

AGENDA ITEM:

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
4 OCTOBER 2005**

YOUTH SERVICE ACTION PLAN: FINAL REPORT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To outline the views of the Children & Learning Scrutiny Panel in relation to the Youth Service Action Plan following its Ofsted inspection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the OSB notes the contents of the Report and approves the Final Report.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT

3. At its meeting on 19 July 2005, the Panel considered the Youth Service Action Plan, following its Ofsted inspection.
4. The Panel was advised that an Ofsted Inspection of the Council's Youth Service had taken place in November 2004. Inspectors carried out direct observation of youth work sessions in a range of settings and locations. They also met with elected Members, senior officers and strategic partners as well as representatives from the voluntary sector.
5. The Panel heard that the overall service was judged to be adequate by Ofsted. The Panel felt that it was important to view this result within a national context, as the Panel heard that of the Youth Service inspections completed nationally, a significant proportion were judged as inadequate.

6. The Panel heard that there were two areas of the Youth Service, which were highlighted by Ofsted. Firstly, it was noted that there was a lack of clarity in the operational management structure within the Youth Service, especially around roles and responsibilities. The Panel noted that following this observation, the Council had commissioned consultants to review the management structure of the Youth Service, with a view to informing the overall action plan.
7. Secondly, Ofsted was of the view that the Youth Service was not sufficiently seeking out marginalised or 'hard to reach' groups. The view of Ofsted was that whilst the Youth Service was very effective at engaging with all groups once they had presented to the Youth Service, it was not being proactive enough at seeking out underrepresented groups.
8. In considering the Action Plan, the Panel was mindful that Ofsted had accepted the Action Plan as an appropriate response to the Ofsted inspection and report. The responsible agency to adopt the monitoring role of that Action Plan is now Government Office Northeast.
9. Further to the above, the Panel was also mindful of the paucity of guidance available to local authorities when compiling post inspection action plans. As a result of this, the authority researched other local authorities action plans to use as a quasi template. Whilst Ofsted had accepted the Action Plan, it was viewed as unhelpful that such little guidance was in existence.
10. The Panel heard that the Action Plan would be updated six months hence to take account of a recent Government Green Paper entitled 'Youth Matters' and the outcome of the managerial structure review. The Panel expressed a desire for this to come back to the Panel at the end of this six-month period.
11. As regards the contents of the Action Plan, The Panel was comfortable that it sufficiently addressed the areas of relative weakness that had been highlighted and was an appropriate response. The Panel did however have comments on one matter.
12. Para 2.4 of the Action Plan is in relation to agreeing the target groups locally i.e. for BME and under performing white males, to which a completion date of March 2006 was attached. The Panel felt that this deadline may not be sufficiently challenging and was, therefore, interested in the possibility of this target date being re-evaluated.
13. In addition to the above, the Panel felt that the Action Plan could be developed to include more content on how the action plan's implementation will be monitored and recorded.

Conclusion

14. In terms of a conclusion, the Panel's views were that the Action Plan was an appropriate and logical response to the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection,

whilst feeling that more information could be included around the monitoring of actions' implementation.

Recommendations

15. That the updated Action Plan comes back to the Children & Learning Panel in six months time. At this stage the content of the consultants report and the content of the Green Paper 'Youth Matters' will have been digested.
16. That in updating the Action Plan, more information is included around how the implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored. To clarify, two additional columns should be added to the Action Plan, headed 'Actual Developments' and 'Success Criteria' to present a clearer picture of the current position.
17. That the Youth Service reappraise the completion date for Action Plan 2.4 with a view to bringing it forward to January 2006.

**COUNCILLOR LINDA WILSON
CHAIR, CHILDREN & LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

18. Ofsted Inspection Report – Middlesbrough Youth Service, Dates of Inspection: 22 –26 November 2004.
19. Youth Service Post Ofsted Action Plan, produced by the Children, Learning and Families Directorate.

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