

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

5 MAY 2009

### SUMMARY OF CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINAL REPORT ON MIDDLESBROUGH YOUTH SERVICE AND CONNEXIONS

#### **Purpose of the scrutiny investigation:**

1. The role of the Youth Service is to support the personal and social development of young people through informal education. The service is a specialist provider of social and informal education, with a particular focus on the 13 to 19 age group. Youth work aims to recognise the special needs of young people in society and works to support them through the transition to adulthood.
2. Connexions is a service which provides 13 to 19 year olds (and those aged up to 24 with a learning difficulty or disability) with information, advice, guidance and practical help in preparing for adult and working life and to help young people engage in learning and work. The service uses a multi-agency approach to provide impartial information, advice and guidance, including careers advice.
3. The scrutiny panel sought to examine the roles and operation of each service by considering **terms of reference** relating to:
  - *How youth services and Connexions are organised, including service provision, targeted work and geographical coverage.*
  - *The accessibility of services for young people, including levels of take up and whether service users are involved in planning and decision making. Also the relationship between schools and Connexions.*
  - *How the impact/effectiveness of the services is measured.*
  - *The influence of the services in reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET').*
  - *Proposals to develop the 'My Place' initiative and also the use of the Youth Capital Fund Plus and Youth Opportunity Fund locally.*

**Findings:**

4. The panel conducted an in depth review and considered detailed information regarding this topic. The panel found that a wide range of services and assistance are available to young people to assist them in their personal development and in accessing education, training and employment opportunities. In general, the authority has recognised and acted on the needs of young people and services are well developed. However, the panel considered that there are areas of the two services where change or action could be beneficial. These areas are highlighted in the panel's conclusions and recommendations, which are summarised below.

**Conclusions:**

5. Based on the evidence considered during its investigation, the panel made 11 conclusions. These are shown in full in the final report and relate to:
  - 1) The extensive range of facilities and services which the Youth Service provides to support young people's personal and social development.
  - 2) The multi-agency approach undertaken by Connexions in advising and guiding young people in accessing opportunities in training, education and employment.
  - 3) The important role of both services in supporting the Mayor's Youth Agenda.
  - 4) The fact that both services are now provided by Children, Families and Learning (following the disaggregation of regional Connexions services) and how this has led to good joint working.
  - 5) The development of the *myplace* facility, which will provide a significant resource specifically for young people and will be a very positive addition to youth facilities in the town.
  - 6) Geographical coverage of the Youth Service - in particular gaps in coverage in some areas.
  - 7) Success which the Youth Service has had in targeting marginalised and disadvantaged groups - though further progress is needed in respect of some areas.
  - 8) Success in reducing the number of young people locally who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET').
  - 9) Success which Connexions has had in contacting the vast majority of young people and reducing the number who are "not known" to the service.
  - 10) The possibility of Connexions promoting employment and training opportunities through better links with local employers.
  - 11) The Youth Service reaching only 72% of its target for establishing contact with young people.

**Recommendations:**

6. The scrutiny panel's final report contains six recommendations. These are shown in full in the attached report and relate to the following:
  - 1) Continuing work to ensure that the Connexions service is fully integrated into Middlesbrough Council to ensure that it operates at maximum potential.

- 2) Connexions exploring the development of links with targeted sectors of local employers to assist in identifying training/employment opportunities for young people.
- 3) The Youth service undertaking work to improve contact rates with young people and move towards achieving targets in this area
- 4) The Youth Service undertaking work in respect of areas which currently have little or no youth service to examine how young people in these areas can be encouraged to access services.
- 5) Continued work to meet targets to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET').
- 6) That, with regard to *myplace*:
  - a) to ensure that the project is financially sustainable in the longer term.
  - b) to address the issue of transport links to ensure accessibility.

**COUNCILLOR JAVED ISMAIL**

**CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**