

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

6 DECEMBER 2012

WORK FORWARD PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of report

To update on the Cabinet Committee on the progress of the Work Forward programme and future plans for the Youth Service with regards to services for disabled young people.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/ other corporate priority

This initiative will have a positive impact for a number of the existing Community Strategy themes, namely:

- Young Voices
- Healthy Living
- Strong Communities

In particular, it links to the Emotional Wellbeing priority identified at the outset of the Strategy, Welsh Government Guidance on Respecting Others (2011), the Strategic Equality Plan (2012-2016), Participation Strategy (2009), Youth Service Strategy (2007), Physical and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy (2011).

3. Background

3.1 School Councils

Good progress has been made in the enhancement and development of school councils, of which the Youth Service has been the main driver to allow progress to be made enabling young people with autism to have their voices heard.

3.2 Enabled

The social networking project 'Enabled' was established specifically for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to empower them to access a wide range of information, advice and guidance resources through an online environment. The Enabled website was launched to young people in 2010/11 enabling them to access resources online and aiming to promote their access to local activities, education and training resources, as well as general information and guidance portals. This website allowed young people to access opportunities enabling them to increase their social media and communication skills.

3.3 Get Active

Get Active is primarily a physical activity and healthy lifestyle programme aimed at young people between the ages of 11 and 25 and particularly those with physical or learning disabilities. The Get Active project addressed the needs of young people with disabilities particularly in targeted areas of Bridgend. The funding provided through Cymorth enabled partnership work, to develop improved services and

outcomes for children and young people. The purpose of the project through physical activity was to make young people aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle while developing social and communication skills, making friends and avoiding isolation.

3.4 Child & Youth Counselling

The Child and Youth Counselling Service offers an inclusive, accessible counselling service to children and young people aged 3-25 years via primary school, secondary school and community venues. The school-based counselling service was commissioned in response to the Welsh Government's school-based counselling strategy (2008) to ensure that all children and young people of secondary school age could access independent support for their emotional Wellbeing. In addition for the years 2009/10 and 2010/11 we were chosen as one of four Local Authorities to pilot schools based counselling for children of primary school age. The strategy will be consigned to statute in early 2013, safeguarding sustainability.

4. Current situation/ proposal

4.1 School Councils

The Youth Service has always worked under the broad umbrella of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with specific reference to Article 12 where children and young people have a right to have their voices heard when adults are making a decision that affects them and have their opinions taken into account. The Welsh Government through the participation consortium and the seven standards of participation are committed to no discrimination where every child and young person must have the same chance to have their voice heard. The Youth Service has worked with this outcome in mind for some considerable time and this has resulted in Bridgend Youth Council having more representatives with learning disabilities. The Youth Council will constantly review and target representation from marginalised groups.

4.2 Enabled

Due to the ceased funding in Cymorth, the social networking project 'Enabled' was redirected to Bwsted as there was insufficient funding to continue a post, something which is very much needed to maintain this project. The Bwsted website is a generic online information service for all young people in Bridgend, however, it does not offer specific support or tailored online services for young people with disabilities. There are no current online projects specifically for young people with disabilities, however, through a European Social Funded Youth Service Apprenticeship Programme we are able to support young people from within additional learning needs schools such as YBC to participate in a social media service in the form of awareness raising and general navigation around the information based Bwsted website.

4.3 Get Active

The Get Active project came to an end in March 2012 after Cymorth funding came to an end. The Youth Service was unsuccessful at securing funding for a similar project under the Families First Disability Theme, however, some aspects of the project, namely 'the schools programme', were included into the Positive Futures project. The programme offers an all inclusive service engaging young people

between the ages 11-25 years with groups from a diverse range of backgrounds, including young people with a wide range of disabilities, and offers young people the opportunity to engage in outdoor sports and activities. The project has attempted to meet the needs of young people with disabilities and encouraged participation on the project by positively engaging with young people on a weekly basis and occasional weekends where possible. Positive Futures staff completed training in disability awareness in the sporting field in order to be qualified to deliver on the project and run specific activities tailored to the needs of those young people who require specific levels of care. Young people with disabilities also participate in the Youth Service annual outdoor education summer camp where many activities are tailored to suit their needs.

Get Active had proved to be an extremely successful project in previous years and offered a vital service to young people with disabilities. The provision is greatly missed as the void created by the discontinuation of funding has been highlighted through the lack of similar provisions within the Borough. Funding for this project is vital to enable it to again champion disability groups in Bridgend; therefore, funding will be sought for new initiatives and as a joint partnership between Bridgend and the Vale Youth Services.

4.4 Child & Youth Counselling

The service is also a key provider of support for children and young people under BCBC's Physical and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy (2011). Funding under Families First (2012) has allowed the service to expand to meet desired outcomes. Community provision is now delivered under a multi-hub model to ensure that counselling can be accessed by all children and young people in local communities throughout the Borough up to age 25 years. Disabled access to venues is also available.

The counselling service has expanded its therapeutic approach to meet the needs of younger children. The counselling team, who are all qualified to at least degree level (85% to postgraduate level); have received training in developmental and therapeutic play to Master's level. As a result the service has created a unique, hybrid therapeutic approach that ensures all children and young people can express their feelings and emotions through the medium of play as an alternative to speech/language. This has proved highly effective.

The ability to adapt the counselling teams' therapeutic approach to suit individual need has also allowed the service to offer and expand provision within BCBC ALN and special school provision; the service currently offers counselling within Ysgol Bryn Castell, Heronsbridge Special School, the Pupil Referral Unit, EOTAS (educated other than at school) and electively home educated children and young people; all provision has been met with positive feedback and results. The service is fully committed to optimising access to counselling for all children and young people.

The Youth Service Counselling Programme was chosen to be one of four local authority counselling services to carry out a pilot project that worked with primary schools throughout the borough. Although specific funding for the pilot project has ceased, in 2013 a development plan will be compiled and funding from the main

secondary school budget will go in part to carry on the work in primaries for transition year pupils.

In addition, the service has won an Excellence in Counselling and Psychotherapy Practice award from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and has also been shortlisted for a Children and Young People Now award in recognition of its' pioneering work in the field of primary school-based counselling.

4.5 New Initiatives

A pilot programme will commence in 2013 to further assist young people with disabilities to regularly attend youth centres, this will be done by assessing their individual needs through consultation and working in partnership throughout the County. An evaluation is currently underway throughout the Youth Service to actively seek youth centres and projects that are adapted to providing a provision to young people with disabilities. A raising awareness programme of disability hate crime and training is being rolled out to young people and professionals who will build on the current training provision. In addition to this, resource packs will be given to professionals to build upon and continue the awareness with young people in group settings throughout the County.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but is required to effectively implement the Council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

Whilst no Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out, this report provides the Committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the Authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications

Enabled, Get Active & New Initiative

Funding no longer exists for Enabled and Get Active. However, the Youth Service will actively seek funding through partnership working across the counties of Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan to reinstate services and create new initiatives.

Child & Youth Counselling

The previous school based counselling grant will from financial year 2013/14 be transferred into the settlement and council tax support grant which will now provide the counselling services with future sustainability. The youth service will continue to seek and secure funding from various sources to sustain the growing demand for counselling services within the primary schools

8. Recommendation

That the Equalities Committee discuss and take note of the successful past and present services within the Youth Service and note its commitment to actively seek further provision to support young people with disabilities within the service.

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