

REPORT TO: Children and Young People Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 4 January 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Young People

SUBJECT: Services for Young Homeless People

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Board will receive a presentation from John Mackie and Kristine Pluger, Halton YMCA, on the most appropriate factors raised by the young people on the services provided for Young Homeless People.
- 1.2 Halton YMCA will present a formal proposal on how they believe these can be implemented and achieved in the short term.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Board receive the presentation

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Over the last year Halton YMCA Foyer and other homeless accommodation projects in Halton, have experienced a significant increase in the number of applications for housing from homeless young people. These have come from referral agencies, such as Housing Solutions, Young People's Team, the Youth Offending Team and self referrals.
- 3.2 Another significant impact on the increase in young homeless referrals has been due to the newly established Halton YMCA Night Stop Project, a project developed to address the prevention of homelessness among young people most at risk. With this new homeless provision, young people are placed with volunteer "hosts" for up to 3 weeks, during which time, suitable safe and appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the young people (including mediation for home returns, where possible) are identified. Halton YMCA Foyer receives around 50% of these referrals.

From Halton YMCA's experience, the main reasons why young people in Halton are finding themselves becoming homeless are as follows:

- Family relationship breakdown
- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Mental health issues such as, anxiety, depression, self harm etc. these are also often linked to the above issues.

- Financial problems and stress within the family unit

3.3 These factors have remained the most common reasons for youth homelessness for the last 20 years.

3.4 Halton Borough Council Scrutiny Group

3.5 Two years ago, Halton YMCA was approached by Dave Williams (Senior Youth Director) who informed me that the Children and Young People's Services were being scrutinised by the Council and they had decided that, because this was such a large spectrum of services, they would focus on one particular service and he suggested that we look at the young homeless people aged 16-19 and the services that are currently offered to them.

3.6 After initially meeting with Councillors Mark Dennett and Joan Lowe, Halton YMCA agreed to consult with the young homeless people living at Belvedere, YMCA, Orchard House and Halton Goals, to establish what concerns they have relating to the Council services offered to them as a homeless person, living in temporary accommodation and what improvements they would like to be made.

3.7 Consultation with young people

3.8 A consultation meeting was organised at the YMCA at which over 20 young people attended. At this meeting, the young people were very vocal and expressed the improvements in services they would like to see in Halton. Also at the meeting, the young people nominated two representatives to sit on the Scrutiny Group, however due to the departure of Dave Williams, the group never met or functioned. The only outcome from this exercise was that the young people organised a youth homeless conference in 2008.

3.9 Results of consultation

3.10 From the consultation and Homeless Conference a number of issues were raised and suggestions made by those who participated, which they felt could have a positive impact on the quality of their lives if implemented. These were as follows:

- Public transport – need for free bus passes to attend college/leisure centres etc.
- Dentists – difficulty in accessing a local dentist
- 16 hour rule – being a barrier to college/training
- Training programmes not flexible enough to enable homeless young people with social problems to complete the statutory courses
- Communication problems with JSA Claims / Crisis Loans leading to delayed income.

3.11 Addressing these issues – Way Forward

3.12 Between now and the end of the year, Halton YMCA will continue to consult with our young people to establish from above, two or three key issues that they would like us to present, that they believe will make a significant difference to them if they can be implemented in the near future.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - The issues and suggestions raised through the consultation could, if implemented, have a positive impact on the quality of young homeless people's lives

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.