

**By:** Amanda Honey, Corporate Director - Customer and Communities

**To:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities

**Subject:** The Future of Youth Services in Kent

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Reference:** 11/01698

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**Summary:** This report summarises the response to consultation regarding future Youth Service provision in Kent, on the basis of which recommendations are now made to the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities for decision.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Between the 1<sup>st</sup> August and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011 Kent County Council (KCC) undertook a wide ranging consultation with young people and the communities they live in about the future of Youth Services in Kent. This report sets out the responses to consultation and makes recommendations for decisions by the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities.
- 1.2** Under the Education Act 2006 (Section 1, subsection 6) the Local Education Authority [upper tier authority] has a function in respect of Youth Work whereby it must secure for qualifying young persons sufficient educational leisure-time activities for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities. The duty to provide these services was reiterated by the Education Select Committee (June 2011)<sup>1</sup> and that Committee has also recommended (October 2011)<sup>2</sup> the Government consider how it will judge and intervene in areas where this duty has not been fulfilled.
- 1.3** The Education Select Committee identified that evidence shows that open-access services can sometimes be as effective as targeted ones in reaching vulnerable young people and that both can perform similarly life-changing roles in young people's lives. As such this committee has recommended Local Authorities recognise that an open-access service could be more appropriate than a targeted one for improving certain outcomes for young people and take this into consideration when commissioning services.
- 1.4** The model described during consultation sought to effectively carry out this duty by the provision of open-access services which also offer the opportunity

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<sup>1</sup> Education Select Committee. 3<sup>rd</sup> Report, Services for Young People Volume 1.

<sup>2</sup> Education Select Committee. 6<sup>th</sup> Report, Services for Young People: The Government Response

for additional support to more vulnerable young people. At the same time the proposal recognised the need for local people to take part in the design and delivery of services by proposing the commissioning of youth work at a local level.

- 1.5 It is important to note that during the consultation, work has begun on developing a more integrated approach to the support of Kent's young people through the merger of management functions of the Youth Service and Youth Offending Service, this is an important step in creating an Integrated Youth Service with the ability to offer more seamless support to vulnerable young people.

## 2. The Proposed Model for Kent Youth Service

- 2.1 The proposed model moves from predominantly in-house provision to one which combines significantly reduced direct delivery by KCC with extensive commissioning via a range of external providers. The model took into account wider transformations in KCC, and notably the need to:

- recognise the changing relationship between citizen and state, allowing local communities to take greater control of their services;
- unlock the potential of Kent's local communities to grow their economy through the development of social enterprises;
- make financial savings across all services.

- 2.2 A central aim of the proposed model is to encourage a wide range of local providers to develop new and innovative methods of working with young people which are relevant to local contexts. In this way it is hoped that local communities will grow in confidence and resilience as they become providers of services as well as consumers.

- 2.3 The proposed model is geographically based on the 12 boroughs/districts of Kent. In order to ensure that a mixed economy of open-access youth work provision creates the maximum possible local opportunities for young people to engage, each of these areas will have the following elements:

- A directly delivered **Youth Hub**. A focal point for local youth work delivery, supporting the locality with workforce development, quality assurance and curriculum development. The Hub will also accommodate local managers and offer co-location opportunities for key partners;
- At least one **Community Youth Tutor** delivered with a partner school, dependent on need and the availability of participating schools;
- A directly delivered **Street-Based Project** which will operate at locally agreed sites across the district/borough working with specific communities of young people;
- **Commissioned Youth Work** activities which will be selected through an outcomes-based process.

- 2.4** The proposed model did not include any changes to a number of existing county-wide youth services including Outdoor Education Centres, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and support for Youth Participation (including Kent Youth County Council).
- 2.5** The provision of Youth Work is, as noted in the introduction, primarily an educational process. Young people are engaged on a voluntary basis in activities through which they can develop positive relationships with appropriately qualified adults and other young people in order to further their personal and social development. Often referred to as 'Informal Education', this youth work process should see the young people developing self-esteem and other key 'soft' skills as they progress to become more involved in the direction and delivery of services.
- 2.6** The Education Select Committee (June 2011) also noted an important point about the provision of youth work: namely that the purpose of youth services should primarily be to offer positive activities and enriching personal and social experiences, and not solely be seen as a mechanism to divert young people from misbehaviour. These enriching activities often support young people to develop the range of interpersonal skills which many employers expect recruits to be able to demonstrate.

### **3.0 Consultation Findings**

- 3.1** The consultation process offered a number of routes to respond including a questionnaire (both electronic and hard copy), e-mail and written submissions. In order to inform the responses to the consultation a number of information meetings were held for young people, staff and partners to explain the proposals in more detail.
- 3.2** There were more than 700 separate responses to the consultation from individuals and groups, and these responses took on a variety of forms including art work and, in one case, a rap produced by young people. A breakdown of the responses to consultation can be found in Appendix A, including a copy of the questions posed in the questionnaire. A list of organisations and individuals who submitted responses is included as Appendix B.
- 3.3** During and before the consultation period, five public petitions were started in response to the proposals. One of these was a countywide e-petition campaigning against any cuts or restructuring of Youth Services in Kent; the petition ran from 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011 to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and received 381 of the 12,000 signatures required to trigger a debate in County Council. Other petitions were more local in nature and are referred to later in this report.
- 3.4** During the consultation it was recognised that, in order to ensure the effective involvement of local communities in decision-making processes, a close relationship was required with the developing Locality Boards and therefore presentations were made to explain the proposals to these bodies.
- 3.5** Responses from consultation indicated a roughly equal split between those who agreed with the concept of a new model of service delivery and those who preferred no change to the *status quo* or a minority who proposed a more radical model of total commissioning.

*Sell an Outdoor Ed centre or some other land and use that money to run centres! If it's been said by Ofsted you're that good, why are you changing?*  
KCC Staff

*The mix of both direct delivery combined with commissioned services will bring innovative approaches to the way in which adolescent services engage with young people across Kent. The district based approach mirrors that being taken by other services and coupled with community involvement should give local groups the ability to design and run service.*  
District Council

- 3.6** The key themes of the proposals and responses to them are discussed below, including a section explaining in more detail responses on a District or Borough level.

#### **4. Key Countywide Themes**

##### **4.1 Youth Hubs**

One of the most debated points of the consultation was the concept and location of the proposed Youth Hubs. Perhaps the most common misconception with regard to the proposals has been the assumption that a district Youth Hub will be the only form of youth work provision in an area, with the concern that young people would have to travel large distances in order to access services.

*The 'hubs' idea sounds a bad one to me, not everyone can afford to travel to the hubs so shall miss out. I know you intend to have youth work teams but what happens in the winter months when youths do not wish to be on the street and want somewhere to go to do activities?*

Young Person

- 4.2** The responses to the consultation were strong in their support of the ability for the proposed delivery model of the Youth Hubs to offer a more extensive and co-ordinated model of delivery for supporting young people.

*This [a Hub] provides an opportunity to bring services for young people together under one roof and provide a genuinely integrated service which will enable us to better support vulnerable young people whose needs cut across service boundaries*

Partner Organisation

##### **4.3 Commissioning**

In order to deliver the vision of a future where communities are not only engaged in participating in youth work, but also providing these services, the consultation set out a commissioning model. This model seeks to assist local communities to develop resilience and creativity by providing a budget and support services for local groups or social enterprises.

- 4.4** Community groups and partner organisations welcomed the opportunity to engage in the commissioning process, but many stated that they would need

to gain a better understanding of specific outcomes frameworks and budget allocations.

*Then please - give US the chance to do this and offer us some HELP!!!!  
Local areas can buy in services for street work so that local people are able to choose the type youth work they want, how long for etc.*

*Community Group*

*I understand the need for change, my major concern is will the level of professionalism be jeopardised by having non qualified personnel working with young people? What if there is no take up by the local community to fill the gaps left behind by detached youth workers especially in the rural areas?*

*KCC Staff*

**4.5** A significant number of respondents highlighted the need for any commissioning process to ensure a sufficiently robust quality assurance framework was in place to protect a good level of service delivery for young people.

**4.6** Responses to the consultation insisted that any commissioning process be designed in such a way so that small providers, new social enterprises and local groups who have a presence within communities were able to engage on an equal footing with larger or more established organisations.

**4.7 Outcomes**

The consultation sought views on an outcomes framework which encompassed a range of 14 general priorities for young people to engage in challenging and fun activities to help them develop a wide range of skills and support their well-being and development. These general outcomes were supported by a range of needs analysis information at a District/Borough level.

**4.8** Consultation findings that relate to youth work outcomes support the overall objectives and welcome the continuation of a wide range of universal and targeted service outcomes. Where concerns were raised, these related to specific borough/ district outcomes, these are addressed in Section 5.

*The future of the Kent Youth Service will change the lives of so many young people, some of whom will create our future. Do not mess this up!*

*Resident*

*In addition to the full gamut of general youth work and that which can also fall under the banner of differentiated activities, we would like to see projects which offer a high level of skill and quality in specialisms, especially for deprived young people who have no other access*

*Borough Council*

**4.9** Any final outcomes framework will need to take careful account of the proposed Outcomes Framework for Youth Work being developed by the 'Catalyst' consortium (a group of four national youth organisations acting as the Department for Education's strategic partner for young people). The Education Select Committee (October 2011) is recommending that government actively endorse this framework and expect youth services to use it unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.

#### 4.10 Buildings

Youth work has traditionally been associated with youth centres, the buildings from which services can be accessed. Under the new model, KCC proposed that the some of the current stock of youth centres would not be run and managed by KCC. A number of alternatives were proposed ranging from making some existing centres available to commissioned local providers to disposing of buildings that were not taken up under commissioning.

- 4.11 Responses to consultation in relation to specific buildings were often very emotive and current users of buildings, naturally, demonstrated clear support for their own premises. The responses highlighted the importance of ensuring that any issues relating to property are dealt with sympathetically to the needs of local communities and continuity of service delivery.

*"I feel strongly that investment in people is far more important than maintaining buildings when there are so many buildings already available.*  
KCC Staff

*Once a facility has been lost it will never be replaced. Work with voluntary organisations but keep the structure and safeguard the buildings.*  
Resident

- 4.12 A number of questions during the consultation focused on the process by which organisations or potential social enterprises would be able to make use of existing KCC properties which are no longer required for direct delivery.

#### 4.13 General Comments

Through consultation, respondents also aired views that did not lead directly from the consultation questions. Some of these are included below as a representation of views that were expressed on a range of youth work related issues.

*It's not the children's fault the economy is in a mess, why should our children have to pay for it by cutting their services*  
Resident

*Cutting money from the youth service will lead to more money being spent on crime reduction.*  
Partner Organisation

*The youth club service is so underrated by the government. For people that are actually suffering in the recession this is one of the only things their families can afford them to do!!! It's such a stupid place to take money from.*  
Young Person

*The proposed changes are a cost cutting exercise handed down from central government and will have a detrimental effect on the young people and communities*  
Resident

*Far too much money is spent on supplying services like sport, dance, art, outings etc that can easily be accessed elsewhere. Stop wasting our Council tax on unnecessary things.*  
Resident

*Seems such a tragic shame to close so many existing successful KYS projects and then commission them out at the risk that relationships built up with local people and agencies will get lost forever*

*KCC Staff*

## **5. Consultation Findings by Borough/ District**

**5.1** A major finding of the public consultation was agreement of key partners for the need to develop local youth work outcomes frameworks (henceforth outcomes frameworks) by borough/district to recognise what youth work provision is required at a local level but which takes account of the countywide outcomes described in 4.7-4.9.

**5.2** The following sections present the outcomes of the public consultation in relation to each of Kent's boroughs/ districts. Each identifies the key themes and issues that will be taken forward for development in the outcomes frameworks.

### **5.3 Ashford**

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Ashford consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Ashford North Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at the Towers School;
- The development of an Ashford Borough-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** A total of 74 (questionnaires and correspondence) were received in relation to Ashford Borough.

Following consultation there is neither clear support nor opposition to the proposed Hub, Ashford North. Neither was there any significant correspondence from users and partners. However the formal submission from Ashford Borough Council (ABC) and meeting with the Locality Board stated strong support to work with KCC officers to develop the local priorities in the outcomes framework. This work would include formal agreement on the most suitable centre to take forward as the Ashford Hub, as well as to develop priorities for street-based and commissioned youth work. Further, KCC recognises specific areas of need in Ashford Borough, particularly Stanhope and dispersed rural communities.

A selection of views from Ashford respondents includes:

*I do feel as though Ashford North Youth Centre acts as a good central Hub for Youth services in Ashford.*

*Young Person*

*Skateside should stay open it [is] right next to the skate park and multiple people use it for access to connexions and job opportunities.*

*Partner Organisation*

*If xcyc was to close I would have [nowhere] to go and I would be unable to get anywhere else and I would also not be able to see my friends and also*

*make new ones.*

*Young Person*

*Tenterden is the centre of rural Ashford, and there is nothing obvious in the proposals with regard to safeguarding the excellent work which is currently being done in Tenterden and the rural areas through the location of a Detached Youth Worker at Homewood School.*

*Partner Organisation*

*If there has to be a hub model then Ashford North is a suitable venue.*

*Partner Organisation*

*It is sad that we have to lose any of our youth centres but if there can be only one hub the Ashford North site would be the best place for it.*

*Young Person*

*Ashford North Youth Centre is ideally located, it is adjacent to the North School with which it has good working links and is close to areas of deprivation. It is also accessible by many transport links (train station and bus routes) and is therefore inviting to young people from many areas of Ashford.*

*Partner Organisation*

#### **5.4 Canterbury**

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Canterbury consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Riverside Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutors based at the Canterbury Academy, Herne Bay High School and Spires Academy;
- A Canterbury City Council area-wide Detached Project;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at Herne Bay High School continuing to manage and deliver youth work at the Parklife Centre in Herne Bay.

**You said:** A total of 38 responses (questionnaires and correspondence) were received in relation to Canterbury City Council (CCC) area.

Following consultation there is no outstanding support for any specific youth centre as a hub. The proposed Hub, Riverside, received support from its users and partners, however this was offset by strong support for Whitstable including public meetings and a protest march involving young people and members of the local community.

CCC and the Canterbury Locality Board expressed a wish to work in partnership with KCC to explore the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework.

A sample of Canterbury responses is included below:

*Keep Riverside!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It's amazing and does so much!! Where would catch 22 and KRAN go!! and I use it all the time!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

*Young Person*

*The hub, if there has to be one should be based in WHITSTABLE as this is where the facilities for are most needed and where the ability to cover from local resources is weakest.*

*Young Person*

*I think that riverside being the hub is good because we are easy to get to and it is very chilled and laid back but we do have our boundaries.*

*Young Person*

*Save Whitstable Youth Centre. As you may be aware Whitstable has been mounting a strong campaign to save our Youth centre.*

*Community Group*

## 5.5 Dartford

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Dartford consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub by developing a partnership approach with Thames Gateway YMCA at the Dartford Hub;
- Developing a Community Youth Tutor based at Swan Valley School;
- A Dartford Borough-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** A total of 22 (questionnaires and correspondence) were received in relation to Dartford Borough.

Following consultation the proposed Hub, YMCA, received only limited support; this was offset by strong support for The Bridge including artworks produced by young people, correspondence and feedback from public meetings.

Dartford Borough Council have expressed a desire to work in partnership with KCC to explore the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework.

Below is a selection of comments from Dartford respondents:

*I very strongly suggest that Dartford's hub be at the new purpose-built KCC-owned facility at The Bridge and that 'commissioned' services be based at the YMCA.*

*Young Person*

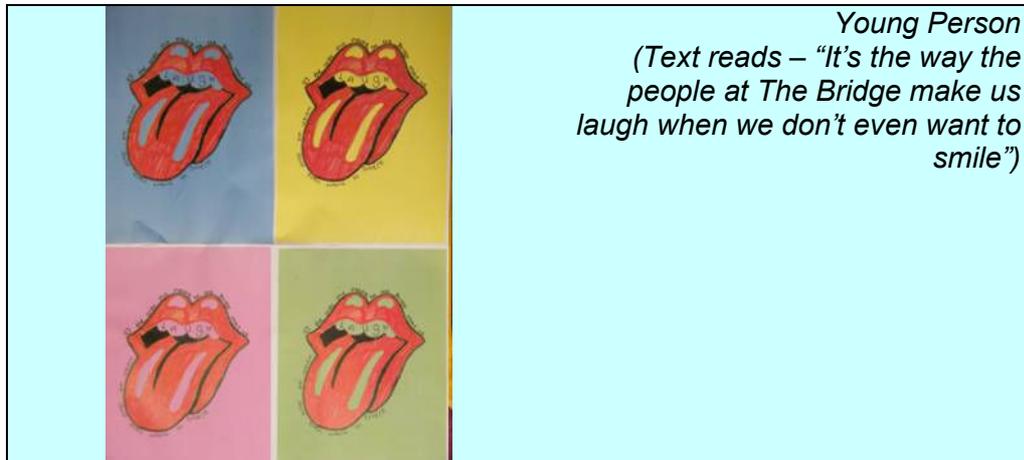
*Swan Valley should be the Hub due to the safe nature of the site. If you looked at the YMCA it is surrounded by busy roads and has not got a place on site for playing outdoor games.*

*Resident*

*The YMCA is a fantastic resource and an ideal hub as it was originally conceived as such. There are outlying areas of Dartford borough which need a way of communicating with the YMCA to enable YP to access the*

*opportunities available.*

*Partner Organisation*



## 5.6 Dover

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Dover consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Archers Court Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutors based at Sandwich Technology School and Harbour/St Edmunds RC Schools;
- A Dover District-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** There was a high response rate from Dover District residents with a total of 102 (questionnaires and correspondence) received.

During consultation, a petition against the closure of Linwood Youth Centre in Deal and Aylesham Youth Centre was handed into County Council with 3944 signatures and, as such, has triggered a debate in full council. This debate is due to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

Within the responses to the consultation itself, there is no clear opposition for the proposal on the whole or Archer’s Court as a hub. However significant support has been received to retain youth work in both Aylesham and Deal (Linwood) Youth Centres. KCC acknowledges the importance of youth work in these communities and is committed to exploring options with Dover District Council and the Shadow Dover District Locality Board in addition to the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework.

A sample of Dover responses is included below:

*The ‘Dover area’ encompasses a larger area than young people actually travel.*

*Community Organisation*

*Parish Council members, and the vast majority of local residents, object most strongly to your proposals to close Aylesham Youth Club [...] We have*

*neither the funds nor the expertise to run a youth club - which is a very skilled job, and CANNOT be done by well-meaning local volunteers.*

*Parish Council*

*Don't close Linwood, we deserve as much as anyone else.*

*Young Person*

*What about Aylesham - our young people cannot and will not go to Sandwich or Dover - they will have nothing.*

*Resident*

*Do not close the archers court youth centre please!!! please please please i love it there and now that I have started secondary I barely see my friends anymore but the archers court youth centre gave me a place to meet up with friends and have fun!*

*Young Person*

*Having youth HQ in Dover and Archers Court means that young people in areas like Aylesham and the small villages who benefit most are potentially missing out.*

*Partner Organisation*

## 5.7 Gravesham

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Gravesham consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Northfleet Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at Thamesview School;
- A Gravesham Borough-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** A total of 33 (questionnaires and correspondence) responses were received in relation to Gravesham Borough.

Following consultation there is no clear support for any one of the existing youth centres as a hub. The proposed Hub, Northfleet, received some support from its users and partners; however this was offset by strong support for The Gr@nd. It is important to note that many of the responses from Gravesham Borough were to express support for the existing KCC work with ethnic minority young people including the 'Under the Same Sky' project.

GBC wishes to work in partnership with KCC to explore the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework. Further KCC recognises the need to consider the needs of specific areas within the Borough such as the King's Farm Estate.

Below is a selection of comments from Gravesham respondents:

*Northfleet is a good centre in a good location but geographically a little isolated compared to a more central location*

*Community Group*

*If young people need advice or want something to do, the gr@nd is the first place they go. The gr@nd also offers work to help integrate the community, it is not something we want to lose.*

*Partner Organisation*

*Losing Miracles YC would be a retrograde step and could result detrimentally to the whole community, especially youths.*

*Resident*

## 5.8 Maidstone

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Maidstone consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing InfoZone Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at Valley Park Academy;
- The development of a Community Youth Tutor at the Senacre Community Skills Centre
- A Maidstone Borough Detached Project.

**You said:** There was a strong response totalling 69 (questionnaires and correspondence) in relation to Maidstone Borough.

Following consultation there is no clear support for any one of the existing youth centres as a hub. The proposed Hub, Infozone, received significant email (39) support from its users and partners, however this was counterbalanced by the majority of questionnaire respondents not being in favour and, more significantly the formal submission from Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) stating a preference for Shepway Youth Centre, further supported by 461 signatories of a petition raised by residents from the local community.

In addition, MBC has suggested that their existing youth provision at The Switch Cafe could be included in a partnership delivery model to complement the KCC directly delivered and commissioned service.

A strong submission in support of retaining the youth centre in Lenham was received from the local KCC Member which was, in turn, supported by a petition from the local community.

During consultation the post of Community Youth Tutor at Valley Park Academy was discontinued by the school which means a new partner school will need to be identified.

The choice of hub and partnership opportunities will form the main themes for developing a joint outcomes framework with Maidstone Borough Council.

A selection of views from Maidstone respondents includes:

*The small youth centres such as Lenham provide a valuable service in communities and locations where there is little else for the youngsters to occupy themselves with, especially in winter.*

*KCC Staff*

*I have not seen InfoZone but I know that [Shepway Youth Centre] has great facilities - indoor and outdoor sports area, dance studio / Kitchen area and is used by many people in the community - not just young people.*

*Young person*

*There are some voluntary youth groups in Maidstone who would be willing to look at support to deliver more youth facilities and activities in the Maidstone area*

*Community Group*

*We have a great purpose built facility at Lenham with access to a sports hall and 3G football pitch which are all used by the club.*

*Resident*

*Shepway is the only youth club with a sports pitch. Shepway has everything the Info Zone has and more space for more activities including indoor and outdoor sports.*

*KCC Staff*

## 5.9 Sevenoaks

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Sevenoaks consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Swanley Youth Centre (The Junction);
- the development of a Community Youth Tutor at Knole Academy;
- A Sevenoaks District-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** A total of 13 (questionnaires and correspondence) responses were received in relation to Sevenoaks District.

Following written submissions to consultation there was little opposition for the proposed Hub, Swanley Youth Centre or the proposed changes to the Youth Service. KCC also acknowledges the need to explore further the future of youth work provision in Edenbridge.

Sevenoaks District Council, whilst suggesting that a greater proportion of the budget be allocated to commissioning, offered support for the model and wish to work with KCC to develop the local outcomes framework and commissioning within which, partnership opportunities will form the main theme for the joint outcomes framework.

A sample of the Sevenoaks responses is included below:

*Although there is a great need in Swanley for youth service provision the fact that the Sevenoaks hub is in one remote corner of the district means that it is not central.*

*Resident*

*Swanley is not central: it may be in an area of deprivation but it is not accessible to young people from other urban areas. Sevenoaks town would be more central.*

*Young Person*

*It needs to be remembered that Sevenoaks is a large area, and youths in Swanley and Edenbridge often lack mobility*

*Community Group*

#### **5.10 Shepway**

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Shepway consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Café IT Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutors based at Folkestone Academy and The Marsh Academy;
- A Shepway District-wide Detached Project.
- The Community Youth Tutor at The Marsh Academy will continue to manage and deliver youth work at the Phase II Youth Centre.

**You said:** There was a strong response totalling 95 (questionnaires and correspondence) in relation to Shepway District. Following consultation there is support for the proposed Hub, C@fe IT. However, during consultation a public meeting and a number of discussions with local County Councillors took place to discuss the future use of Hythe youth centre.

The future use of Hythe Youth Centre and partnership opportunities will form the main themes for the joint outcomes framework between KCC and SDC.

A selection of views from Shepway respondents includes:

*If Cafe IT is used as a hub there will be more youths outside and the situation will become even more unbearable.*

*Resident*

*Cafe-it should definitely be the hub as it has given me so much in the few years I have attended it and it would be a mistake to lose such a wonderful and friendly place.*

*Young Person*

*I like The Shed and the skate park. I need an outside space to ride and do graffiti art. I like to cook as well. I am worried the new hub won't have the facilities.*

*Young Person*

*I would sincerely hope that the Hythe Youth Centre if not designated the Hub would be very much part of the commissioning process in order that the young people of Hythe will continue to be part of the local service delivery.*

*Community Group*

*Facilities should also be retained in Hythe because the youth of Hythe do not have the means to travel to Folkestone.*

*Resident*

## 5.11 Swale

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Swale consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing New House Sports and Youth Centre;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at The Isle of Sheppey Academy;
- A Swale Borough-wide Detached Project.
- The Community Youth Tutor at The Isle of Sheppey Academy will continue to manage and deliver youth work at Minster youth club.

**You said:** Following consultation, 69 responses specific to Swale were received many of which provided strong support for New House Sports and Youth Centre as a Youth Hub. Serious concerns were raised in relation to the nature of the district, and its 3 distinct communities; the Isle of Sheppey and Faversham as well as Sittingbourne. KCC acknowledges the importance of youth work in these communities and is committed to exploring options with Swale Borough Council and Swale Locality Board in addition to the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework.

A selection of views from Swale respondents includes:

*We feel that because of the geological [sic] location and amount of young people in Swale particularly in Sheerness West and East there should be a service offered above and beyond a community youth tutor in Minster*

Parish Council

*If this centre [Sheerness] were to close then crime would increase, and the local children, will go from few youth facilities to none, and that is disgraceful to think about. That will cost the council much more than keeping a relatively small youth club open.*

Community Group

*I believe Newhouse is an excellent choice for the hub, due to its range of facilities - large, very well used sports hall, dance theatre, fitness gym, meeting rooms, amongst others.*

Young Person

*My daughter uses the Faversham youth centre and has done for 3 years along with a lot of friends. It would be a massive loss for lots of different reasons.*

Resident

*The hub concept is meaningless in the swale district, because we have three distinct urban centres. Sheerness, Faversham and Sittingbourne, should all have a fully funded and maintained youth facility.*

Community Group

*Threat of closure of Sheerness County Youth Club which is big a thing to the island for past generations and the youth of today.*

Resident

## 5.12 Thanet

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Thanet consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub at the existing Quarterdeck Youth Centre (Margate);
- The Community Youth Tutor based at Marlowe Academy (Ramsgate);
- The development of a Community Youth Tutor at the Thanet Skills Centre;
- A Thanet District-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** There were a total of 29 responses (e-mail and questionnaire) from Thanet in response to consultation, in addition an e-petition was raised against the closure of youth centres in Ramsgate, this received 68 of the 1,000 signatures required to trigger a County Council debate.

Following consultation there is clearly a need to undertake work between KCC and Thanet District Council to explore the needs of the District. Thanet has two large urban centres and consultation suggests that young people will not travel between these. Therefore the outcomes framework will need to focus on these issues as well as the themes for youth work.

A selection of views from Thanet respondents includes:

*Desperately needs at least two 'hubs' - Ramsgate and Margate, as both towns have different needs and Ramsgate (Concorde and Artwise) would become more alienated. Why should Margate be the focus?  
There are many children in Ramsgate that use the Concorde centre, if moved to the Quarterdeck many of us would no longer be able to attend.*  
Partner Organisation

*YP from Ramsgate won't travel to Margate, and without Youth Centres providing diversionary activities how are they meant to spend their free time?*  
Young Person

## 5.13 Tonbridge and Malling

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Tonbridge and Malling consisted of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub developed in partnership with the Borough Council;
- The Community Youth Tutors based at Ridgeview School and The Malling School;
- A Tonbridge and Malling Borough-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** During consultation there were 27 responses (e-mail and questionnaire) from Tonbridge and Malling and following the receipt of these responses there is recognition of the need for a Hub in the town of Tonbridge, although to recognise areas of greatest need, further work is required to find the optimum location and building.

During consultation very significant support for the existing SAMAYS youth provision was submitted from users, residents, the Borough Council, Snodland Town Council and Tracey Crouch MP.

KCC acknowledges the importance of youth work in the 'Medway gap' communities and is committed to exploring options with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to finalise the choice of hub, partnership opportunities and the main themes for the joint outcomes framework.

A selection of views from Tonbridge & Malling respondents includes:

*The Tonbridge and Malling area is extremely vast. Young People living on the outskirts of the borough particularly those in Aylesford would have to travel a long distance into Tonbridge.*

*Partner Organisations*

*The facilities and the service provided by SAMAYs to the young people in Snodland and surrounding areas has become a very valuable asset to the community which contains some of the most disadvantaged areas within the Borough.*

*Community Group*

*The youth centre [King's Hill] has developed good links with the community*

*One centre located in the south of this Borough is insufficient as the geography of the area is an urban area of Tonbridge separated from the equally built up area of the Medway gap by a rural area.*

*Parish Council*

#### **5.14 Tunbridge Wells**

**We proposed:** The proposed new model of service delivery for Kent Youth Service in Tunbridge Wells will consist of direct delivery through:

- A Youth Hub to be developed in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
- The Community Youth Tutor based at Oakley School,
- A Tunbridge Wells Borough-wide Detached Project.

**You said:** 23 responses (e-mail and questionnaire) were received during the consultation and it is clear that there is strong commitment for joint work between KCC and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to ensure that a suitable Hub be developed in Tunbridge Wells Town centre.

During consultation, the Headteacher of Mascal's School proposed (with contributory funding) the creation of a CYT post to allow youth work to continue in Paddock Wood.

Following consultation KCC also acknowledges that the rural nature of Tunbridge Wells will need to be given particular consideration. As with all Boroughs/ Districts, KCC will develop a youth work outcomes framework with the borough council and Locality Board to ensure the specific needs of young people from Tunbridge Wells are considered in future youth provision.

A selection of views from Tunbridge Wells respondents includes:

*A youth Hub in the town centre would improve the central provision in the largest town in the district. The town centre is also easily accessible by public transport from the edge of town. Partner Organisation*

*A central Hub would allow for better joint provision and partnership working.*  
*Community Group*

*You have to look at the rural areas and the area that a centre is being removed from and the needs of these young people which are very different to those in the urban areas of Tunbridge Wells the needs are not all the same and we must remember this and look at this.*  
*Resident*

*I feel that Tunbridge Wells has a very large rural area and it would be difficult to manage both the rural and urban areas with one street based team.*  
*KCC Staff*

*I live in Cranbrook and go to Oakley clubs because I can stay to after school and evening club.*  
*Young Person*

## **6.0 Equalities Impact Assessment**

**6.1** In addition to the mainstream activities of the consultation process, Kent County Council commissioned the University of Glasgow to carry out independent focus groups with identified groups of young people in order to fully understand the potential impact of the proposed changes on protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

**6.2** Following the focus groups and responses received during the consultation, it is clear that KCC will need to take great care when commissioning and/ or delivering youth work, either at a county wide level or when working closely with local communities, to ensure that young people who are from these groups are taken into consideration and involved in decision-making processes.

**6.3** The report into potential impact upon groups protected under the Equality Act has been used to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment full screening and subsequent action plan, which requires the County Council to take into account the following findings for when creating the new model of service delivery:

- **Disability:** Young people require additional support to engage with 'mainstream' services and also place high social and emotional value on the provision of specialist groups.
- **Gender:** Youth work activities are still accessed by more young men than young women. Young women place particular value on the ability to meet together in safe, social spaces supported by trained professionals.
- **BME:** Young people valued the opportunity to integrate with various groups on their own terms and valued the safety and development offered by groups intended for them.

- **Religion/Belief:** Young people found their own faith-based settings offered suitable support for them giving spiritual development alongside space to socialise.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Young people highlighted the need for safe and supportive places to meet where they were able to access peer support as well as that of appropriately trained professionals.

## 7. The Commissioning Process

- 7.1 During consultation a minimum amount of £1.2M per annum was identified for the commissioning of infrastructure and direct delivery youth work organisations across Kent. The stated intention was to work with partners to identify other resources with which to increase this amount for commissioning. Whilst key partners have thus far been unable to identify resource to increase this allocation, some have indicated the desire to begin working on aligning similar outcomes and the co-location of service delivery.
- 7.2 Kent County Council has been able to identify further funds from its Early Intervention Grant with which to increase the commissioning budget a portion of which would need to be set aside for infrastructure organisations and countywide support of large voluntary organisations.
- 7.3 Throughout the process of developing a joint approach to commissioning it is hoped that, by working with District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils and other agencies, some further resources for the provision of youth work activities will be identified.
- 7.4 Commissioning budgets per borough/ district will be determined using the Resource Allocation Mode, as used widely across Kent County Council in determining the distribution of resources on a needs basis. The model recognises the population of young people in each area, as well as taking account of the levels of deprivation in areas where young people live. This model ensuring a distribution of commissioning funds which will build additional youth work on top of the open-access model of direct delivery.
- 7.5 Following extensive background work and advice, notably from Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team and other KCC commissioning teams, it is recommended that the Youth Service Transformation commissioning uses a framework approach. When procuring over a period of time, a framework can deliver many benefits, such as:
- reduced transaction costs
  - continuous improvement within long-term relationships
  - better value and greater community wealth
  - sustainable local supply chain
- 7.7 Framework agreements should be viewed as a long term relationship with the community or suppliers whereby partners are working together to deliver sustained ongoing improvement. In addition KCC has a successful history of the involvement of service users in decision-making processes and this can be continued through the engagement of young people in the development, and evaluation of commissioning frameworks and providers.

**7.8** Prior to the opening of the commissioning process, there would need to be preparatory work with Locality Boards to add detail to the outcomes framework for each Borough/ District. It is anticipated that in order to attend meeting and undertake the supporting work that at least 8 weeks will be required. This has been considered in the timetable below (Table 1).

**Table 1: Commissioning Process Timescale**

DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>Commissioning Timescales</b>												
Cabinet Member Decision	Outcomes for local youth work developed alongside district & borough councils		Locality Boards endorse local outcomes	Commissioning framework open for submissions from interested organisations		Evaluate submissions to frameworks	Invite to tender	Tender selection & contract negotiations		Contracts issued	New model delivery starts 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2013	

## **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1** As a result of the changes of timescales for commissioning to allow greater input from Locality Boards and District and Borough Councils, it will be necessary to re-align proposed timescales for the recruitment of staff to the new model of service delivery to ensure business continuity and concurrent implementation of the core delivery and commissioned services.
- 8.2** A separate response to the staffing and HR issues raised during consultation will need to be prepared and shared with staff and unions to support staff through the process of service transformation.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1** The consultation process served to demonstrate the strength of attachment within local communities to youth work provision in their areas, whilst this was often expressed as a desire to keep a specific building it is more accurately represented as a vote of confidence for the services delivered from those buildings – a finding upheld by young people’s responses and information gathered in focus groups.
- 9.2** There was strong support at every stage of the consultation for continuing the delivery of open-access youth work in Kent and the strength of response in favour of the quality and effectiveness of current provision is evidence of the need for an ongoing core KCC delivery of youth work.
- 9.3** The consultation gained significant support for the concept of Youth Hubs and the wide ranges of services they would be able to offer both to young people and also as a key element in supporting the quality of local youth work delivery. Whilst in some areas the proposed location was not contested, in others, there is a genuine debate over the best location.
- 9.4** There is clear support for increasing the resources given to voluntary and community groups in order to create a wide range of opportunities for young people to engage with youth work activities in their areas. Any commissioning process would need to take into account the needs of existing local providers as well as emerging social enterprises and/ or community groups to ensure development within the marketplace.
- 9.5** The recently published Ofsted report into the commissioning of young people’s services (August 2011)<sup>3</sup> was published during the consultation and highlighted a number of key points to be found in the effective commissioning of services. Namely this was where local authorities had:
- ensured the commissioning process received an appropriate level of local authority professional support;
  - nurtured new and different providers;
  - enabled established providers to have a role in supporting new or emerging organisations;

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<sup>3</sup> Ofsted: An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people’s services. August 2011

- considered the cost efficiency in awarding contracts of a large enough scale and for a long enough period;
- made good use of the knowledge held by existing networks of providers and practitioners;
- tackled adversarial attitudes between organisations where they occurred
- involved elected members in key decisions;
- were underpinned by robust, intelligent monitoring by the local authority.

**9.6** The majority of responses regarding the outcomes of youth work in Kent supported the need to define outcomes at a local level and work with key partners has resulted in clear support for joint work to create a set of outcomes for the commissioning and delivery of youth work activities in each area which recognise a common county-wide approach to youth work whilst addressing key local need. These outcomes will need to take into account national outcomes for youth work currently being developed.

**9.7** New developments in how KCC works more closely with local areas, notably through the introduction of Locality Boards, provides an opportunity to ensure that local youth work outcome frameworks can be endorsed by those democratically elected representatives who are best placed to understand the needs and aspirations of their communities.

**9.8** The consultation process demonstrated that, for some communities, the physical youth club building played a key role in delivering services above and beyond the delivery of youth work activities and that consideration to how these properties can be utilised by voluntary and community groups.

## **10. Recommendations**

**10.1** Based upon the results of the consultation, it is recommended that Kent County Council exercise it's statutory duty to provide educational leisure-time activities by:

- *Proceeding with the implementation of a new model of service delivery that will combine the best of KCC's work through the delivery of a core KCC offer of open-access youth work as defined in 2.3 alongside local commitment, energy and creativity supported by a newly created commissioning fund.*
- *Continue the delivery of key county services which offer a range of opportunities to young people through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Kent Youth County Council and Kent's Outdoor Education centres*
- *KCC undertaking joint work with boroughs/districts to define what youth work provision is required at a local level during the first months of 2012. During this process exploring and identifying where common outcomes can assist in aligning budgets and resources for the commissioning process.*
- *KCC Officers seeking the endorsement of Locality Boards for local youth work outcome frameworks during March 2012.*

- *Developing a commissioning framework which ensures the equality of opportunity for small and emerging organisations and social enterprises when tendering to deliver youth work activities within their communities.*
- *Allocating funds for the commissioning of youth work activities at a district or borough level using the methodology of the Resource Allocation Model.*
- *KCC, district and borough officers and Locality Boards ensuring the engagement of young people as decision-makers and evaluators of directly delivered and commissioned youth work activities.*
- *KCC, district and borough officers and Locality Boards taking full account of the recommendations of the Equality Impact Assessment when agreeing outcomes frameworks and commissioning youth work activities for young people.*
- *KCC's Property Group developing a means by which voluntary and community organisations will be able to lease buildings (at a sustainable cost and with suitable length of lease) in time for the approval of the commissioning process on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.*
- *Shaping and implementing the new model by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 in close cooperation with colleagues in the boroughs and districts and other partner organisations to ensure that local needs and priorities remain at the heart of what young people will be able to access.*

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**Background Documents:**

1. Education Select Committee. 3<sup>rd</sup> Report, Services for Young People Volume 1.
2. Education Select Committee. 6th Report, Services for Young People: The Government Response.
3. Ofsted: An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services. August 2011.