

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2013

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

POST 16 SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS (Just @sk Plus)

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding progress on the new 'Just @sk Plus' service which relates to the ongoing development of a universal integrated post 16 service for all vulnerable young people in need of support within Bridgend County Borough. A main group of young people supported by the service are those who have left or are leaving care.

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.

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 Committee 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 was imperative to ensure that services were 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 / Proposal

- 4.1 The service structure and specification have 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 @sk’ provision merged to create the new ‘Just @sk Plus’ integrated service for 16-25 year olds. The new service became operational on 2 April 2012, and is based at the former Just @sk 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.
- 4.3 The existing services provided by the former ‘Just @sk’ 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.

- 4.4 The project group set up to drive the initiative forward has developed a number of work streams which are progressing.
- 4.5 A team manager has been appointed and took up post on 6 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 June 2012.
- 4.7 All 16 plus LAC cases are now routinely transferred to the Just @sk Plus service using the transfer protocol. This has led to a significant increase in workloads within the team and it is predicted that this increase will continue. There are also increased demand on the service and the increased statutory duties in relation to the recent legislation and policy document 'Reconnecting to Care' and the 'When I am Ready' consultation document. In addition to this, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) was implemented in December 2012, which will mean that all young people under the age of 18 years in youth detention accommodation will have 'looked after' status. This will potentially have a further impact on increasing workloads.
- 4.8 The transfer of paper files to a paperless system, the Electronic Data Record Management System (EDRMS) is underway.
- 4.9 It is proposed that a housing officer will be based at the Just @sk Plus offices. The post holder will provide housing advice and support for those young people presenting as homeless, with a view to undertaking joint assessments in the future. It was anticipated that this provision would be delivered from Just @sk Plus from August 2012; however, due to a reorganisation within the housing service, it is now unlikely to be achieved before April 2013.
- 4.10 The Bridgend Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT) was successful in securing funding to employ an additional full time substance misuse practitioner. The post holder commenced on 15 October 2012. The Substance Misuse Worker is employed by West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (WGCADA) and will provide a service to young people referred through Just @sk Plus.
- 4.11 Monthly consultation surgeries for Just @sk Plus staff with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to discuss young people that are considered particularly vulnerable are now in place. In addition to this, a meeting took place in October 2012, with the Consultant Psychiatrist at CAMHS and their colleagues, which was extremely positive in relation to young people receiving services from

the Just @sk Plus base. However, further work is required to consider the appropriate referral pathways and access to services.

- 4.12 A team information day was held for staff in the new service in December 2012, to raise awareness of services across the county borough for young people. A team development day is planned for early 2013 to further consider and develop roles and responsibilities within the integrated team.
- 4.13 The Young Persons Consultation Forum continues to meet quarterly as a minimum. Young people from the consultation group have recently met and been consulted on the design and content of a proposed Just @sk Plus information leaflet. There is on-going consultation with regards to the development of the service.
- 4.14 The lease on Derwen Road (the former After Care Service) ended in December and this means that there will no longer be access to the resources at these premises. As a result, urgent consideration is being given to identifying both short term and long term accommodation solutions to ensure services can continue to be delivered on a 1:1 basis to young people from an accessible base.

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 for an additional social work post to enable the service to take responsibility for 16+ LAC. Additional funding has also been secured through SMAT for the substance misuse worker.
- 7.2 In relation to the increases in demand, 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 resources, time saved in unnecessary duplication of tasks and via realigning of existing budgets across teams and services.

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 @sk Plus service.

Hilary Anthony

Corporate Director Children

Contact Officer: Colin Turner
Head of Safeguarding and Family Support

Telephone: 01656 642314

E-mail: colin.turner@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Children's Directorate
Safeguarding & Family Support Services
Sunnyside Offices
Sunnyside
Bridgend
CF31 4AR

Background documents

None