



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14TH FEBRUARY 2023

SUBJECT: FORMALISING THE YOUTH SERVICE MODEL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Education Scrutiny Committee on a proposal to Cabinet 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 The Education Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Consider the recent adaptations to the youth service and comment on the proposed refinements to formalise this new way of working
- 2) Support a recommendation to Cabinet that the Youth Service formalises this new way of working and moves forward with the changes required to achieve further service improvement

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 As an update report, no Integrated Impact Assessment is provided.

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 To date:

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Education Finance
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