

'INTERACTION'

Neighbourhood Management Partnership

9 JANUARY 2007

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

At a previous meeting of the Board it was agreed that Chris Allen, Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor, would provide a paper for the Board to discuss regarding the engagement of children and young people in the SSCF Programme.

Attached at Appendix A is his summary report taken from the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit Youth Scoping Report, which includes a number of recommended actions for the Board to consider.

Recommended: That the general recommendations set out in Appendix A be incorporated into the annual Delivery Plan.

SUMMARY OF NRU YOUTH SCOPING REPORT

Author – Chris Allen

General Observations

1. Article 12 of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard, within the family, the school or the community.
2. The Government's Children's Green Paper, "Every Child Matters" and the following Children Bill 2004, indicate that all services affecting children and young people need to be measured against how well they support them achieving five key outcomes:
 - Enjoying and achieving
 - Being healthy
 - Staying safe
 - Making a positive contribution
 - Economic well-being.
3. The new inspection framework for services for children and young people will include the Joint Area Review (JARs), which will seek to establish how well children and young people are doing against the five outcomes in a particular area or neighbourhood. JARs will encompass neighbourhood renewal initiatives and their contribution to the five outcomes.
4. The new Local Area Agreements will have a strong funding element focused on Children and Young People.
5. The NRU has a central role to play in supporting and strengthening opportunities for the engagement of children and young people in neighbourhood renewal and for improving their life chances.
6. As part of this, the NRU needs to encourage partnerships to ensure that the views, concerns and opinions of young people (in all their diversity) are heard as equal partners in the decision making forums at the neighbourhood level. They have a right to this as current community stakeholders with views and interests that go beyond specific young people's issues. Partnerships need to build and strengthen the routes (and in some cases open them) for young people to be fully engaged in the decisions, opportunities and challenges affecting their communities.
7. The benefits of this will flow through into partnerships having a better chance of achieving their 'floor-target' objectives on employment, community safety, health, education and environment as well as supporting community cohesion.
8. Partnerships cannot do this alone and need support from the NRU, other government departments, Government Offices and from the Youth Services and professional agencies.
9. There is a real challenge to engage and involve children and young people more effectively than we are currently doing. During the scoping exercise we identified a number of excellent initiatives (examples are provided in Annex D) involving young people and neighbourhood renewal. We need to ensure that these are promoted in ways in which others can draw inspiration from or use to challenge local performance.
10. The general picture that emerges from the scoping exercise is that many people and partnerships have an interest in children and young people and their issues. There are many local initiatives but, with a few notable exceptions, there is not a sense that these are connected

to a clear strategic framework. There are undoubtedly resource issues which impact on what can be achieved but equally it can be argued that we could make better use of what is already available.

11. There appears to be some policy and provision gaps (notably around young people aged 5-13 – particularly acute for the 9 – 13 age range) but the major problem that has been identified is what can best be characterised as one of *'disconnections'*. The NDC and NMP questionnaire identified 'lack of service co-ordination' as the biggest challenge and barrier to the delivery of effective youth services.
12. There is some confusion over the role and responsibilities of statutory Youth Services (what they do and what they don't or can't do as well as their funding) which impacts on relationships. There are also reports of some Youth Services failing to engage with the NDCs and NM Pathfinders. Engagement and involvement of young people could be improved.
13. The majority of the NDCs and NMPs are not effectively connected into or contributing to local youth service plans. The NRU and Government Office neighbourhood renewal colleagues do not appear to be effectively linking in with Government Office Youth Service leads.
14. The NRU is not effectively prioritising young people as part of its requirements for Delivery Plans, baseline information, guidance etc and is not making use of best practice to promote change and improved performance. Stronger links in the Programme and Implementation Division could be made with the developing agenda on full-service schools (and schools generally) which would benefit both the schools as well as local communities.
15. There is absolutely no indication of this reflecting a lack of interest on anyone's part but is more a consequence of a lack of a clear strategy, with focused and co-ordinated leadership.
16. This results in the NRU/ODPM and NMPs/NDCs (with some notable exceptions) not being as effective as they could be on youth engagement and youth issues. The NRU could strengthen the priority and guidance given to youth engagement in NMPs, NDCs and warden schemes. It could also foster and develop the links between youth services and local partnerships as well as with schools. It could use its central and facilitating role to work with Government Offices to build regional (and national) networks that bring practitioners, young people and partnerships together.
17. More can be done to promote best practice (through www.renewal.net and other mechanisms) in the way that the NRU has developed for other priorities. Working arrangements with other government departments should be strengthened in key areas (e.g. links with the Home Office on Anti-Social Behaviour and with DfES's Youth Service Team).
18. It is also important to note that the problems and challenges faced by the NRU funded NDCs and NMPs are not unique to them. If anything, the situation can be more difficult for other neighbourhood renewal projects. *The benefit of the strengthening and raising the profile of youth engagement for NDCs and NMPs will extend far beyond these programmes and indeed this should be one of the fundamental objectives of 'upping the game'.*

NMP/NDC Questionnaire – General findings

19. There is a caveat attached to the results. Not all of the NDCs and Round 1 NMPs responded. Some responses misinterpreted one or two of the questions and not all questions were answered. The responses may also have been influenced by the knowledge, role and experience of the person completing the questionnaire, though this in itself raises issues about local leads on youth engagement and activities. However, despite these factors, the responses to questionnaire do paint a strong picture that can inform the action that the NRU needs to take over the coming months. They reinforce the identified problem of service 'disconnections', lack

of clear strategy and guidance as well as the need for stronger methods and mechanisms for promoting best practice on youth engagement in neighbourhood renewal initiatives.

20. Summary of responses (40 out of a possible 59 schemes):

Strategy and Co-ordination

- 60% of the NDCs and NMPs do not have a youth strategy or youth charter
- Where they have Youth Strategy or Charter, most *are not linked to the Youth Service strategy for the area*
- Of those who don't have a Youth Strategy or Charter most say that they are working on one
- Most have someone who leads or co-ordinates their work on youth engagement and most have an identified Local Authority Youth Service Manager who they are in contact with and most (though a sizeable 35% *do not*) meet with local staff on a regular basis
- *58% have not contributed to the Youth Service Plans for the area*
- Most are working with Children's Fund/Connexions
- Most have a sub-group or theme group responsible for youth
- *60% of NDCs do not know who their GO Youth Service contact is and only 3 NMP out of the 15 respondents do. Few have involved their GO Youth Service contact*

Governance

- 57% of respondents have seats on their board or partnership for young people but of these *45% are not taken up*
- 45% have someone who *acts as a champion for young people* on their partnership or board
- 52% say they have young persons forum which is run by young people and of these, 50% feed in to the decision making process of their boards or partnership with 40% having dedicated budgets which they are free to make decisions on
- Most say they run regular events to ascertain the views of young people but it is not clear how these are fed into the deliberations and decisions of the partnership boards. *This echoes some of the findings from the NDC case study evaluation on young people (NDCs and Young People: Questions of engagement and awareness)*

Funding and Activities

- Only 35% know about the funding mechanisms for Local Authority Youth Services and only 35% know what the Youth Service Budget is for their Local Authority
- *Only 27% know what the youth services budgets are* for their NDC/NM area yet 45% say they monitor budgets and staff resources with the youth services
- *Over 95% have statutory youth service, voluntary and community sector clubs or activities in their areas. 63% are contributing to statutory youth service activities* (roughly even for both NDCs and NMPs) and over 90% are contributing to clubs or activities led by either the voluntary sector or local residents
- 37% have clubs or activities run by young people and of these 63% receive funding support - mostly from NDCs
- Of those responding, most NDCs spent between 0-9% of their budgets on young peoples activities and clubs and for NMPs most were spending around 0-29% of their budgets
- *77% said that all age ranges were not being catered for in their area – with particular focus on the 5-10 and 19-24 age ranges by the NDCs but fairly evenly spread for the NMPs*
- *Over 74% said that that different communities of young people were not being catered for effectively – key groups – Black and Minority Ethnic young people, females and young people with learning difficulties and/or housebound*
- *80% are working with schools on youth activities and youth service support*

Main perceived barriers to youth engagement:

- *Lack of service co-ordination* (1st)
- Lack of resources/youth workers (2nd)
- Lack of facilities (3rd)
- Lack of engagement and support from the statutory youth services (4th)

Main perceived positive/support factors affecting youth engagement:

- *Support from the local community* (1st)
- Youth workers on the ground working with you (2nd)
- Support for youth activities by the voluntary sector (3rd)
- Self motivated young people (4th)

Best practice most often identified:

- Strategy on engagement and service provision – NDCs (1st)
- Arrangements for engaging/consulting young people (2nd)
- Engagement of other services/wardens/fire/police/schools (2nd)
- Clubs/activities run by the voluntary sector/residents (3rd)
- Youth Forums, Diversionary Activities and Arts & Culture also identified

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

NDCs & NMPs should to be encouraged to:

- a) Clarify and confirm the leadership/co-ordination role for young people on their Partnership/Board, what their role is and how young people will be represented or feed (and contribute to decisions) their views on young people's concerns, issues and activities.
- b) Identify an officer within the NDC/NMP who will have a lead responsibility for youth issues and engagement and who will work with the Board 'champion' as well as local youth workers, young people and clubs.
- c) Ensure that there are strong and robust mechanisms for youth engagement and decision making and that there is a transparent link between these mechanisms and the decisions that their Board/Partnership make on priorities and funding for interventions. This should not be restricted to what are considered to be 'young peoples issues'
- d) Develop (with young people) a robust and practical strategy on youth engagement and activities and ensure that this is reviewed regularly.
- e) Forge stronger links with their local Youth Services and the Youth Service Planning process and explore the potential for local Service Level Agreements as part of a more structured arrangement to the delivery of local services. Children and young people could be involved in the monitoring of these services standards.
- f) Ensure that youth issues and youth engagement are part of their Annual Delivery plans
- g) Promote the role of voluntary sector and community/resident run activities for young people as well as those run by young people and where possible fund these.
- h) Promote and develop with others (including residents) a range of activities/clubs which engage those currently least included (BME, females and young people with disabilities or who are house bound)
- i) Ensure that they build a strong relationship with GO Youth Leads and Local Authority Principal Youth Service Officers.

- j) Develop a stronger baseline on young people as part of analysing current and future needs for young people.
- k) Positively promote the achievements and success of young people as part of the communication strategy for NDCs/NMPs