

**Children and Young People
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

Date: 6 September 2007

Education and Inspections Act Section 6

Wards: All

Portfolios: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children and Young People's Services

Summary of Report:

To inform the panel of the details of the requirements of Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act and the actions being taken in Walsall to meet them.

Recommendations

1. To endorse the proposals in the 'next steps' section of this report.
2. The panel consider the establishment of a working group to look at the implementation of the Act.

Background papers:

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities
July 2007

Reason for Scrutiny:

The Council at its meeting on 23rd April 2007 requested that the Children and Young People's scrutiny panel consider the duty under Section 6 of the Act and investigate the provision for positive activities available to different age groups.

The responsible Cabinet Member will provide a report together with any recommendations from Scrutiny to full Council as to the implementation of the requirement of the 2006 act.

1. Education and Inspections Act Section 6

- 1.1 Section 6 adds requirements to local authorities functions under the Education Act 1996. These functions fall into two age ranges.

For children under 13 this involves adequate facilities for recreation and social and physical training. This includes camps, holiday classes, playing fields, play centres and playgrounds, gymnasiums and swimming baths.

For young people ages 13 to 19 (and those young people aged up to 24 who have a learning disability) the local authority must secure access to:

- a) Sufficient educational leisure time activities which are for the improvement of their well being and sufficient facilities for such activities and
- b) Sufficient recreational leisure time activities, which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities.

- 1.2 The guidance requires authorities to provide sufficient educational leisure time activities and facilities for such activities, which are for the improvement of young people's personal and social development. This relates to activities, which are delivered, using youth work methods and approaches.

- 1.3 The recreational leisure time activities include sports, dance and informal physical activities as well as a wide range of cultural activities including music, performance and visual arts.

- 1.4 In addition, the local authority must ensure that young people are consulted over the provision and also publish information about what activities are available in its area.

- 1.5 Walsall's Children and Young People's Plan has identified the strategic direction for the authority to increase the engagement of children and young people in positive activities. In order to ensure that it meets its obligations under the act, a strategic multi-agency group is being convened, comprised of representatives of all relevant agencies and organisations to take a lead in implementing the recommendations.

- 1.6 Currently 37% of young people aged 13 to 19 in Walsall have been in contact with the Youth Service , compared to the national target of 25% and 26% of young people have regularly participated in the programmes and activities on offer, compared to the national target of 15%.

2 Recent Developments:

- 2.1 In July the government, through the HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, published "Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities."
- 2.2 This is the final document in the policy review of children and young people and outlines the government's vision for informal education and leisure provision for young people. It covers work with young people aged 13 to 19 and aims to acknowledge the impact that can be achieved and recognise that most young people have a positive contribution to make to society.
- 2.3 The strategy sees a key role for youth work and youth workers in delivering high quality work with young people, supporting their active involvement in decision making. It also calls on local authorities to take the strategic lead to ensure that comprehensive and integrated services are made available in each area.

3. Current Activity in Walsall:

- 3.1 Provision of positive activities for young people aged 13 to 19 (and those aged up to 24 who have learning difficulties and disabilities) is made available to young people in Walsall through a wide range of services and organisations. These include the local authority, through its Youth Service, Sports, Libraries, Leisure and Culture Sections, Schools, the Connexions Service and the voluntary and community sector.
- 3.2 The activities are provided at times when young people have need of them – after school, evenings and weekends. Some daytime provision takes place for young people who have left school and are seeking the skills to enable them to gain employment. Volunteering opportunities are also made available to young people with support from the Youth Service and voluntary organisations. Additional provision is organised for school holiday periods with a major summer programme available. This programme has included a number of challenging activities and events, trips to residential centres where both recreational and educational activities have taken place and regular activities in youth clubs and centres across the borough.
- 3.3 A group of young people have visited Sri Lanka this summer, following the very successful "MAD show" event to take funds they had raised to support tsunami victims and to develop links with young people there. Last year 54 young people who were acting as mentors to children with particular needs as part of the "Ready Steady Summer" scheme achieved the Platinum Youth Achievement Award, the highest level in the country. This year a similar number of young mentors are also working with the Youth Service to continue supporting children and achieving accredited awards.

- 3.4 The Youth Service provides a wide range of social educational activities. These include peer-mentoring programmes in drugs education and sexual health education. Arts and drama work takes place in partnership with the Authority's Creative Development team and voluntary youth organisations. Work to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) takes place in a number of areas, in partnership with Connexions.
- 3.5 Joint work has been developed with a number of schools, providing both informal education and support for young people in need of social inclusion. 22 school leavers with no positive destinations and 13 NEET young people completed a joint Connexions and Youth Service project which included learning opportunities. Over 80 young people have been trained as peer educators in drugs prevention work. 95% of looked after children have been able to make their views known at their statutory reviews.
- 3.6 Sports activities are provided at the borough's sports and leisure centres and also in partnership with schools such as Aldridge, a Science School, Willenhall Sports College and Shelfield Sports and Community College. Looked after children and young people are supported outside their formal schooling to achieve their potential with activities provided by the Children's Services outreach team, the Youth Service and the Education Support team. In partnership with New Deal and Sport England three leisure centres have created dedicated gyms for children aged between 8 and 16.
- 3.7 Young people with disabilities have the opportunity to engage in specialist activities and are also supported to participate in open youth clubs and projects. A project, called Churchill Road Youth Club operates at Jane Lane School two evenings a week for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is also a young people's disability forum that is part of the Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) structure. Voluntary sector organisations are also involved in providing activities. A joint project involving Education Walsall, Supported Housing and the Youth Service is developing provision for Gypsy and Traveller young people.
- 3.8 There are a considerable number of opportunities for young people to get involved in outdoor and challenging activities. Many youth clubs and projects organise residential weekends and trips away. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme works with hundreds of young people and, along with the Youth Achievement Awards, Arts Award and a newly developed Local Award gives young people the chance to obtain recognition for their achievements. Over 100 young people took part in a consultation weekend as part of the Youth Service planning process. Over 800 young people achieved accredited outcomes in the last year, a significant increase on the previous twelve months.
- 3.9 In the last three years a substantial investment has been made to

refurbish the authority's youth clubs and centres and there are now activities available to improve young people's educational leisure time throughout the borough. Opportunities now exist in many schools for both before and after school clubs for young people aged over 13.

- 3.10 Provision of recreational and social opportunities for children under 13 is made primarily by libraries, schools and voluntary and community organisations. There are before and after school and lunchtime activities available in most schools and there will be a total of 16 Children's Centres, 10 are currently operating, which will provide a range of recreational and social opportunities. In every school inspected by Ofsted it was reported that children enjoy learning. There has been an increase in the number of young people who are active library users, up to 24% of the population in March 2007.
- 3.11 Currently, information on all the activities that are available is held by organisations across the borough. This information needs to be collated in one place so that children and young people, their parents and professionals working with them can readily gain access to all the opportunities available to them. Much of this information is held in the Children and Young People's Services Directory (www.walsallchildrensservices.com) and further work is taking place to ensure that the information is both accessible and up to date.
- 3.12 Voluntary and community organisations provide children's activities, both in the evenings and during school holidays. The Greenspaces Improvement team have been involved, in consultation with children and young people, in refurbishing and building new play areas and other facilities in parks around the borough. The Ready Steady Summer scheme, which is recognised as successful in providing positive support and reducing anti-social behaviour operates throughout the summer holidays.
- 3.13 The Bryntisillio outdoor pursuits centre is available for children up to the age of 13 to use both during term times and in the school holidays. The Playing for Success Study Support Centre at Bescot Stadium provides learning opportunities for young people aged 9 to 14 using football as the basis for learning about team building, self esteem, problem solving and achievement in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- 3.14 "Adolescence is an exciting time of life, characterised by new opportunities and significant change. It is also a crucial transition period in which young people take increasing responsibility for themselves, their relationships and the decisions about their lives that shape their future prospects". Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities (DCSF July 2007)
- 3.15 In conclusion children and young people in Walsall have a wide range of activities from which to choose to participate. However, further development is required to ensure all age groups are made aware of

what is on offer, where the activities are taking place and how they can access information. In addition within each locality the different organisations need to provide a more 'joined up' co-ordinated approach to the activities provided for children and young people.

- 3.16 Children and young people need to be empowered to have influence over, and have access to, high quality positive activities and wider youth support services, this is crucial to ensuring that they progress through adolescence on the path to success. An integrated youth support strategy to be developed with young people in Walsall will put in place measures to achieve this for all young people, but with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised. This strategy will require the commitment and expertise of local public services, voluntary groups, community groups and the professionals working directly with young people and their families. Children's services through children's trust arrangements, will lead on delivering this strategy with young people, driving action and greater focus across agencies and organisations on improving outcomes for young people as part of the ongoing Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme.

4. What we've done so far

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with all the key providers of services and activities in Walsall. This has included the Youth Service, Leisure and Culture in the Neighbourhoods Directorate, Education Walsall, Secondary school Head teachers, the voluntary and community sector and Connexions.
- 4.2 Young people have been actively involved in discussions and consultation, through Youth Opinions Unite, the Youth Inspectors and the annual young people's consultation conference. Further consultation will take place through school councils. Young people with disabilities and learning disabilities have been involved in the consultation.
- 4.3 The Locality Partnership Event consultations, which have taken place during March and June in each LNP area, have also included the opportunity for lead professionals from across a wide range of organisations and agencies to identify the particular needs for children and young people in their area.
- 4.4 Funding for youth work in the borough operates using a need assessment formula, which results in a fair allocation of resources based on numbers of young people and a social deprivation index. The formula is used for both local authority and voluntary and community organisation clubs and projects. The use of this formula for other provision for young people will be considered.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Ensure a strategy for integrated youth support and targeted youth support in Walsall sets out aspirations for what services should achieve over the next ten years and clearly identifies year round positive activities for young people is in place and implemented. The strategy will engage young people and ensure they receive expert support to improve their ability to influence provision locally and ensure young people will be at the heart of decision making. Services for young people will be fully integrated, and young people will be fully equipped to access the help they need.
- 5.2 Compile a comprehensive directory of all positive activities for the improvement of children and young people's well-being, which are currently provided by the local authority, including schools, the voluntary and community sector and other agencies and organisations in Walsall. Much of the information is already available, through the Youth Service (which includes both local authority and voluntary provision), Sport and Leisure, Schools, Connexions and the Contact Point information-sharing index. The information has to be produced in a web-based format and be available to all young people by April 2007. This will be achieved in Walsall.
- 5.3 When the directory is completed, consideration will be given to what is available to young people across the borough and what gaps exist in provision.
- 5.4 Form a strategic multi-agency group to take the lead in implementing the recommendations of the act and ensuring that young people's voices are heard in the development of positive activities in Walsall.

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