

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18th December 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Directorate

SUBJECT: Halton Youth Service – Future Commissioning Arrangements

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider proposals to secure improved outcomes for young people through the future commissioning arrangements of Halton Youth Service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that:

- 2.1 steps are taken to secure future commissioning of Halton Youth Service;
- 2.2 existing arrangements for commissioning Halton Youth Service from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd are extended to 30th September 2009;
- 2.3 commissioning of Halton Youth Service is separate but aligned with the commissioning of 'connexions service'; and
- 2.4 the timescale for the contract should align with that of the 'connexions services' and should cover the period 30th September 2009 to 31st March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to 3 years. The contract will accommodate an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced financial capacity to commission the service to the level previously agreed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Youth Service

3.1.1 In June 2002 Executive Board agreed:

- The principle of the Youth Service transferring to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership; and
- That a first stage transfer takes place from September 2002 with staff seconded to the Connexions Service. The second stage full transfer to take place from April 2003.

- 3.1.2 In March 2003 Executive Board further approved the Partnership Agreement for the management of the Youth Service by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership.
- 3.1.3 The contracting of Halton Youth Service to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership has proven to be successful with the Youth Service now demonstrating improved performance against national performance indicators. Additionally, the improved engagement with young people evidenced through the Youth Cabinet, Borough Youth Forum, UKYP and the Youth Bank is testimony to the transformation that has occurred in the Borough in placing young people at the centre of our efforts to develop services around their needs.
- 3.1.4 The contracted period for the commissioning of the Youth Service ends on 31st March 2009.

3.2 Youth Matters

- 3.2.1 In 2006 the Government launched 'Youth Matters' a key policy directive which promoted a vision of integrated support structures and services for teenagers which promoted and sought to secure access to positive activities and high quality information, advice and guidance. This would be delivered within a framework of integrated and targeted youth support, with local flexibility for service redesign.
- 3.2.2 As a consequence of 'Youth Matters' Local Authorities are responsible and accountable for youth policy in their area and are taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This will enable, over time, universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for Young People and to improve outcomes for them.
- 3.2.3 "Youth Matters" also made it clear that the support and guidance services provided by Connexions should now 'go local' so that they can be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. It is intended that the 'localisation' of Connexions services will be achieved through the development of an integrated Youth Support strategy at the local level; this will enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents / carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services are procured and delivered locally.
- 3.2.4 The guidance contained in 'Youth Matters' has subsequently been confirmed in legislation through the Education and Inspections Act 2007 and will be further embedded in the forthcoming Education and Skills Act.

- 3.2.5 More recently the publication of PSA Delivery Agreements and in particular PSA 14 focuses upon the objective to 'increase the number of children and young people on the path to success' and has at its heart the drivers to secure '**increased participation and resilience**' by young people measured by their engagement in education, employment and training (EET) and, more participation in positive activities. Additionally it seeks to '**tackle negative outcomes**' as measured by indicators of substance misuse, reduction in the under 18 conception rate, and the reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the criminal Justice System aged 10-17.
- 3.2.6 Mechanisms for securing progress against the objectives contained in PSA 14 include delivery of high quality opportunities and activities for young people to secure their engagement in positive activities and to include diversionary activities to prevent them engaging in 'at risk' or anti-social behaviours in the community. Traditionally this has been delivered through Youth Clubs but additionally is increasingly now being secured through more creative routes should as detached outreach, 'On the Streets' provision, activities running on Friday and Saturday evenings, and integrated delivery of engagement activities by partner agencies, including the police and the Youth Offending Team.

4 JOINT AREA REVIEW

- 4.2 In April 2008 OFSTED undertook a Joint Area Review of services to children and young people in the Borough. While the inspection focused upon the contribution of services in ensuring children and young people are effectively cared for and achieving the best possible outcomes, further investigations were also carried out in the areas of health and integrated youth support.
- 4.3 The additional investigation into integrated youth support particularly focused upon the impact of this provision on young people's involvement in planning and delivery of local services, their engagement in youth work and in addressing the level of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- 4.4 The inspection reported the following in terms of major strengths:
- Good and improving engagement by young people in youth support services;
 - Commitment and action among partners to integrate key aspects of youth support and development;
 - Continued improvement in the performance of the youth service;
 - Very responsive approaches to young people's involvement in relevant decision making; and

- Good early identification and intensive support for young people at risk of not progressing into education, employment or training.

4.5 Important weaknesses were identified as:

- Some important strategic and operational planning issues yet to be resolved; and
- A small but significant proportion of young people fail to sustain their involvement in education, employment or training.

4.6 While focusing upon many positive developments the report emphasises the need locally to progress to 'determining a single management structure' and also to 'review job tasks and identifying and modelling best practice in order that the skills and experiences of both personal advisers and youth workers operating in a broader range of settings can be more effectively utilised.

5 'CONNEXIONS SERVICES'

5.1 On the 25th March 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to Local Authorities notifying them of interim arrangements for the delivery of 'connexions services' and for undertaking assessments for young people with learning difficulties from 1st April 2008. The Education and Skills Bill currently before Parliament, proposes that legal responsibilities be brought into line by effecting the transfer of the statutory responsibility of 'connexions services'.

5.2 'Connexions services' are currently provided by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd, and have been commissioned by the 6 Merseyside Local Authorities since the 1st April 2008. Steps are currently underway for the future commissioning of 'connexions services' and this is subject to separate consideration by Executive Board on 18th December 2008.

6 PROPOSAL

6.2 Consideration needs to be given to the future commissioning of Halton Youth Service within the context of Youth Matters, PSA 14, and the future commissioning arrangements for 'connexions services'.

6.3 Members will already be aware of the steps being taken to commission 'connexions services' across the City Region in partnership with the other 5 Merseyside Local Authorities. At this stage Halton Borough Council is the only Local Authority to have taken steps previously to commission external providers to deliver its Youth Service. As a consequence it was not appropriate to include the commissioning of Halton's Youth Service within the specification drawn up for the 'connexions services'. However, it is evident, that within the developing

Integrated Youth Support arrangements currently being drawn up, that there will need to be a closer alignment, if not integration of the Youth Service and Connexions workforce, to secure maximum benefit of service support to young people.

- 6.4 As a consequence of the above it is proposed that the commissioning of Halton Youth Service is aligned with the process of commissioning of 'connexions services' and is secured within the framework of a single City Region commission with an additional local dimension specific to Halton. This would ensure the delivery of 'connexions services' and Halton Youth Service by a single provider.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.2 Work is progressing to develop an Integrated Youth Support Strategy which effectively co-ordinates service delivery to young people in a way which takes account of their needs and views, avoids duplication, and which provides targeted support to those young people who need more support to overcome barriers to accessing opportunities to which they are entitled. Young people have contributed to the developing Integrated Youth Support Strategy, and a Young People's conference was held earlier this year to seek their ideas and views. Ongoing engagement is secured through the Borough Youth Forum and through developing Young People's Advisory Groups. One such group is the newly formed Young People's Advisory Group for Sexual Health.
- 7.3 Government expectations are that services will be delivered within a framework of integrated planning, commissioning and delivery wherever possible and informed by young people's views.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The effective delivery of integrated and targeted support to young people is crucial to the delivery of key outcomes for young people, which include:

- ❖ Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training;
- ❖ Reduce the under 18 conception rate;
- ❖ Reduce the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system; and
- ❖ Reduce the number of young people involved with substance misuse

8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The work of Personal Advisors and Youth Workers in supporting young people, in providing access to positive activities, in the provision of

impartial information and advice coupled with raising aspirations to improve enterprise are important skills young people in Halton will need to access future employment and learning opportunities.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

High quality information, advice and guidance will inform young people on the benefits and options in adopting healthy lifestyles.

8.4 A Safer Halton

Personal Advisors and Youth Workers, working within the Integrated Youth Service agenda in Halton, and working closely with young people to both equip them to be safe but also to challenge young people's actions and behaviours in order for Halton to be a safer place to live.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

'Places to go and things to do' is at the heart of service redesign for young people. The creation and development of high class youth facilities is key securing the engagement of young people in positive activities.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

A strategic risk assessment has been undertaken, as Appendix 1.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Equality and Diversity issues will be at the forefront of developments and will be addressed as part of the service specification developments.

10.1 Reason(s) for decision

Arrangements for the future delivery of services to young people will affect all young people aged 13 – 19 in the Borough. It will also include the targeting of specialist services to vulnerable young people to enable them to access their universal entitlement.

10.2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None

10.3 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

It is intended that the new contractual arrangements will take effect from 1st October 2009.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Education and Inspections Act 2006	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Youth Matters	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (DCSF – 2007)	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Education and Skills Bill	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher