

## Select Committee – Provision of Activities for Young People (Somewhere to Go , Someone to be)

March 2009

### I Executive Summary

#### **Committee membership**

The Select Committee consisted of six Members of the County Council, five Conservative and one Liberal Democrat. The committee also had the assistance of labour representative Mr Terry Birkett.

Kent County Council Members (County Councillors):



Alan Chell



Jeff Curwood



Godfrey Horne



Michael Northey



Geoff Rowe



Elizabeth Tweed

## **The Terms of Reference**

1. To explore national and local policies and strategies in relation to the provision of (leisure-time) activities for young people.
2. To examine recent consultations and consult with young people during the review, with an emphasis on young people who may not currently engage with services, and motivational aspects.
3. To explore how the range of activities available to young people is communicated to them and whether there are opportunities to make this communication more effective
4. To examine collaborative and partnership work taking place between KCC and other organisations particularly through Youth Advisory Groups, and any opportunities to develop this further.
5. To examine whether existing funding streams for provision of activities for young people could be used more creatively to benefit young people and communities.

## **Evidence gathering**

The Select Committee gathered evidence through desk research and received evidence in person and in writing from a range of stakeholders including young people, the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Service, Environment & Regeneration, Children, Families and Education Extended Services, District Councils and the voluntary sector. The original aim to include an in-depth look at Youth Advisory Groups was scaled down due to the appointment of an independent consultant to carry out a simultaneous review.

A list of the witnesses who attended Select Committee hearings is at Appendix 1. A list of those submitting written or supplementary evidence is at Appendix 2. Details of visits carried out are at Appendix 3.

## **Reasons for establishment of the Select Committee**

The Select Committee was formed in response to concerns that young people are increasingly being acted against rather than provided for and that information about activities provision could be made more inclusive.

The review has looked at:-

- activities on offer to young people and how this is communicated
- barriers to access
- motivational aspects
- multi-agency work and funding

## Introduction

This is the first select committee to have been appointed by the Communities Policy Overview Committee. 'Communities' is the Kent County Council Directorate in which Kent Youth Services and KDAAT 'sit'. In many other council areas youth services are under the same management as Children, Families and Education but in Kent this is a very large directorate, covering all of education and children's social services and it was felt that keeping them separate would help the council to focus on many of the issues that affect young people and their communities as they grow up.

At the same time, having Integrated Youth Support Services means that all the people involved in youth provision will in future meet, talk and work closely together to make things better for young people and one aspect of this is the provision of positive activities.

There have been other Kent select committees which have looked at the topic of activities such as 'Transition' in April 2007, as well as those which have looked at other important issues affecting people (including young people) such as the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee in 2008. This work was carried out because there were serious concerns about the damage alcohol can cause to people's health and wellbeing and its terms of reference included looking at vulnerable groups (people who are often badly affected), one of which was young people. The report said that one of the reasons for alcohol misuse among young people was having 'nothing else to do'. Some of the report's recommendations and those of other recent KCC select committees are given at the end of this report in Appendix 4.

Members of this committee decided not to focus just on the work of the Kent Youth Service (KYS) since independent consultants BMG carried out detailed research and published a report in 2008 and Ofsted<sup>1</sup> also inspected and reported on KYS in June 2008. It was decided instead to look at what kinds of activities are on offer in Kent, where they are, how young people find out about what's on and what might be stopping them from taking part.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for Standards and Education

Kent has a variety of leisure opportunities provided by all sorts of organisations: this ranges from activities anyone could take part in, to those aimed specifically at young people or particular groups of young people. It is not too surprising to find out that young people from less well-off backgrounds and those who are no longer at school, are less likely to participate in positive activities<sup>2</sup>. Apart from that, there are many young people who would like to take part in more leisure activities but can't because of their family situation, or other obstacles such as being disabled or having caring responsibilities, a lack of things to do locally, the cost of taking part, and the availability and cost of transport. Sometimes it's as simple as just not knowing what is around. Therefore we have looked at ways of communicating with young people about what is on offer and how young people with different needs and wants can be encouraged and enabled to participate.

Statistics about the population in different parts of the county can be useful in helping to decide where services should be and people from different organisations can put their knowledge together to help managers to identify where the gaps are, and plan services for the future. It also helps when different organisations put their money together to provide something that young people really want and need – and they only find out what this is by listening to experts, and of course this includes young people themselves. The most important thing is that, because all young people are individuals, there need to be plenty of different things to do. This means that the County Council, district and borough councils, the voluntary and community sector, and private organisations must all work together, and must communicate with young people all the time.

Many youth projects are now funded through the Youth Capital Fund and Youth Opportunity Fund and this gives young people lots of control and choice since they are involved in projects from start to finish.

Another thing which concerned the members of this committee was that many people seem to have a poor opinion about young people because of the kinds of negative stories and images that are always in the news. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that this view is not at all fair or balanced and that there are far more young people acting positively and doing constructive things for themselves, and to

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<sup>2</sup> Policy review of children and young people – A discussion paper, HM Treasury, 2007

contribute to their communities. We therefore also looked at actions that could be taken to bring back some balance and to give people (including young people themselves) a more realistic view. A list of the recommendations that are made in the report is shown on the next few pages.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations are numbered according to their sequence in the report but the ten which select committee members believe to be most important are shown first, in bold print. The Chairman will also be consulting with young people to find out which recommendations they feel will make the most significant difference in Kent, given the financial constraints which currently prevail.

**R2 That KCC particularly through the Kent Youth Service and Extended Services continue to encourage and support schools in their efforts to develop extended services that compliment and supplement those already available in their local communities as an essential part of Integrated Youth Support in Kent.**

**To facilitate this, the Extended Services Team should explore how available funding could be utilised to ensure that schools are supported in their efforts to develop up to and beyond the core level of extended services by, for example:**

- making extended school co-ordinators or community youth tutors available in more schools**
- with colleagues in the Youth Service, developing expertise among School Governors and Head Teachers by providing training/presentations on extended service development and community engagement**
- ensuring that information about extended services within Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs) is gathered, recorded and made available to the public through various media (as outlined elsewhere in this report) and taken into account as an integral part of the Youth Strategy in every district**
- with Youth Service Colleagues, encouraging and assisting schools to ensure there is effective and ongoing consultation with local communities (beyond the immediate school population) about the development of extended services**
- ensuring that the allocation and distribution of funding for extended services (routed LCSPs) is clearly recorded and made available to assist with planning for service provision within local communities.**

**R3 That KCC together with district and borough councils should:**

- a. proactively engage with rail travel providers in Kent to determine the feasibility, cost and business benefits of incorporating off-peak rail travel into the Freedom Pass to enable more young people to make use of existing activities and facilities.**

b. proactively engage with bus travel providers to determine the feasibility, cost and business benefits of adding integrated (perhaps specific nights of the week) later bus services to enable more young people to make use of existing activities and facilities.

c. consider the benefits and potential cost savings of combining the Freedom Pass with any (future planned) Leisure Card and for example, Library card. This should be considered alongside the concept of rewards for positive activities (e.g. encouraging use of healthy activities). (p53)

R4. a. That to fully utilise available transport KCC directorates should co-operate to produce a register of passenger carrying vehicles (minibuses) that could potentially be shared with the youth service and/or voluntary sector organisations for individual trips or on a more regular basis and that guidelines be produced for the use of such vehicles.

b. That the Youth Service liaise with the Rural Regeneration Officer to determine whether links could be made to existing community transport schemes to provide assistance with transporting young people to leisure activities, or to investigate whether any joint funding arrangements could be of benefit.

c. That there be a drive to recruit certified PC V drivers employed by KCC and partner organisations in Kent to register for occasional voluntary driving duties (subject to satisfactory CRB disclosure being in place) to assist the Youth Service's provision of sports/leisure activities to young people. Once established the Youth Service should assess the viability of extending the scheme to include affiliated and non-affiliated voluntary organisations. (p55)

R6 That KCC (Youth Service and others) should work with district partners including those in the voluntary and community sector to build upon the success of events such as Gifted Young Gravesham, those organised by Blade and Youth of Generation and explore opportunities to hold similar events elsewhere in the county. (p73)

R7 That KCC adopts a policy of promoting positive language, perceptions and expectations of young people in all KCC publications and communications and encourages and engages with partners and the media to further this aim. (p77)

R8 a. That meetings which are to involve young people are planned and structured in a young person-friendly format.

b. That Youth Advisory Groups focus on strategic planning in their districts and extend invitations to, and renews efforts to engage, private and voluntary sector facility and activity providers as well as potential funders, in

order to create opportunities for mutually beneficial discussions at YAG meetings.

c. That KCC Members be encouraged to contribute towards local young people's transport funds from Members' Community Grants (and other available sources) to finance organised trips for young people from their local area, focusing on those who attend youth groups and projects. (p90)

R12 a. Development of Togogo could include:

- Clear links to leisure listings for specific areas of interest such as cycling, parks, sports
- Times dates of meetings/venue contacts
- How to contact local Kent Youth County Councillor and Local Members of the County Council (by postcode look-up)
- The facility to vote on youth-related proposals
- Continually providing the opportunity for and proactively seeking out private and voluntary providers to invite listing
- Interactive local maps showing private/voluntary/LA provision
- Requesting that schools signpost Togogo on pupil VLEs (virtual learning environments screensaver and enabled in favourite sites) thus reaching every schoolchild
- Advertising Togogo on the Freedom Pass/Kent Travel Card/Library Card
- Allowing additional and selected advertising on the website (directly leisure related) to generate revenue and show discount offers.
- Liaising with the Children's Disability Register co-ordinator to ensure that views and experience of disabled young people and their families help to make the site informative and relevant.

b. Following an initial reluctance by young people to engage with Togogo its effectiveness in reaching a range of young people from different areas and backgrounds should be measured before and after development of the site by using Mosaic to analyse users registering on the site with a postcode. (p104)

R13 That KCC Innovations Team works with young people, supported by professional advisers to produce a policy and guidelines for the safe use of social networking sites (Facebook, Bebo etc) by young people, and that KCC work towards developing protocols for effective and appropriate use of social networking sites by youth work practitioners, other KCC staff and Members as well as members of Kent Youth County Council. (p106)

**R15 That KCC should consider providing support to Oi! (provided there is a sustainable business plan) to enable more young people to benefit from the work experience and personal development it offers and for the magazine to reach and involve a greater number of young people across the county. This support might take the form of a regular advertising slot paid for by the Kent Youth Service and other directorates/service (particularly CFE Extended Services) to: publicise activities and the availability of other local youth provision, and get across important messages e.g. links to advice on internet safety. (p108)**

**R16 That the Youth Service increases its engagement with the diverse range of services provided by the voluntary and community sector to ensure that the contribution of this sector can be fully acknowledged, mapped and taken into account in planning positive activities within an area. (p114)**

R1 That, as part of the comprehensive review of community library services, Libraries and Archives consider the role of mobile libraries as a means of engaging more young people in positive activities, and whether a change of timetable is a practical way of facilitating this. (p40)

R5 That the Youth Service and in particular the Diversity Team should liaise with the Analysis and Information Team to determine how Mosaic could enhance their work in terms of community profiling and targeting information. That the Analysis and Information Team determine whether Mosaic could incorporate data on Traveller communities. (p58)

R9 a. That projects with an intergenerational theme should receive a high priority in decisions about funding in Kent in order to break down barriers and build community cohesion.

b. That KCC should consider how intergenerational activity could be supported in other ways such as through the Staff Club and Staff Discount schemes. (p92)

R10 That there should be increased opportunities for well motivated young people to shadow community leaders in order for them to gain experience of political life and leadership and that Members of Kent County Council should take a lead in facilitating this. (p93)

R11 That Kent TV continues to provide young people with the opportunity to broadcast their interests and concerns and gain experience of TV and film production through the apprenticeship programme and the development of a dedicated broadcasting unit. (p99)

R14 That KCC should investigate the implementation of an SMS texting service to notify young people of discounts and offers of free access to leisure activities. (p107)

R17 That KCC, with its partners, considers how to increase the proportion of activities, as well as information advice and guidance, provided to young people in young-person centred surroundings, in locations accessible during evenings/weekends.(p116)