveys including non-users, we were pleased to note that Leeds is apparently in the forefront of this type of activity.

Purpose of survey

28. We discussed the purpose of conducting the current Youth Service survey, and what we, as Scrutiny Board members, would like to see achieved as a result of the survey.
29. One of the issues concerning us was that some young people who would potentially benefit greatly from participation in some form of youth

service activity are not currently accessing any services of this type. We are keen to better understand the reasons for this, but we also feel that some young people will need support and encouragement before joining any activity. For them this is not likely to be achieved through a survey or awareness raising activity.

30. Nevertheless, the 2009 non-user survey also raised issues about young people's lack of knowledge of what opportunities are available to them, and offered suggestions about how to tackle this. Members suggested that youth officers in schools and also school councils would be useful resources to promote the availability of, and access to, youth service activities to a wider audience within schools, building on the ideas explored in the non-user survey.

Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds report to us within 3 months on how awareness of youth service activities generally can be more proactively promoted in schools, and young people be directly encouraged to participate in such activities.

Constraints

31. We discussed the fact that some other providers of youth service activities will be conducting their own user satisfaction work. It is unlikely that it would be possible or practical to require all organisations to sign up to a single survey.



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32. In some areas of the city voluntary, community and faith sector organisations are the predominant providers, and some areas are developing better links between the different providers, particularly through area and cluster commissioning arrangements. Furthermore our Leeds Voice representative told us that an Integrated Youth Support Service Voluntary Sector Forum has been established.
33. We also acknowledged that it would be virtually impossible to conduct any sort of school-based survey and identify accurately whether young people were users of Leeds City Council Youth Service provision. Young people are not always aware that the service they are using is provided by the council. To some extent this may reflect the fact that youth work is often taking place in smaller settings and groups than the traditional youth club, to meet the requirements for recording outcomes and aiming for accreditation of achievements.
34. However, if as we discussed, our priority for a city-wide survey is to identify young people not accessing any provision, then this question of provider becomes less relevant, and the Every Child Matters survey may be an appropriate way of gathering information.
35. The Every Child Matters survey is an annual survey administered by Education Leeds and completed by young people in schools.
36. The survey is an online, anonymous pupil survey available free of charge to schools in Leeds. The survey covers the five Every Child Matters outcomes and is designed to provide information for both schools and Children's Services to inform self-evaluation and needs analysis.
37. The survey is produced in different versions for Years 5 and 6, Year 7, Year 9 and Year 11, with age appropriate questions.
38. The survey was first conducted in 2007/08 when 4,300 children and young people took part. In 2008/09 this rose to 6,800, although take-up by primary schools is higher than in secondary schools.
39. The Performance Management and Information team in Education Leeds administers the survey and analyses the results. Questions for the next survey had recently been finalised when we met, and we were also told that in future Cluster Managers would be able to access data from the survey at a cluster level.
40. We feel that the Every Child Matters survey potentially offers a good opportunity to explore young people's participation in activities in more depth, as well as barriers to participation, at a city level. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to use the 'Be Heard' survey tool that has been developed for delivering the Every Child Matters survey in schools to deliver a separate youth survey to school based pupils.

Every Child Matters survey

35. The Every Child Matters survey is an annual survey administered by Education Leeds and completed by young people in schools.



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Recommendation 2 –

That the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds explore children and young people's participation in activities and identify barriers to participation in more depth, either by including questions in the next Every Child Matters survey or by developing a separate survey using the Be Heard survey tool.

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Children's Services ensures that the local analysis of findings from surveys such as the Every Child Matters survey and the Youth Service user survey is routinely made available at a local level to Area Committees and Clusters to inform their planning of future activity.

41. Having had the opportunity to consider the context for survey work in this area in more detail, we agreed with officers that it was appropriate to refine the focus of the current Youth Service survey.
42. We recognise that the Leeds City Council Youth Service continues to need to carry out some form of user satisfaction survey. We also welcome the developments in young people's direct involvement in consultation on an ongoing basis in individual Youth Service activities, and also through the core participation group established by the Youth Service. We are pleased that the young people are developing their own ideas for future surveys.
43. We feel that the information gained from this work, combined with information from the inclusion of participation questions in the Every Child Matters survey, will continue to provide useful information to guide future service delivery, especially when analysed at a more local level.



Evidence

Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Youth Service user and non-user surveys 2009 – Report to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) – July 2009
- Youth Service User Consultation 2009 – Full analysis of responses
- LCC Youth Service Non-user Survey 2009
- Proposal for Youth Service User Surveys 2010

Witnesses Heard

Councillor Richard Harker - Executive Member, Learning

Keith Burton - Deputy Director of Children's Services

Jean Davey – Principal Youth Officer, Integrated Youth Support Service

John Bradshaw – Curriculum Development Manager, Integrated Youth Support Service

Heather Eyre – Research and Information Manager, Education Leeds

Vincent Foster – Youth Work Manager, Integrated Youth Support Service

Suzanne Wainwright – Senior Youth Officer, Integrated Youth Support Service

Members of Working Group

Councillor Lancaster (Chair)

Mr Britten

Ms Morris-Boam

Dates of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Board meeting - 9 July 2009

Working Group meeting - 29 January 2010

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