



# Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

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## Report to the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee

**Title:** Buckinghamshire Youth Services

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**Cabinet Member sign-off:** Zahir Mohammed

### Purpose of Agenda Item

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on how the Buckinghamshire Youth initiative has progressed since it was last discussed at the CSC&L Select Committee. The paper is for information only and includes:

- An overview of Buckinghamshire Youth;
- How budget reductions were managed;
- A brief analysis of the data set;
- Successes and challenges and how they are being overcome;
- Risks going forward.

### Background

Buckinghamshire Youth was discussed by the Select Committee in October 2015 when the initiative was still under development. The committee were informed that Buckinghamshire Youth was a collaboration of 3 providers who would work closely together to ensure the best support for young people could be provided. By February 2016 the budget was agreed by full Council with an additional saving requirement of £1,755,000 split across the three Buckinghamshire Youth Providers.

### Summary

Buckinghamshire Youth launched in June 2016. It is a partnership between:

- The Youth Service (internal BCC service)
- Adviza (formerly Connexions Bucks)

- Action4Youth (a voluntary sector organisation providing support to community youth groups)

The over-arching aim of the partnership is to:

- Ensure young people can access the right intervention(s) from the right professional(s) at the right time, preventing escalation into the more expensive statutory services;
- Improve outcomes for young people;
- Reduce duplication;
- Increase efficiencies across the 3 providers, including creating a single front door and utilising the voluntary sector offer.

Buckinghamshire Youth is a referral based service and is able to support young people who meet set criteria. Young people accessing the service all have additional needs which are sometimes complex and needing specialist support defined as Level 2 and 3 in the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board Threshold Document. The full criteria is outlined in Appendix 1 and includes young people not in education, training or employment, young people at risk of offending or exploitation and many others.

Young people referred to Buckinghamshire Youth are provided with a package of support which can include:

- 1:1 Key Worker Support sometimes in the context of their families where a key worker will coordinate support for a family when referred through the Early Help Panel;
- Mentoring when less intensive support is required but young people still require low level support for example to maintain any change they may have made;
- Targeted Small Group Work to enable young people to learn from their peers, gain support from a positive peer group, and learn the skills needed to transition into adulthood successfully. Supported access to engage in activities in their community that support their social and personal development

In addition to the above the following work is also delivered by the Youth Service:

- Street Based Youth Work where youth workers meet with discreet groups of young people wherever they happen to be, in parks or other community spaces. This often takes place in areas of deprivation and/or rural areas where there are multiple problems at play, and/or where anti-social behaviour is prevalent.
- Youth Voice Work including delivery of the Children in Care Council. The Youth Voice initiatives provide a mechanism for the Council to consult with young people on a regular basis and maintain open dialogue.

The storyboard in Appendix 2 provides an overview of work completed to establish Buckinghamshire Youth.

## Key Issues

### **1:1 and Groupwork Case Study**

*Tim is 16 and lives with his mum and step dad. He has been in care himself in the past and is currently on a Child in Need plan. His 3 younger siblings are all in care. Tim has a history of being exposed to domestic violence and poor conditions at home and has been a school refuser since April 2016. At the time of referral Tim rarely left home, was anxious about social situations, was vulnerable to exploitation, crime, and gangs, and was missing education. Tim had only online friends and preferred to communicate with others through a headset rather than face to face.*

*A youth worker worked with Tim over a period of months supporting him in 1:1 sessions to build his confidence and trust. Tim was encouraged to join an employability project where he has been able to gain support from his peers and try out the strategies he has been working on in his 1:1 sessions. As a result Tim has now:*

- *Returned to education;*
- *Secured a p/t job;*
- *Achieved 2 sections of his Duke of Edinburgh's Award as well as other accreditations;*
- *Developed techniques for dealing with his social anxieties and is regularly meeting with friends outside of school as well as actively engaging in groupwork;*
- *Is doing things for himself that he would not previously have done on his own i.e. catching buses, going to the hairdressers etc.*
- *Has a renewed ambition and direction relating to future career choices and the qualifications he needs to take to get there.*

## Data Analysis

Since launching in June 2016 data has been collated and analysed. The 6 month review identified:

- 158 referrals have been received from 21 different agency groupings, with the most referrals being made by Social Care, Schools, Family Resilience Service and Banardo's R U Safe.
- Most referrals came from Aylesbury Vale (61) and Wycombe (56) with a further 28 from South Bucks and 11 from Chiltern.
- The average age of young people referred was 14.16 which included young people ranging from 10 to 19 years old;
- Young people's progress is assessed using the Outcomes Star tool. The average improvement is 0.8. This is above the national average of 0.6.

It is interesting to note that:

- Since July the number of referrals into Buckinghamshire Youth has increased month on month, a reflection of the growing demand and how the service is valued by partner agencies;
- Between June and November Social Care have been the main referrer with 25.9% of the 158 referrals coming from a Social Care team or re-directed from First Response. This equates to 47.5% Children in Need, 10% Children in Care, 40% redirected from First Response and 2.5% from other Social Care Teams. This demonstrates the role Buckinghamshire Youth can play in supporting young people to overcome barriers that other agencies cannot resolve;
- Of the total referrals one of the most common presenting needs was support for young people linked to anger. This is representative of the high levels of referrals other agencies are receiving linked to behavioural issues and the role Buckinghamshire Youth is playing in supporting this increasing need;
- The second most common referrer has been schools with 13% of the total. 38% of these have been for 11- 12 year olds confirming that schools are well placed to identify need at an earlier stage and when pupils are at a younger age. It also identifies a cohort who would not previously have been supported prior to Buckinghamshire Youth launching (22% of all referrals).

#### ***Street-based Intervention Case Study***

*The Youth Service acted as the lead agency coordinating support in Buckingham around a group of young people exhibiting risky behaviours, including an escalation of drug and alcohol use and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Due to their unique approach youth workers were able to work with young people in community spaces and on their territory, maintaining trusting relationships with young people while facilitating information sharing across agencies to safeguard the young people effectively.*

*By the end of the project the number of young people using mephedrone had reduced with one prolific user having stopped completely. Serious concerns raised about 6 members of the group by Social Care, Thames Valley Police and Community Safety had been completely eradicated. Many group members were able to demonstrate a renewed focus on their futures, gaining employment, improving school attendance and adopting a positive outlook despite difficult home circumstances*

#### Successes and Challenges

Since launching Buckinghamshire Youth in June 2016 there have been a number of successes and challenges:

#### Successes:

- Referrers, parents, carers and young people now only have one place to go to access support from 3 different providers. Developing a single point of access to Buckinghamshire Youth has also led to a reduction in duplication of support from across agencies;

- Referrals have been continually building and allocations have been completed jointly across the 3 providers. This has strengthened the package of support provided;
- The service has been very positively received. Young people, referrers and families have given positive feedback on the support they have received;
- The groupwork offer has added value to what can be provided in 1:1 settings and has given young people the opportunity to learn and gain support from their peers who are experiencing similar issues;
- 139 young people, many with multiple and complex needs have been or are in the process of being helped to achieve positive outcomes;
- Positive professional relationships with other agencies have been further developed (i.e. Family Resilience, Banardo's R U Safe. Social care etc.).

### Challenges:

- As demand has increased there is limited capacity to take on new cases. Ensuring young people are progressed through the levels of support in a timely way is a challenge;
- Recruitment to vacant posts has been an issue and it takes time for new staff to be inducted and upskilled to take on a full case load;
- Ensuring volunteer mentors are recruited/available in the right area at the right time is difficult;
- Establishing and developing Bucks Youth across 3 providers, 2 of which are externally commissioned has taken time, managing conflicting priorities and different ways of working.

### **Resource Implications**

Savings of £1,755,000 were achieved through the Buckinghamshire Youth initiative. These came from:

- A reduction in funding to the Buckinghamshire Youth providers and a broadening of their remit to include working with all vulnerable young people at a level appropriate to need;
- The addition of a cost effective mentoring service delivered largely by volunteers;
- Implementation of new referral criteria so resource is focused on the most vulnerable;
- Commissioning of a joint database to enable improved data support and economies of scale.

### Changes to Connexions Buckinghamshire and the Youth Service

Connexions Buckinghamshire (Adviza) became part of the new Buckinghamshire Youth model, bringing with them their expertise in working with NEET young people. A reduction in funding led to the closure of their drop in centres and they no longer provide drop in careers advice and guidance. However an open access online service remains and schools buy services directly from Adviza (the responsibility to provide impartial advice and guidance lies with the school and not the Local Authority). NEET young people are still

provided for as part of Buckinghamshire Youth and an employability skills programme is part of the offer. Pupils attending PRU's, YOS and those in aftercare still get a service as identified vulnerable groups. NEET figures remain low across the county and partners in Buckinghamshire Youth are available to assist with tracking young people to help keep the "not known" figures low.

A reduction in funding to the Youth Service led to changes in some of the delivery. The Youth Service no longer holds the Duke of Edinburgh's Award operating authority licence that schools affiliated to, and those who wished to continue became directly licensed to the national charity. Youth Voice initiatives were also reduced and we no longer have a specialist team supporting this work across the board. Youth Voice work with Looked After children and young people and those with disabilities has been retained. Projects such as Young Inspectors and United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) are no longer delivered.

## **Next Steps**

### Risks Going Forward

Clearly the Council continues to operate in challenging times with reducing budgets. Risks that may directly impact on the ongoing development of the Buckinghamshire Youth initiative include:

- Demand may outstrip supply and result in long waiting lists or an even more stringent referral criteria;
- Further reductions in budget will result in the service being able to help less young people with more young people escalating into expensive statutory services;
- Further changes and uncertainty may result in issues with retaining staff.

### Opportunities

- Closer working with statutory services for better integration of Buckinghamshire Youth support options within intervention plans for some of the most hard to reach young people in Bucks;
- The use of street based youth work to engage young people directly in their social environments and intervene with risky or harmful behaviours and contexts;
- Further analysis of success of Buckinghamshire Youth in preventing young people who have previously received a specialist intervention from returning to the more expensive statutory services;
- The remit of the service to work with young people at evenings and weekends.

- 1. Appendix 1: Buckinghamshire Youth Referral Criteria**
- 2. Appendix 2: Buckinghamshire Youth Storyboard**