

To: Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member and Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Date: 6th April 2010

Subject: Youth Advisory Group Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper outlines the review of Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) undertaken during 2008/9. The review was informed by extensive consultation with existing Youth Advisory Groups. It was also designed to ensure that the new arrangements form an integral part of Children's Trust arrangements in Kent; becoming a key focus for the planning and delivery of integrated youth services in localities. The full review report is attached at Appendix 1.

FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent Youth Service is committed to involving young people and partner agencies in service provision and Youth Advisory Groups were set up in 2003 as one mechanism for local practice to be reviewed and suggestions to be made by partners and young people. This commitment is now driven by the Duty to Involve as required by section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. YAGs are chaired by elected Members appointed by the Cabinet Member for Community Services.
- 1.2 Kent Youth Service and other services for young people in Kent are part of wider children's services. The Children Act 2004, which introduced Children's Trusts, is the legal instrument for government policy on the transformation of children and young people's services. The aim of the legislation is to improve outcomes for children and young people across a range of areas (the Every Child Matters programme). Service integration and the purposeful participation of children and young people are key means of effecting this change. Children's Trust arrangements have been further strengthened by the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- 1.3 Kent Children's Trust Board has sponsored a recent review of its arrangements to ensure that it meets the new requirements of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act. As part of this review changes have been proposed which will streamline structures and improve integrated working. At county level, it is proposed that there will

be a single sub-group of the Trust Board for all services relating to the 14-19 age group. This brings together the Integrated Youth Support Strategy Group (IYSS) and the Kent Strategic Forum for 14-19 Education and Training. It is anticipated that this will deliver better integrated services for young people through which learning, skills and personal development can be mutually reinforced. Local Children's Trust partnerships will operate at district level and the new Youth Advisory Groups will link with these and be a key group in developing local integrated youth strategies. The implementation of the Children's Trust review will be undertaken by a multi-agency Change for Children team.

2. Review Recommendations

- 2.1 Four key recommendations arose from the review, and these are briefly detailed below.
 - 2.1.1 The function of the Youth Advisory Groups is outlined in the review, along with a recommendation that they adopt new terms of reference. This will broaden the focus the groups to take a wider ranging (in terms of age and service), and more strategic, view of local services for young people.
 - 2.1.2 The review comments on the current participation levels of young people and concludes that this could be improved. The recommendation requires groups to develop robust and purposeful models of engagement to ensure young people's voices are heard effectively.
 - 2.1.3 The review continues the focus of the YAGs on the key 13-19 age group of the Youth Service but includes a recommendation that issues affecting the 10-12 age group also be given consideration to allow for better transitions and also to reflect and recognise the work undertaken by other partners, notably the district councils.
 - 2.1.4 Perhaps most importantly the review considered the links to local decision making groups and recommended a formal link to the Local Children's Trust Partnerships in order to advise them on youth work and young people's issues. These arrangements will support the Kent Agreement 2 indicator NI110 (Engagement in Positive Activities by Young People). As the local Children's Trust structures are in the process of changing, this will allow for the new Youth Advisory Group arrangements to be fully embedded from the start of new working practices.

3. Implementation

- 3.1 The proposed changes to Youth Advisory Groups will be supported by existing management and staff resources within Kent Youth Service. There are no other resource implications.
- 3.2 The YAGs have already adopted the new terms of reference and membership and as the groups meet during 2010, they will need management support and appropriate engagement of partner agencies to develop their strategic remit and methods of participation.

3.3 Work will be undertaken through the Change for Children programme to link the YAGs to the new, district-level Children's Trust partnerships and other relevant partnerships.

3.4 Once the merger of 14-19 and IYSS sub-groups has been agreed a process for linking the local strategies being agreed through the YAG's with the development of Kent-wide support for young people needs to be agreed and implemented.

4. Recommendation:

4.1 Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to NOTE and comment upon the review and the recommendations outlined above.

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Background documents:

Review of Youth Advisory Groups (Kent Youth Service 2009)