



CABINET – 22ND FEBRUARY 2023

SUBJECT: FORMALISING THE YOUTH SERVICE MODEL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to formalise the blended approach to youth work that has gained prominence and delivered success throughout and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2019, the Youth Service presented proposals to the Education Scrutiny regarding a series of changes to the structure of its part time youth work section. The proposals were based on the requirement for a more modern and fit for purpose means of delivery.
- 2.2 The Covid pandemic that began in 2020 required the more immediate and ultimately very successful repositioning of youth work to meet the sudden changes of need by young people and communities to a much more flexible and responsive position.
- 2.3 The scale of change was significant as lockdown required the closure of building-based youth work and saw the emergence of outreach and online versions of youth work provision during that period.
- 2.4 Over the years that have followed, the service has only partially reintroduced building based youth work alongside the newer forms of delivery.
- 2.5 As a consequence of this requirement to adapt, the former reliance on a youth clubs-only format for the service's part-time youth work section has now evolved into a more blended approach involving a variety of types of youth work engagement.
- 2.6 With the success of this new blended model continuing to impact positively on the young people of Caerphilly, the service is looking for Cabinets approval to formalise this model of working and embed it as a core operating principle of service delivery.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That Cabinet:

- 1) Agrees to formally adopt the new blended model of youth working set out within this report
- 2) Delegates Authority to the Youth Service Manager to begin to progress discussions with staff and Trade Union partners in consultation with the Chief Education Officer and relevant Cabinet Member
- 3) Delegates Authority to the Youth Service Manager in consultation with the Chief Education Officer and relevant Cabinet Member to progress meaningful consultation with the local community in respect of the needs for the service to retain the Youth Centre at Brooklands in Risca.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 With a new and successful blended approach to youth work having been in operation for almost three years, support is sought to formalise these changes and embed them as a core operating principle of the Council's approach to youth work.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 This report focuses on the part of the youth service that has been mostly represented by youth club-style provision, with clubs often located in *ad hoc* locations and available at times that are not necessarily appropriate to the needs of young people. The clubs have seen variable levels of uptake and attendance. While the part time youth work section aims to be universal in its reach (that is, openly accessible by any and all young people), a purely centre based approach open at certain times of the week does not readily facilitate this aim.
- 5.2 The new model aims to deliver improved core youth work provision throughout the borough, based on the needs, demographics and geography of the area, whilst enhancing the professionalism of staff and better blending and balancing universal youth work with the more targeted elements of the service. This would include its NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) work, for example, with the advantages of better team communications including the more efficient safeguarding of young people.
- 5.3 The model is not new. In fact, the Covid period saw the loss of many youth club venue spaces (for example in community centres and schools). In many cases, these venues can now no longer offer rental space. Most youth clubs were not located in fit for purpose venues (such as youth centres) but in hired premises that were not always 'young people friendly'.
- 5.4 There had always been a degree of 'post code lottery' with this single format type of youth work provision, which supported some communities better than others while some could not be supported at all. The clubs also only operated between September and May.
- 5.5 The modern habits of young people demand greater built-in service flexibility. In essence, a solely buildings-based, youth club-style approach to delivery is no longer relevant. Modern youth services need to reach out to young people wherever they

choose to be, year-round and through their application, other opportunities will emerge over time. Over the last three years, the Council has developed its new model through practice and the impact has been positive on many fronts.

- 5.6 For example, during the pandemic period, the Crumlin Youth and Community Centre which was already seeing greatly diminished usage, was given up as an asset. This enabled the Council to accrue considerable future savings as well as avoid significant and ongoing maintenance liabilities. The release of the asset was carried out sensitively via meaningful consultation, which was multi-layered and inclusive of community members, elected members and with young people in the area, and would ultimately support the development of more flexible and widespread forms of Youth Work.
- 5.7 In a similar vein, the service is now exploring a proposal to withdraw from the Risca Youth Centre which is in close proximity to another youth centre that young people in Risca attend. Withdrawing from this centre will separately provide the opportunity for the Council to develop specialist housing requirements on that site. Arrangements for the development of an improved youth work offer for the Risca area are already at an advanced stage of preparation. Any withdrawal from the Risca Youth Centre will, however, be subject to meaningful consultation with the local community and the development of more flexible and widespread forms of Youth Work.
- 5.8 From a staffing perspective, the improved model will likely require the review of some youth worker contracts. Initial soundings have been undertaken with staff and, should Cabinet ultimately support the formalisation of the new model, staff will be formally engaged along with Human Resources and the Trade Unions.

5.9 **Conclusion**

This report seeks to formalise a model that has been operating in practice over the last three years. During this time, the youth work offer has been adapted through circumstances that have largely been dictated by the pandemic but have, nonetheless, delivered significant benefits. The blended approach has seen the Council withdraw from some premises while refining and enhancing the offer to young people. Support to formalise the model is now sought.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 None.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The proposals are consistent with the principals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the National Youth Work Strategy and WG's Engagement and Progression Framework guidance and locally with the new Agile/flexible working policies and CCBC's Education Strategy.
- 7.2 Any Cabinet decisions that emerge as a result of the recommendations set out within this report will be subject to an IIA where necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Any financial implications associated with the formalisation of the new model will be managed from within the existing service budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The new model will provide opportunities for the career development of employees and an eventual increase in the retention of skilled practitioners. Any changes required to the service resulting from the new model will be in accordance with HR policies and procedures and in consultation with staff and Trade Unions.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 This report was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on the 14th February 2023. The comments received are summarised below:

Comments on Formalising the Youth Service Model

Members noted that the report states that the proposed changes to the youth service model seeks to put in place the changes adopted during the Covid pandemic, however members suggested that some of these were already happening before Covid and were perhaps a sign of the times.

The scrutiny committee were advised that different models were experimented with before Covid and included online and outreach work, with a survey was carried out.

This showed it was easier to reach more young people and provided assurance that young people want a broader range of services which are not necessarily building based. Young people are more sophisticated and require a broader means of engaging with youth workers. They want a service that is responsive to their needs with more flexibility, that is offered throughout the year and takes into account the time of year.

Members suggested that a place that is already established in a community can be an advantage because people know where to go and asked what would be the disadvantage of moving towards this model and asked specifically what percentage is online.

The scrutiny committee were advised that this model is a blended approach, there will be three youth centres and people can be transported to one of the three youth centres if they wish and access good centres with good facilities. The model will be responsive to needs and adjust to the time of year, during the good weather people may choose to be outdoors for example.

The online offer uses a wide variety of social media platforms, and for some young people they are more comfortable interacting this way. The old model of only providing youth clubs excludes those people not comfortable with attending a club and interacting in that way. Members were assured that this model has come from consultation with young people, and they have said what they want and need.

Members commented on the work done by voluntary groups in some areas and understand the benefits of having a building but also recognised that many young people prefer different offers, preferring a non-traditional approach. There is a need to engage with hard to reach groups and outreach may be a way to help make contact with them. The scrutiny committee asked how much money has been released by transferring to this model, with the selling off buildings no longer needed. What is the percentage of outreach, and what re-training of staff has been required to

develop the skills for outreach and what percentage of staff have Welsh bilingual language skills.

Members were advised that they will still need to meet the MTFP requirements but other than that the savings will be used to provide resources for young people. For example a cost benefit analysis of the Crumlin building has been carried out and it was estimated that £500k would be needed to maintain the building for the next five years and the preference was to invest that money into other things. In terms of outreach this was a large part of the consultation with young people and also consultation with Partners such as the Police. The feedback challenged the service we were providing and we were told that we need to make the youth work available to young people wherever they are and available all year and not just provide it in a youth club during certain months.

The scrutiny committee were assured that they have invested in substantial training of staff, not just during lockdown, to make sure staff are comfortable working in a blended environment. Staff can now work well in a building but also in parks, street corners etc. We have managed to develop staff skills and offer them a new way to work with young people. There are staff who have 20+ year of experience and love the changes because they are working with young people they haven't met before. They are aware outreach work needs support and the rules of engagement are different but there was a growing demand from young people and staff. There are opportunities to work with the youth homelessness team and also support mental health and well-being issues in young people, so moving away from a general education service.

Members were advised that in terms of the bi-lingual service they have carried out a workforce exercise to try and find out who can speak Welsh and by asking the question in a different way we have 15% of staff who identified they can speak Welsh. Historically people may not have answered that they speak Welsh because they were concerned that they may be asked to carry out translation work. There is a Welsh Language youth facility and have secured Welsh Government funding to expand the Welsh Language Youth offer. An example of joint work with SYDIC at Virginia Park was provided where this work has been developed to ensure it is relevant for young people.

The scrutiny committee sought assurance that the engagement was sufficient to fully comprehend and demonstrate service users views. Members were assured and it was highlighted that during the recent Youth Forum Cabinet elections there were a number of people who stood who had never been reached before. During Covid young people presented their thoughts and they have carried out a long process of formal consultation. The aim is to have steering groups for each cluster area with young people sitting on it and advise the youth service in that area.

Members were assured by the Chair of the Youth Forum that the blended approach is great as it gives young people who wouldn't otherwise become involved opportunities that suit them.

Members asked how the service deals with challenges from parents around their children in contact with particular children for example. The scrutiny committee were advised that parental engagement is a big factor in making changes with partners organisations. They have reconfigured the staffing so there are people available to carry out engagement with families on a permanent basis. The aim is to deal with any local issues through contact and discussion and seek a resolution.

The scrutiny committee asked how staff engage with young people in the blended model and outreach. Members were advised that there are a set of protocols for outreach work with staff working in pairs. They will carry out reconnaissance and explore an area, get to know the young people, the location and the area. The staff will speak to local shopkeepers, and key community people. Then they will use their youth skills to build those relationships look at the issues and provide a response which could be a project such as an educational visit. This type of work can lead to better local relationships, less school disengagement etc. This work can also lead to further engagement with colleges, training courses.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and particularly thanked Lottie Davies the Chair of the Youth Forum for attending and Paul O'Neill Senior Youth Service Manager for his responses.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation this was unanimously agreed.

Author: Paul O'Neill, Senior Youth Service Manager, Ty Penallta

Consultees: Christina Harray, Chief Executive,
Richard Edmunds Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Education Senior Management team
Cllr Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education
Cllr Teresa Parry, Chair of the Education Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Jo Rao, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
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