

Mayor and Cabinet			
Report Title	Response of Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Community Services to issues raised by the Children and Young People and Safer Stronger Communities Select Committees on Reshaping Youth Services		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Children and Young People; CYP Commissioning, Strategy and Policy; Youth Service; Community Services		
Class	Part 1	Date	22 May 2013

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the response of the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Community Services to the comments and views of the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, arising from discussions held on the *Reshaping Youth Services* report at the joint meeting of the Committees on 13 February 2013.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Mayor is recommended to agree that the proposed response in Section 3 prepared by the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Community Services to the comments and views of the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee be approved and reported to both Select Committees.

3. Response of Executive Directors of Children and Young People and Community Services to the Views of Children and Young People Select Committee and Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

- 3.1 On 13 February 2013, as part of the *Reshaping Youth Services* item, the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee discussed a number of issues arising from the report. The issues discussed are set out below followed by the response of the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Community Services to each of the issues raised.
- 3.2 *The Committees expressed concern at the capacity of the Council to be able to manage such a large transition in service delivery within the timetable set out. Members therefore seek assurance that there will be sufficient capacity to support the change management process.*

Response

We recognise the need for sufficient capacity to successfully manage a transition process of this size. We have developed a detailed and robust transition plan which will enable effective change management, including clear lines of communication

and accountability for all stakeholders and opportunities for regular progress reviews. Additional capacity to support the transition plan has already been planned for and is in place.

3.3 *The Committees feel that for the new service to be successful, the following areas should be built in at the earliest stage:*

- *Improved information management*
- *Improved mapping of youth need and provision*
- *Improved monitoring and impact measurement*

Response

Improved information management, youth provision mapping, needs analysis, monitoring and impact measurement are all areas that will be central to the new service and will be built in from the start. This is reflected in the new staff structure which includes key posts with lead responsibility for each of these areas.

Work is currently underway on strengthening exiting mapping of youth provision and need, both as part of the needs analysis informing the design of the new commissioning framework, and as a key component of that framework. The PVI sector, young people and other stakeholders will be involved in needs analysis and impact measurement, through stakeholder events as part of the development phase of the new commissioning framework, and on an ongoing basis once the framework is in place, for example, through young people's involvement as Youth Commissioners.

3.4 *The Committees feel that the community and voluntary sector should be supported by the Council and Voluntary Action Lewisham in developing capacity to bid for and manage Youth Service provision.*

Response

Involving the voluntary and community sector (VCS) effectively will be critical to the success of the new service. Officers are currently working with VAL to plan how best to involve the sector, both in developing the new commissioning framework and on an ongoing basis once the new framework is operational. This will include stakeholders' events, the first of which is planned for June 2013, which will involve organisations in designing and developing the new process. The training needs for the sector will be identified by participants at this event, with training held for organisations in August/ September to ensure that they are 'commissioning ready' and able to respond effectively to the requirements of the new service.

3.5 *The Committees request that a specific timetable is set out as to how the Community Sector Unit and Voluntary Action Lewisham will work with the Youth Service to ensure that the commissioning process used by the Youth Service dovetails effectively with existing funding processes.*

Response

The Youth Service, Community Services and VAL are working in partnership to ensure that the commissioning process used by the Youth Service dovetails effectively with existing funding processes, including the Council's main grants

programme. Initial discussions with Community Services have included the possibility of the youth activities component of the main grants programme being run independently from the wider grant in order to coincide with the Youth Service commissioning process. This would enable greater synergy between the two. There is also the possibility that the main grants programme could focus more on infrastructure support and capacity building for the sector with direct service activity being funded by Youth Service commissioning. This would mean greater support for smaller community organisations wishing to participate in the Youth Service commissioning process but currently lack the capacity and skills to be able to do so effectively.

These discussions are ongoing and cover attitudes and approaches to funding youth organisations to ensure synergy across the Council. We recognise the need for a specific timetable detailing how the Youth Service, Community Services and VAL will work together to achieve this, and will produce this as soon as there is greater clarity on the commissioning intentions of both services, in particular in relation to decision-making on the main grants programme. The final timetable developed will be in accordance with the Lewisham Compact regarding timescales for consultation and communicating funding decisions with the VCS.

- 3.6 *The Committees request that an appropriate, structured commissioning process for Youth Services should be developed, which will include and involve young people where possible.*

Response

The new commissioning framework is currently being developed by officers with input from a range of stakeholders, including young people and the PVI sector. The new framework will be clear and robust with a strong focus on outcomes and simple but effective methods for measuring these. It will be developed in line with the requirements of the Lewisham Compact which covers communication, partnership working, premises, monitoring, funding and consultation with the VCS.

Young people will be involved at every stage, both in terms of designing the new framework, and once the new framework is operational. We are currently working with the Mayor's Young Advisors to plan young people's involvement; we will ensure that this takes place early enough in the design process for the input of young people to have a meaningful impact on the final design, and that a wide range of young people can be involved. The involvement of young people will be central to the new commissioning framework, with young people at the forefront of designing, developing and evaluating Youth Service delivery in future. This will be the responsibility of all staff within the new structure, with the Participation and Engagement Officer playing a lead role.

- 3.7 *The Committees feel that the commissioning of short breaks should be considered alongside commissioning of youth services to ensure a holistic approach is taken.*

Response

Officers agree that youth services and short breaks should be considered alongside one another as part of the new Youth Service commissioning process to ensure that there is synergy between the two. Meeting the needs of young people with

disabilities and SEN was recognised throughout the consultation process as one of the most important considerations for the reshaped Youth Service, including the new commissioning framework. Through robust needs analysis and the resultant allocation of funding, the new commissioning process will ensure that there are appropriate and effective youth services in place to meet the needs of young people with disabilities and SEN. This will include consideration of how short breaks funding can contribute towards achieving this objective.

However, in the short term, the timetable for changes to current Youth Service short break provision, including initially proposed staff changes, has been amended to allow for further consultation to be carried out with stakeholders, and to allow for service continuity for young people and families while this is underway. For current Youth Service staff employed specifically to deliver short breaks, this means no change to their posts at present. However, a wider non-Youth Service short breaks tendering process is currently underway as planned and in the long-term, the Youth Service element of this may be incorporated into this wider process if it can be demonstrated that this would result in improved outcomes for young people and better value for money; this will be determined following consultation with stakeholders.

- 3.8 *The Committees support the ongoing involvement of volunteers in the Youth Service. The Committees ask for assurances that potential safeguarding issues will be addressed in light of their potentially increasing responsibilities.*

Response

The Youth Service will continue to take a robust approach to volunteer recruitment and management to ensure that safeguarding requirements are effectively adhered to, especially in light of a potentially increasing role for volunteers in the new service. This applies to our commissioned services, as well as our in-house services. As part of a strengthened commissioning process, we will ensure that all PVI providers selected to deliver youth services on behalf of the Council, have a strong and safe workforce able to meet the needs of the young people they work with, whether they are paid or voluntary. This includes any training on safeguarding required. This will be assessed on the appointment of any new provider and monitored on a regular basis through a tight performance monitoring and quality assurance process. As part of our volunteer policy, it will continue to be a requirement that all staff, commissioned and in-house, have an up-to-date DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, formally CRB) which permits them to work with children and young people.

Recently awarded Youth Task Force funding is allowing a one year development of a new volunteer curriculum within the Youth Service. Lessons learnt from this pilot will contribute towards a robust approach to volunteer development, management and support in the new service.

- 3.9 *The Committees were concerned that Downham could be left without adequate youth provision as part of the changes to Youth Service provision. Therefore the Committees support recommendation 3.5 in the report, to pursue a community solution for Oakridge Youth Centre. However, if a community solution is not feasible the Committees request that the Mayor commit to using a proportion of the commissioning fund to ensure ongoing provision in the area.*

Response

Officers have been working with VCS partners to assist them in exploring a community solution for Oakridge Youth Centre, although it is recognised that this must be community-led. VAL are also supporting interested providers. VCS partners held a conference in March entitled *Reshaping the Youth Service - Youth Provision in Downham, Bellingham and Whitefoot* for local VCS organisations interested in community solutions for Oakridge. Discussions have been ongoing since this event with some potentially promising options being considered. However, whether a community solution can be found or not, the new commissioning fund will ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate youth provision in place across the borough. The allocation of funding will be needs-led in any case; this will be reflected in the amount of funding allocated to the South-East of the borough, where there is a high level of need.

- 3.10 *The Committees feel that access for children with additional needs should be built into the reshaped Youth Service. How these young people will access provision across the borough should be given due consideration.*

Response

We recognise that extra support will be required to ensure that all young people, but especially those with additional needs, can access youth provision safely and confidently. Accessibility will be a key requirement for commissioned services, as well as in-house services, and will be built into service specifications and evaluation criteria for potential providers accordingly. As part of developing the new service, including the new commissioning framework, we are looking in more detail at how we address the issue of transport for young people to ensure that they can access the full range of provision across Lewisham and London, both in terms of supporting older young people to travel and considering how best to achieve safe transport for those who are younger.

- 3.11 *The Committees support the aim of encouraging young people to travel across the borough and across London in order to access all opportunities available to them. However, many young people currently will only travel within small territorial areas. Therefore any attempts to change attitudes and behaviours around this should be handled sensitively. There should be close monitoring of how this is done and the outcomes.*

Response

Many of the young people we consulted with on these proposals said that they would be willing to travel beyond their local area to access better youth activities and opportunities. The importance of young people feeling safe and empowered to travel across Lewisham and London to access the full range of opportunities available to them, was a view frequently raised during consultation. This is important in raising young people's horizons and aspirations, and in preparing them for the world of work. However, we recognise that this is more challenging for some young people than others for a variety of reasons, including age, additional needs and concerns about safety, and that such issues must be handled sensitively.

We will seek to mitigate these challenges through support with travel for those who need it, as well as a good geographical spread of strong local youth provision, through in-house services, commissioned services and non-commissioned services which we will promote and facilitate access to for young people. We will continue to put young people's views and feedback on services at the forefront of our decision-making, including their attitudes and behaviours in relation to travel. This is an area that will be closely monitored to consider impact, with our commissioning processes sufficiently flexible to be able to respond to changing demands and needs of young people.

4. Reshaping Youth Services Timetable

4.1 The table below sets out key dates for the transition to the new Youth Service structure.

Task	Dates
Staff restructure including staff training and induction	March - November 2013
Develop and implement financial transition plan	April 2013
Undertake needs analysis including provision mapping to inform commissioning	April - May 2013
Plan overall commissioning approach	April - May 2013
Align commissioning priorities/ processes with Community Services main grants programme	April - October 2013
Implement transition arrangements for currently funded PVI providers	April 2013 - March 2014
Engage with community groups regarding youth centres in South East Lewisham	May 2013
Engage with young people on staff recruitment process and planned commissioning approach	May - Sept 2013
Engage with PVI providers on planned commissioning approach (provider event and feedback)	May - Sept 2013
Develop service specifications and performance monitoring framework for commissioned provision	June - August 2013
'Commissioning ready' training for providers	August 2013
New structure in place	October 2013
Commissioning process begins	October 2013
Implement transition arrangements for non-Lewisham owned youth centres staffed by Lewisham	October 2013 - March 2014
New contracts begin for commissioned services	March 2014

4.2 The Executive Directors of Children and Young People and Community Services will report back to the Children and Young People and Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee in February 2014 to update them on the progress made in implementing the changes to the Youth Service.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

6. Environmental Implications

6.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 Public bodies are legally required to consider the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (set out in the Equality Act 2010) and document their thinking as part of any decision-making process. The Act sets out that public bodies must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic; and
- Foster good relationships between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic.

7.2 A full Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA) was undertaken on the *Reshaping Youth Services* proposals (13 February 2013). On balance, the EAA found that the potentially negative implications of the proposals from an equalities perspective, arising from a reduction in Lewisham staff and Lewisham-run youth centres, are outweighed by a number of positive implications including the following:

- More funding for high quality and varied youth provision for the PVI sector, to meet the diverse needs of Lewisham's young people including provision for all age groups;
- Greater focus on young people with additional needs (including those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, disabled, in care, young parents etc and those with 'protected characteristics');
- Greater access for young people who need extra support to high quality youth provision, including those with SEN and disabilities;
- Greater focus on celebrating young people's achievements and promoting social cohesion and a positive image of young people;
- Greater involvement of young people in designing, developing and evaluating youth provision;
- A more modern, more efficient Youth Service, with a flatter staff structure, streamlined management and greater consistency across staff contracts which enables greater transparency and fairness across the workforce.

7.3 Overall, the impact of the proposals on equalities was deemed positive, with a concluding recommendation that the proposals should therefore be progressed. However, an action plan has been instigated to ensure that any negative implications are responded to and minimised. The action plan is being monitored, updated and actioned by the Youth Service Transition Board. To see a copy of the full EAA, please contact Charly Williams (charly.williams@lewisham.gov.uk/ 0208 314 7013).

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Constitution provides for Select Committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider them. This report details the response of the Executive Directors for Children and Young People and Community Services to the comments raised to the Mayor by the Children and Young People and Safer Stronger Select Committees.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reshaping Youth Services – Joint meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee (13 February 2013)

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Charly Williams, Commissioner or Mervyn Kaye, Youth Service Manager, Children and Young People's Directorate (charly.williams@lewisham.gov.uk / mervyn.kaye@lewisham.gov.uk).