

**COMMITTEE:** BEST VALUE SCRUTINY PANEL

**DATE:** 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2004

**SUBJECT:** YOUTH SERVICE

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING

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**IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>LEGAL</b>		<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>	
<b>EQUALITIES</b>	✓	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>FINANCIAL</b>	✓	<b>CONSULTATIONS</b>	✓
<b>STAFFING</b>	✓	<b>OTHER</b>	

**WARDS AFFECTED:** ALL

**PURPOSE**

1. To inform Panel Members of the work the Youth Service is undertaking to ensure the service is fit for purpose and is prepared for a future Ofsted inspection.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. **BEST VALUE REVIEW PANEL Committee is recommended to** note the report and to comment upon the actions being taken by the Youth Service to respond to the recent 'Health Check' report. The Panel is also asked to note that a new Principal Officer has just been appointed and will start work in September and to consider whether a Best Value Review of the service would be advisable from April 2005 allowing a 6 month period for the new lead officer to complete his own evaluation of the service.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Up until 2002 the Luton service was located within the Chief Executives Department and had experienced a range of staffing and operational difficulties. Since then real and substantial improvements have been made. Area working and planning has been introduced and has been effective in integrating the work of youth workers community workers, Adult Education and other key partners. Main youth centres are being upgraded and improved. Some like Lea Manor

now provide a full range of excellent activities in partnership with the school. Previously this centre was only open one or two sessions a week. The service requested Internal Audit to review youth centres and their financial management systems, and an action plan is in place to tackle weaknesses. Performance management systems are in place, for example all staff are now regularly supervised and appraised. Financial management training has been given to cost centre managers. The service is also tackling long-standing issues (matters like training, appraisal, supervision etc) around employing some sixty part-time sessional staff.

4. The service has some well-established partnerships with the voluntary sector where it has a number of seconded workers, CYCD is a good example. The service has improved its quality control by introducing SLA's with these organisations. The first Strategic Plan and Operational Plan have been published and an excellent Curriculum Framework and Toolkit has been developed in collaboration with DeMontfort University. These plans link to Council aims and objectives, and Government aspirations and targets for youth services nationally. The service has improved its profile within the region in relation to GO-East and other practitioners.
5. Some of the continuing constraints include difficulties in recruitment, some remaining issues around competence and skills, limited management capacity and until recently poor procedures and management systems. Successful recruitment remains a key element in the service's ability to delivery a high quality service. Youth worker posts are hard to recruit to and consideration is being given to this within the corporate recruitment strategy
6. The service is aware that an Ofsted inspection is likely within the next two years. To ensure it is a fully prepared for this, an external consultant was commissioned to do a benchmarking exercise. This 'Health Check' was received by the Panel at its last meeting. The consultant who did this work had previously been a principal officer in youth services elsewhere. The report was not in huge detail but was welcomed and seen as a very helpful assessment of strengths and weakness with recommended actions. The following report outlines recommended actions and progress so far.

## REPORT

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>1</b>	Provide a clear strategic direction for the Youth Service's role and contribution to corporate aims and to the delivery of services to children and young people in the Borough.	NC	The service will be included in the new Children and Learning Department. These actions to be taken forward by the new Principal Officer from September 2004.	Ongoing from September.
<b>2</b>	Prepare the Authority's strategic response to the OfSTED requirements of strategic leadership and management.	NC	The service has concentrated on capacity and organisational development issues. It will now take forward strategic/leadership /OfSTED issues from September 2004.	Ongoing.

3	Develop the Youth Service's contribution to the school improvement and social inclusion agendas by building on existing examples of good practice.	TQ	Current pilots at Lea Manor are occurring on how youth workers can work more closely in the school-based environment. The new centre manager will also be tasked on ensuring maximum usage of school based buildings and youth work are achieved over the next six months. A decision is imminent on how the Welbeck can assist in this area post connexions from September.	June onwards.
4	Implement the new management structure with a professional Head of Service post focusing on leading Luton Youth Service to meet the national standards set out in Resourcing Excellent Youth Work Services and Transforming Youth Work.	NC	Management capacity has been a critical issue for the service with only one out of three posts filled. New managers start in June and September so after a year there will be a 100% management capacity.	New Principal Officer. September 2004.
5	Review the agreement and sub-contracting arrangements with the Connexions partnership to ensure a clear focus on the Youth Service's contribution to Connexions targets.	NC	This has been achieved and have been successfully renegotiated. LBC have reduced the amount of resources committed from April 04 with a full reduction by September 04. This area has been overtaken by the national picture and the issue of VAT. As with other areas Connexions from September are going to become a direct delivery model.	Service to review its role in schools.
6	Seek to increase levels of external funding to the Youth Service by linking it to Borough-wide bids and collaboration with corporate initiatives.	ALL	Due to the management capacity of the service up until June i.e. only 1 out of three posts filled it has been impractical to follow this recommendation. By September all management posts will be filled which would then allow this to occur.	Ongoing.
7	Undertake a review of grant-aid arrangements to the voluntary sector and investigate models of commissioning and contracting work to voluntary and community providers where specialist expertise 'adds value' to services.	ALL	The youth service has introduced service level agreements with voluntary youth partnerships who have staff attached to their projects i.e. BYL, PKYF, ACCDF etc. The youth service recognises the need to review all grant aid systems and has built this into the youth service operational plan for the end of this calendar year. There has been a growth of voluntary organisations using youth service buildings due to the sla procedure.	Ongoing.
8	Improve the service's MIS systems to provide accurate statistical data to meet the requirements of the NYA audit and of the OfSTED performance indicators.	RJ	New system introduced and piloted between Jan – Apr. Paper based system rolled out to all projects from Apr 04. Paper based system will be updated to reflect YOUTHBASE the preferred MIS systems for all youth services. IT system in place from March next year. Computers and IT access to all ft staff in place from June 04 with all part time projects from Jan 05. A termly statistical summary sheet currently being developed and expected to be in place from Sep 04. Funding received from transforming youth work to employ a ft admin worker in a developmental roll including MIS.	Services across the country are experiencing wide ranging problems with YOUTHBASE. The strategy for LBC is to ensure a paper based system is in place and have the computer based system running parallel

9	Accelerate the delivery of 80% of Youth Service provision to the 13-19 years target age range and address the gender imbalance in the service by targeting more provision to girls and young women.	NC	Current figures are showing that there is an approximate split of 50% under 13 and 50% over 13 years. The service has opted for a continued phased emphasis on increasing resources and targeting the 13 – 19 age range, rather than a big bang approach of cutting services to the under 13's. Once the statistical summary sheets start to emerge we will have a clearer picture of how successful this has been.	
10	Ascribe a higher priority within the service for a focus on training, staff development curriculum leadership and quality assurance, particularly with part time staff.	NC	The service need is for a dedicated full time trainer to deliver youth work training to ft, pt and voluntary organisations. The service is currently reviewing the position of a training co-ordinator who sits across the division. A decision on this will occur this month.  The youth service introduced compulsory comprehensive training in Feb and March this year for all part time staff covering curriculum leadership and the related topic of quality assurance.	It is a service priority to ensure the issue of training regarding the need of a dedicated trainer for the 100+ staff is resolved and in place by September 04
11	Develop the curriculum 'toolkit' training and peer observation work to improve the quality of youth work practice especially through training and support to part time staff.	ALL	The curriculum document and toolkit has been phased in since October last year with all projects on line since April. Now the final printed copy is available we will launch at the next part time staff conference in July.	
12	Increase the sharing of good practice, peer visits to centres, publication of curriculum materials amongst staff.	ALL	It is in the operational plan to produce a termly newsletter for staff focusing on excellent projects across the borough. Staff have built into their objectives this year around supporting staff in club swops and visits. The admin support is being built up to ensure the curriculum resources are kept up to date and are accessible.	
13	Accelerate the development of project work, detached/outreach youth work and advice, information and counselling provision across the Borough to lessen the dependency on youth centre delivery.	ALL	Detached work has been rolled out with, from October, a dedicated full time senior member of staff. This area has used short term funding to recruit part time staff for specific periods of work and to link with other detached workers from different organisations. Building the level of Information and advice available to young people has been high on the agenda and is in the youth service plan and built into individual staffs objectives for the year. The issue of the recommendation of providing counselling services has not been embraced at this time.	

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- Proposed developments within the Youth Service can be covered within the existing budget. The only likely growth bid for next year is for the training post". This will be considered by the Council when setting the 2005/06 revenue budget. The Finance Manager, Lifelong Learning agrees with this financial position.