

Central Dudley Area Committee – 13 March 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Youth Service Provision in Central Dudley Area

Purpose of Report

1. To update the committee on the present position regarding youth work provision in Central Dudley.

Background

2. Following the restructuring of the Youth and Community Team in 2001, much of the team's resources were devolved into 5 local area teams. Each team had a minimum staffing of 1 area team leader and 2 area youth and community workers supported by a number of part time sessions. In addition the area also has 3 full time play workers based at Meadow Rd Adventure Site.
3. As a result of securing external funding and budget growth, this has increased within the Central Area, to 1 area team leader, 2 area youth and community workers, 4 detached youth workers, 1 development worker and 83 part time sessions. In addition the area also has 3 full time play workers based out of Meadow Rd Adventure Site. The Service also has borough wide staff who have contributed to training, service and curriculum development within the area during the last 12 months.
4. Initially external funding determined that the detached youth workers were allocated to 4 of the 5 wards within the area. However, following a move to core budget and the assimilation across to a new national pay scale, the posts now have an area brief enabling a more responsive approach to issues for development. Currently provision is being developed in Quarry Bank, Priory, Kateshill and Sledmere, Netherton, Woodside and Saltwells.
5. At present we have 2 vacant full time detached youth work posts and a further 29 part time sessions, due to natural staff turnover. Given Directorate budget spending restrictions for this financial year, we have not yet been able to progress recruitment. Although this has an obvious impact on capacity to develop work, we have been able to maintain existing provision.

6. Nationally Youth Services are expected to achieve a key performance indicator that states that we should be reaching 25% of 13-19 year olds. As of the end of January 07 we have reached 26.73% of this age range living within the Central Area.
7. Within the Central Area we have 3 buildings from which we deliver centre based youth work. These centres are located in St James, St Thomas and Castle and Priory wards.
8. The Claughton Centre is presently awaiting transfer to a community association. Current provision consists of 3 youth club sessions and a deaf youth club for young people with hearing impairment.
9. Russells Hall Neighbourhood Centre is used in the daytime by community groups as well as a youth club, 4 evenings per week. The club has recently been successful with a number of grants, resulting in improvements to the building and the development of a music studio for local young people.
10. Meadow Rd Youth Centre re-opened in 2006 following a serious arson attack. The club is presently open 3 nights per week with a fourth due to begin shortly. A local youth charity, the YES Project is based at the centre.
11. We currently run part time youth clubs from 2 community settings; Sledmere Community Centre and St Thomas Network. In partnership with Connexions and health services we also deliver a weekly mobile sexual health project on Priory Park and targeted provision for teenage parents is delivered at the Zone in Dudley Town Centre.
12. Within the Central Area a youth forum has been established enabling young people to have a voice within decision making procedures. These young people are drawn from local schools and youth provision. Several young people from the area are members of the Dudley Youth Council and the Youth Service's internal inspection team. During half term, a United Kingdom Youth Parliament and Youth Opportunities Fund roadshow took place at Claughton Centre in order to further develop opportunities.
13. Finally, we have developed a successful project at Hillcrest School and Community College and are continuing to increase Duke of Edinburgh opportunities within the area and across the borough.
14. The success of much of our work depends upon the positive working relationships that we have with partners both statutory and voluntary. At present we are supporting 12 voluntary youth organisations within the area to increase their capacity to respond to local need.

Finance

- 15. Funding for the Youth Service is drawn from the Children's Services base budget and national grants. The Youth Service budget is subject to a decision by the Council.

Law

- 16. Youth provision is provided under the Education Acts and has recently been supplemented by the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

Equality Impact

- 17. This report complies with the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy with regard to access to Youth provision in Central Dudley.

Recommendation

- 18. It is recommended that the Committee consider and comment on the youth work provision as detailed above.



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