

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

23 JULY 2012

### REPORT FOR THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN

#### POST 16 SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

##### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee regarding progress on the new 'Just Ask Plus' Service which relates to the ongoing development of a universal integrated post 16 service for all young people in need of supported living within Bridgend County Borough.

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 Looked After Children are a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents and connect with the following community strategy and corporate plan themes:

- Young Voices,
- Healthy Living,
- New Opportunities.

- 2.2 The development of an integrated service for young people aged 16-25 also links with the Authority's improvement objectives for 2011-13 which are:

- to build safe and inclusive communities supported by an effective physical infrastructure;
- to develop and support sustainable and affordable housing solutions for those who are homeless or in need;
- to implement better integrated health and social care services to support independence, choice, empowerment, dignity and respect;
- to work in collaboration with partners to combat poverty and provide children with the best start in life;
- to help all children and young people to achieve higher standards of attainment by accessing high-quality learning opportunities;
- to improve physical and emotional well-being by promoting active lifestyles, participation and learning;
- to support our disadvantaged communities by promoting economic growth, physical renewal and sustainability;
- to manage and promote the natural and historical environment;

- to improve the way we work to ensure effective and efficient use of our financial, technological, physical and human assets.

### **3. Background**

3.1 Within Bridgend County, there is a clear and agreed view that all services which work with and for children and young people do so to ensure that they will:

- thrive and make the best of their talents;
- live healthy and safe lives;
- become confident and caring individuals throughout their lives;
- know and receive their rights.

3.2 A proposal, 'Designing the Future', outlining a new model for a universal multi-disciplinary service for young people aged 16-25 was presented to Cabinet in April 2011. The proposal sought approval for the development of a new post 16 service which included reconfiguration of existing services and the development of a specialist team to target services for all young people aged 16 to 25 living within Bridgend County Borough.

3.3 Bridgend has some excellent service provision in both the statutory and voluntary sectors for adolescents and young adults, delivering a range of innovative, creative and challenging youth provision that enables and empowers this group to achieve their potential. The proposal aimed to build upon and compliment such services - not to replicate, replace or undermine areas of existing good practice.

3.4 However, faced with the challenges of an increasingly complex environment for young people and the current economic climate with its reality of shrinking budgets, it is imperative to ensure that services are fit for purpose in meeting the diverse needs of this age group and that services remain best placed to continue to deliver improved outcomes. There is, therefore, an emphasis on the need for improved collaborative working across the authority and a specific recommendation on the joint commissioning of services – particularly between children and young people's services, supporting people and housing.

### **4. Current Situation**

4.1 The service structure and specification has been agreed in principle, though there may be a need for further amendment as development of the new service progresses. The authority's after care service and youth service-'Just Ask' provision merged to create the new 'Just Ask Plus' integrated service for 16-25 year olds. The new service became operational on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012 and is based at the former Just Ask offices in the town centre.

- 4.2 The main aims of the new service model are:
- to provide a service that can respond promptly, flexibly and effectively to the needs of vulnerable young people;
  - to fulfil the local authority's statutory duties as corporate parent to young people leaving care, including accommodation, support, advice and befriending;
  - to provide advice, practical assistance, information and personal support to young people in a range of areas, including education, employment, training, housing, welfare rights, health, leisure and personal development;
  - to ensure the service listens to young people, treats them with respect and involves them in decision making.
- 4.2 The existing services provided by the former 'Just Ask' youth service continue to be provided within the new service which include a 'drop in' advice and information service, counselling, sexual health, and various workshops/courses such as confidence building, media skills, Learn Direct-basic skills, animal care, budgeting and money management, careers and job club, peer training and volunteering.
- 4.3 The project group set up to drive the initiative forward has developed a number of work streams which are progressing.
- 4.4 The formal consultation process with staff within the former after care service relating to new job descriptions has commenced and is approaching conclusion in respect of the social work and senior practitioner posts. Consultation is planned to consider the job descriptions in relation to the non social work qualified posts and unique posts within the service.
- 4.5 A new team manager has been appointed and took up post on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012.
- 4.6 Funding was agreed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy for an additional social work post to enable the new service to take on case management responsibility for all Looked After Children who are 16 +. The new post holder took up post on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Case transfers of all existing 16+ LAC are currently in progress and this process should be completed in July.
- 4.7 A marketing and communications strategy has been developed and continues to be rolled out. The launch of the new service was also featured in the last edition of the 'Bridgenders' employee newsletter.
- 4.8 The transfer of paper files to a paperless system, the Electronic Data Record Management System (EDRMS) is underway. The current activity within this work stream includes
- arrangements to improve network connectivity/speed
  - scanning of Aftercare/LAC transfer files has been completed

- business support staff have been trained in preparation for scanning
  - training sessions for social work staff are being scheduled in the use of the new system
- 4.9 There are ongoing discussions with Housing to establish a joint post based at the Just Ask Plus service. Initially this will provide 20 hours of housing advice and support for those young people presenting as homeless. This service currently operates from Civic offices, but it is anticipated that this provision will be delivered from Just Ask Plus in August 2012.
- 4.10 Interim referral and assessment tools have been developed for the service though these will require amendment once the Joint Assessment Framework (JAF) tools have been finalised and rolled out.
- 4.11 The Bridgend Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT) has secured funding to employ an additional full time substance misuse practitioner, who once appointed, will spend a specified number of hours based within the Just Ask + Service.
- 4.12 Funding is being sought for a KIT (keeping in touch) worker to support young people not in education, employment, training or training (NEETS).
- 4.13 Development and training days are being planned for staff in the new service to ensure there is clarity of roles and responsibilities and to ensure staff are appropriately skilled and equipped with the necessary tools to undertake their new roles.
- 4.14 A young person's focus group has been established to ensure young people's views are being taken on board and listened to as the new service develops. An initial consultation was undertaken with a small group of young people in December 2010 to ascertain their views as to the suggested integrated model which received positive feedback. A second event was held in October 2011 which included young people taking part in an organised outdoor activity (canoeing) as well as discussion groups to consider what services would benefit young people most within the new service. This proved to be an excellent piece of work and DVDs have been produced to demonstrate this. A further event is planned to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> June with the focus aimed at advocacy and entitlements for young people.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.**

This report has no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment.**

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in August 2011 and concluded that the new service will not have a negative impact on how the Authority complies with its duties, with regard to people who are protected due to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual and sexual orientation. It is considered that the new service will have a positive impact on the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, the advancement of equal opportunity, the fostering of good relations and the protection and promotion of human rights.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 Funding has already been secured through the MTFP for an additional social work post to enable the service to take responsibility for 16+ LAC. Additional funding is also being sought for the KIT worker and has been secured through SMAT for the substance misuse worker. Other than this, no new funding to deliver the new service model is being sought.

7.2 The intention is to explore how existing resources can be more effectively utilised through a joined up approach to service delivery, whilst at the same time improving the quality of services on offer. There may be scope within the new service model for financial savings to be made, e.g. through the possibility of sharing accommodation, resources and time saved in unnecessary duplication of tasks and via realigning of existing budgets across teams and services. It will, however, be necessary to continue to undertake further work to more clearly identify the anticipated demands on the service to ensure that appropriate staffing and resources are available to deliver the services highlighted within the new service model. This will require a cross-agency approach.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers this report and notes the progress that has been made with regard to the current development of the Just Ask Plus service.

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**Background documents**

None