

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: GREEN PAPER: YOUTH MATTERS








Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:

This report presents a proposed response to the Green Paper “Youth Matters”.

Cost to Council: No cost implications at this stage, but there are proposals in the Green Paper that, if adopted, could lead to resource issues.

Within existing budget? Not applicable.

Contribution to Corporate Plan (Minor/Moderate/Major/Neutral):

	+		-		+			
	Minor				Priorities			
	Major			Clean Streets and Public Space		Neutral		
		Neutral		Crime and Disorder	Moderate			
	Major			Housing		Neutral		
		Neutral		Managing our Finances		Neutral		

Comments on Impacts on Corporate Objectives and Priorities:

Youth issues are a corporate aim in themselves but of course they also relate across virtually all others. There are suggestions in this Green Paper that would have impact on our interaction with young people.



Organisation of excellence



Working with public and partners



Economic well being



Social well being



Environmental well being

CABINET: 2 NOVEMBER 2005

RESPONSE TO THE “YOUTH MATTERS” GREEN PAPER

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Government has an extensive agenda for children and young people issues. As part of wide ranging legislation, a Green Paper has been issued for consultation.

2. COMMENTS ON THE GREEN PAPER

2.1 There is an extensive list of questions for consultation. These and the suggested response, are attached as Appendix 1. Panel Chairmen and Vice Chairman of the two lead panels for youth issues have been asked for comment. There has also been a discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Crime and Disorder, Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Review Panel and Chairman of the Leisure Review Panel.

2.2 There is a broad range of interest in this subject – hence the desire to bring the issue to Cabinet. There are some links across into other initiatives such as Local Area Agreement and Local Public Service Agreement 2. The Council is well represented in these processes and will be involved in any developments as they emerge.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no particular implications at this stage. There is the prospect that if the Green Paper were adopted, there would then be implications.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation has taken place with the internal officers group concerning children and young people and with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the lead Panels for Youth issues.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no particular implications arising from this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct implications arising from the report. However, some of the content in the Green Paper is driven by crime and disorder issues. Comments on those are contained in the response at the appropriate points.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS

7.1 This item is relevant to all Portfolio Holders.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the proposed response to the Green Paper “Youth Matters” be approved.

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Background Papers:

Published report.

Youth Matters: Comment from New Forest District Council

Overall comments are offered on the following points:

- The focus of delivery through local authorities is welcomed and re-inforces the processes underway through the Children and Young People Plan, which is critical to effective joint working locally.
- There should be reference to the fact that it can be the perception of adults that is the issue, as much as the behaviour of young people.
- The Green Paper could have done more to include the views of young people themselves, rather than what might be seen as purely an imposition of an adult point of view.
- Too much of the Green Paper presents a negative slant. The very great majority of young people are making a really positive contribution to society and should be recognised more clearly and celebrated more effectively.
- The Green Paper uses the term “Local Authority” without distinction as to level or type. The predominantly this seems to mean the Children’s Service authority. This can lead to confusion and particularly in rural areas, will not properly describe the relationship that is needed between all levels of local government – County/District and Town or Parish Council. Delivering universal services involves a complex set of relationships and the expression of the commissioning process in the Paper is often too simplistic.
- There is a need for a clear lead agency for the 16-18 age group. Clearly the intention is for the Children’s Services Authority to have a principal role but there is considerable reference in the document to the role of schools. This has merit but it does not fully encompass this difficult to reach age group.
- There is a need for a strong connection all the way through, from early years to the teenage years.
- The need for more provision related to parenting skills consistently appears as a high priority in consultations undertaken locally. More emphasis should be given to this in the Paper.

General

1. What do you think are the most important issues facing young people now? How are these issues different for younger (13-16) compared to older (17-19) teenagers?

There are wide range of issues facing young people now. There are issues around behaviour that leads to antisocial behaviour, involvement with alcohol or substance abuse for example. There also a lot of life changing moments at this age (13-19) e.g. work, housing, relationships.

Also for some of the younger ones in rural areas lack of their own earning power and lack of transport, leads to narrow choices. Little doorstep activity is available.

2. Are there issues faced by particular groups of teenagers that are not addressed in this document? If so, what are they?

Unsure. There is a need to ask young people but basic support from youth services in our District is patchy due to limited resources. More resources for preventative universal work are needed.

3. Do you know of any projects or initiatives, which have been outstandingly successful in tackling the challenges covered in this document?

“Sugar and Spice” / “Slugs and Snails” joint youth service, health, Connexions and voluntary sector initiative. Youth Sports projects at Health and Leisure Centres. The LIFE and 999+ Camp instigated by the Fire Service. Mobile provision - Forest Bus and Streetwise, outreaching to local communities. The “Out of Joint” programme for pupils at risk of exclusion led by Forest Forge Theatre Company. Locally based formation of youth opportunities eg East Boldre Youth Project. Within Hampshire, the Testway Housing project was particularly successful in tackling nuisance crime within the Andover housing estates.

4. How can we encourage young people to take their responsibility seriously – what should the incentives be for good behaviour and what sanctions should be applied for poor and disruptive behaviour? Do you know of any examples of schism, which have applied these kinds of incentives and sanctions effectively?

By seeing the positive effect that their actions have upon the community with they are a part of, the young people should be able to see that that have a true voice and therefore would be encouraged to take their responsibilities more seriously. Any incentives should be ones that are of worth to the community or the individual, this would obviously change from community to community. The handling of sanctions must be well managed so as not to then exclude those that we are trying to engage. Experience from multi agency case working shows that young people are more likely to respond to techniques that require them to confront the impact of their behaviour, than purely sanctions alone.

Current good practice would lead to the suggestion that focusing on rewarding positive behaviour would be the way to go. Sanctions –could further increase the gap in life chances rather than help. It is good to remember that some people can shine through leisure / own time/ cultural activities, where in other areas they are struggling. Sometimes engagement in these activities can give young people a fresh start. Imposing sanctions/ punishment by denying young people these opportunities could be seriously counter productive.

5. What more could be done to divert young people from risk-taking behaviour, like smoking, binge-drinking and volatile substance and illicit drugs misuse?

The use of role models to make the risk taking behaviour unfashionable would be more effective than a lecture from certain groups. As a natural part of growing up, young people will always be attracted to risk taking behaviour. More recourse into universal preventative work to assist young people in making informed choices around potentially risk taking behaviour.

More recognition should be given to the impact of adult behaviour in leading young people. This can relate to parenting skills and this should be an aspect given high priority.

6. What practical benefits and challenges will there be in developing an integrated youth support service?

The benefit of a group that has a coordinated approach that is young person centred but with the various experts cooperating is obviously very beneficial. The whole work force across all services will be able to develop/share common core skills in working with young people. If there were such a grouping they would still need to be charged with networking across other services eg crime and disorder, leisure and so forth.

7. How can the Connexions brand be used to best effect within the reformed system?

Connexions has the brand and the network which should be fully utilised – so keep it! This should be kept, notwithstanding the need to bring services together through children's trusts and the key role of local authorities.

8. What more can we do to ensure that reformed services are focused on achieving the improved outcomes we all want to see?

The establishment of the targets and outcomes at the start of the programme should help to ensure that the targets of all are achieved. All plans based around five "Every Child Matters" outcomes integrated with the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) and any related plans at a locality level i.e. use one planning process.

Empowering Young People: Things to do and Places to go

9. What do you think of the emphasis in the proposals on empowering young people themselves to shape local services? What other options are there for achieving this?

The engagement and empowering of young people to shape local services should lead to a more customer centred service that delivers what young people require. This being the case it should lead to a more effective use of resources with better results being achieved. However there has to be a management of expectations and guidance from those who know their way around 'the system'.

It is critical to empower young people to shape services, but the emphasis in the Green Paper relies too heavily on the buying power idea and the anti social behaviour sanctions which might have the effect of disempowering young people. It would be better to encourage the good practice that is already happening to get young people involved in the actual design and delivery of real projects and services in their locality.

Consultation work locally shows that young people particularly desire a range of places to spend time – such as a youth café / shelter or the like. Providers can find this difficult to justify when so much of resourcing is target driven. Therefore any initiative or funding programme should allow for such facilities.

10. How should opportunity cards be developed so that the maximum number of young people can benefit?

There are serious concerns about this idea. The cost and logistics of the establishment of a card system may be prohibitive at a local level, so this may need to be monitored.

If implemented it must build on things that exist like the Connexions reward cards. Duplication must be avoided. All the money could be swallowed up in technology. The idea is too centred on the individual, would it not be better for “points” or “benefits” to be accrued by facilities / projects / organisations where there could be a collective community benefit – and therefore show the young person giving a real contribution?

As presented it does also tend to ignore what, in rural areas, is often the single largest barrier for young people - transport

11. How should opportunity cards be developed so that the maximum number of young people can benefit?

Opportunity cards could be given to every young person when they start secondary school as part of their development in citizenship. These can then be linked to community work such as step in to sport, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award etc. Their ‘Marketing’ will be important – perhaps not as an Education based card.

Young People as citizens: Making a Contribution

12. Will our proposals, taken together with those of Russell Commission, lead to increased mutual respect between young people and others in the community?

The proposals outlined will go some way to increasing mutual respect within the communities between young people and others. By given the young people a voice and the responsibility of what should be delivered where, you are helping to break down stereotypes on both sides. This is further supported by the different groups working together engaging and challenging preconceived ideas both sides may have.

13. What more can we do to recognise and celebrate young people’s positive contributions to their communities?

It is important that the good work that the young people do in their communities are celebrated on a regular basis as it is often the bad press that gets the coverage. By highlighting the positive work that is done then perceptions amongst the communities may become more positive. It may also worth having an annual award evening to further support and recognise the good work young people carry out in the community.

Try and combat press reporting that continually show young people in a negative light. Celebrate wider achievement not just exam results.

14. Would the opportunity to earn rewards motivate young people to get involved in their communities?

The earning of rewards may motivate young people to get involved in communities. It may depend on the rewards being held of value to the community or the individual. This is not the same as the rewards being valuable.

15. How can we ensure that young people from the diverse range of communities that make up today's society, are effectively engaged by service providers?

To actively engage the young people from the diverse range of communities it is important to engage these communities as service providers. It is often those within the social, ethnic or religious background that can share the issues that young people have and offer quality help and support.

Supporting Choices: Information, Advice and Guidance

16. What kind of help and support is most important for young people?

Impartial and non-judgemental help and support is important to young people as well as the confidence that the information will be treated as confidential.

There is a good deal of constructive and helpful activity at a local level. Any process must respect this. Young people are unlikely to have regard for something that is seen as duplication or adult attention seeking.

17. How can we ensure that information, advice and guidance provided to young people, is comprehensive and impartial and challenges rather perpetuates traditional stereotypes?

Pool skills and resources locally to engage young people in design and implementation of one route to source.

18. What do you think of our proposals to devolve responsibility for information, advice and guidance to children's trusts, schools and colleges?

The devolution of responsibility may result in a number of problems. Without one centralised voice then there is the opportunity for duplication and mixed messages being given. Also there is an opt-out option for schools and colleges based on their perceptions of poor provision. It must be based on something more concrete than the perception (personal views may not always be accurate) and also what would happen to the delivery of IAG to young people in an area if the school/college withdrew from its local arrangement?

19. Do you agree that it is important to have minimum expectations of the information, advice and guidance received by young people? Are the proposed expectations correct for each age group?

It is important that the IAG received by young people is quality information and there should be this minimum standard. If young people are to make quality decisions they must have quality information advice and guidance to do so.

20. Do you agree there is a case for quality standards for information, advice and guidance? If so what should they cover? How can they be made affordable without putting pressure on financial or workforce resources?

There should be a quality standard for the IAG and to ensure that this standard is maintained it is important that the investment is made in the workforce, through training and the development of their personal development plan.

21. Would quality awards for information, advice and guidance help to ensure high quality and impartially?

An accreditation would ensure that the IAG body had certain infrastructures in place to give high quality and impartial advice but it should avoid becoming a numbers game being target driven rather than young person focused.

22. Do you think a 'personal health MoT for 12-13 year olds would be an effective way of helping young people make a successful transition to the teenage years and to secondary education?

More information is needed as to what a 'personal health MoT' would involve. Managed correctly it may be a good spring board to assist with that young persons personal development for the coming years.

All Young People Achieving: Reforming Targeted Support

23. Do you think there is a good case for bringing together within children's trusts responsibility for commissioning different services, which provide support to young people with additional needs?

There is a good argument for bringing together the responsibility of the commissioning of services. This would ensure that there was no duplication of delivery and also an inclusive approach to the delivery of activity to all young people with additional needs. Again, this should be part of the CYPP.

24. How can we ensure that young people facing particular barriers, for example those who are disabled, are effectively engaged by service providers?

The best way to ensure that those facing barriers are engaged is by offering them a voice at the particular working groups.

25. How can we ensure that the new lead professional role is successful in co-ordinating the delivery of targeted support to young people who need it?

The establishment of key performance indicators set by and fed back to a working party involving the main stakeholders would ensure that the lead professional is delivering what is required and to who needs it. Integration with existing local networks will be the key to success.

26. What more could be done to help older teenagers make a smooth transition to support from adult services, where they need them?

The transition to support from adult services could be aided by the introduction of the adult services rather than letting the young people find their own way there. If a young person has accessed teenage services then perhaps there is an opportunity to introduce them to the adult service (meet on the premises, open day etc). It may be useful for someone to meet the young people and explain the services that they offer or for the two services to share facilities.

Parents

27. At what stage(s) of their children's lives would parents find it most helpful to receive information about how they can support their teenage children?

Different issues will come to the fore at different stages of the teenage years. However it is important the parents realise that the support is there for the issues that they may face and so it may be useful to start the information given at the start of secondary school when the young people begin to see a lot of changes and choices. Financial planning needs a long lead in time.

There is a need to tie this agenda to the rest of the planning process under "Every Child Matters". Certain types of approach are needed with teenagers but there is much to be said for early intervention with parenting skills and work with young people at an earlier age. A more positive recognition of this would be welcome. We would re-inforce the point made earlier about the need for priority on parenting skills.

28. On which issues would parents of teenagers most like support? How, or through whom, should information be delivered?

Parenting skills should be given a high priority. Many parents would like to be able to give advice or have an understanding of the issues that their children are going through. Knowledge of where to get the information required is often enough, i.e. career/education options. However it may also be very useful for parents to be given non-sensationalised information on topics such as nutrition and healthy lifestyles, drugs or sex education.

This information could be delivered at 'parent's evenings' either in terms of workshops or information stalls. This support would best come from those who deal directly with the young people so that an honest and true account can be given, whilst tackling the issues that concern the parents and the young people themselves. An emphasis on interpersonal / communication skills would bring a number of benefits to all concerned - parents and teenagers alike.

29. How could schools help parents remain involved with their teenager's learning and future education opportunities?

Schools must look at how they become a centre for the community and encourage parents to feel comfortable to approach schools. For some parents schools are seen as an area of punishment, somewhere they are summoned when their child has misbehaved and this can lead to an anti-school feeling.