



# Devon's Youth Offer

## *Our Vision*

*This document sets out plans to engage on the development of a targeted youth service.*

*It is intended to inform the conversations that will take place during the engagement events planned in the Summer 2013.*

*The intention is to progress to an options paper in the early Autumn 2013 which will set out detailed proposals as to how this vision could be delivered, with proposed formal consultation to follow.*

## **Introduction**

Meeting the needs of young people that most need services, reflecting the changes and increasing expectations for our safeguarding role and social care whilst adapting to reducing budgets is the challenge we face, however we are confident that we can achieve this.

This document underpins the engagement events being launched to harness the voices of all those crucial stakeholders. This input will shape how we remodel the service in order that it complements the wider youth offer available to children and young people in Devon.

Government Policy, Positive for Youth, set out the coalition's government's vision for services for young people. A recently released document – Positive for Youth: Progress since December 2011 – continues to advocate the need to offer support to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, despite reducing resources.

There is opportunity along with Devon's emerging Early Help Strategy, enabling a continuum of help and support to respond to different levels of need of individual young people and families, with services coming together to offer synergies and enhanced support for young people.

It is also clear that we need to ensure that Youth Work skills are utilised in providing the offer of Early Help/Prevention/ Targeted work further to the Ofsted inspection published in May 2013.

Devon's youth service has a skilled workforce that needs to be directed to work alongside young people most in need of support. In order to make this happen in Devon we may need to rethink our individual roles which will be both a challenging and exciting opportunity.



*Cllr Will Mumford, August 2013*

## Background

Devon County Council, like others around the country are having to review how they deliver services to all parts of the community. The drivers for the review of the Youth Service include budget pressures and the need to remodel to respond to the recent Ofsted report however we are working within the clear guideline established regarding the provision of services to young people. 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services Activities to Improve Young Peoples Wellbeing June 2012' offers guidance to the provisions set out in the Education Act 1996. It notes that:

- Local Authorities have a duty to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, equality of access for all young people to the positive, preventative and early help they need to improve their wellbeing
- Local Authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them, not just at the outset when change is implemented but on-going in the long term
- There is no definitive list of services and activities for young people the Local Authority should fund or deliver or to what level, however the Local Authority is under a responsibility for securing, so far as is reasonably practicable, a local offer that is sufficient to meet local needs and improve young people's wellbeing, personal and social development
- Local authorities do not need to provide services directly; they can support other agencies to provide these services whilst ensuring that those other agencies have the skill set and capacity to deliver effective services successfully

Devon County Council is facing major budget cuts over the next four years. Government spending targets mean that over £110 million needs to be saved by 2017 in addition to the savings already made over the past four years.

This means the overall council budget will have fallen from £600m in 2009 to £400m.

It is clear the council will not be able to provide the same level of services as it has done in the past. It must ensure the most value from every pound spent and inevitably the focus must be on mandatory services and supporting the most vulnerable. At the same time, the council is committed to working with its partners to find new ways to deliver vital services and help communities to meet local needs.

All services currently provided via the council will be subject to review over the next few years. This is to ensure the best possible approach is taken to get the most from the resources available and to minimise the impact of any change on communities. There is currently no specific savings target for the any specific area.

The current Youth Service is delivered by more than 100 Full Time Equivalent Staff – based around the county. They operate out of more than 80 Youth focused venues of which over 20 are buildings owned by Devon County Council, the remaining premises are secured through a variety of arrangements– including buildings leased by the local authority.

The service is a universal service offering open-access across Devon with some targeted projects within that offer, for example working with young people who go missing from home. The service also delivers outreach via ‘mobiles’ and street-based work.

It is important to note that the offer of services to young people in Devon is not delivered exclusively by Devon County Council’s Youth Service. There is a robust universal offer within the Third Sector for example the Scouting movement, leisure facilities and within universal settings such as schools and through other services within Devon – for example via public health. This offer includes access to positive activities, information, support and guidance however the targeted offer is limited.

Currently the Youth Service works mainly with young people aged 13 to 19 and has a presence in most of the coastal and market towns and a rural dimension. It offers support to the voluntary sector in localities and to county wide organisations, e.g. Young Farmers, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and directly delivers the UK Youth Parliament and Children in Care Council. However given both national and local drivers set out above we need to look at remodelling the service going forward in order that diminishing resources are utilised in the most effective way.

### **Going forward Young People can expect:**

- Access to information, advice and guidance about the things that are important to them;
- Their voices to be heard through effective participation, engagement and consultation mechanisms enabling them to be active citizens;
- Access to affordable universal, open access provision in order that they have somewhere to go and something to do;
- A targeted service that reaches those most in need of additional support.

### **In order to do this we will:**

Ensure that part of the remodelling will include a commitment to the provision of effective **information, advice and guidance**. We will utilise systems already in place, such as the Careers South West website, but we will also listen to what young people tell us about how they would like to receive information, advice and guidance.

Review our current **Participation and Engagement** mechanisms with children and young people. We will in response to what they tell us change what we do, whilst retaining those services we have a duty to provide such as the Children in Care Council. We will be open to utilising social media and other mechanisms that enable young people to have a voice that is meaningful.

After clearly mapping the current provision of services available to young people and reviewing their needs we will explore how we can retain ***Universal, Open Access Youth Centres in key areas***. We will work with all stakeholders to ensure that they have a voice in shaping the criteria that will be utilised when difficult decisions are made regarding reduction in services. We will also explore how best this universal offer can be retained, being open to ideas and innovation. We will do this within the context that other providers, be that the third sector, district and town councils or commercial companies, have a role to play in this provision alongside the County Council Offer.

We want to deploy our highly skilled youth service workforce to engage with those young people who are most in need of support. We will actively seek the opinions of all stakeholders to explore which groups of young people the ***newly configured Targeted Youth Support Service*** should work with. We want to include young people such as those who are at risk of offending, of going on to be NEET and those missing from home. However we are also keen to ensure all stakeholders are engaged with defining with whom this valuable resource should be deployed. We are interested in evidence based models of intervention and work that secures positive outcomes and impact. The Targeted Youth Offer will sit alongside work that is undertaken by a variety of providers, both alone and in partnership – for example the Targeted Family Support Programme.

All of this will be undertaken with clear regard to ensuring we consider our duties in relation to equality. We will build upon the best practice and lessons learned emerging in this area of work as other local authorities re shape their services, such as those documented in “A Return to Ancient Truths”. [www.communitymatters.org.uk/returntoancienttruths](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk/returntoancienttruths)

## Appendix A

Devon County Councils Estate Strategy 2012 – 2017 states on page 11 “Moving forwards to 2016/17, the authority’s estate will be significantly smaller having been shaped through a process of locality based asset reviews, centred on three geographical areas:

- Exeter and East and Mid Devon
- Newton Abbot, Teignbridge and South Hams
- Barnstaple, North Devon, Torrington and West Devon.

These reviews will be based on the following key principles:

- a substantial reduction in office buildings
- co-location of Adult and Community Learning, libraries, Youth Services and Fulfilling Lives (Learning Disability).”