

RECOMMENDATIONS

If outcomes for Staffordshire's children and young people are to be improved, then they must be centrally involved. Participation work is costly in resource terms (people, time, transport, venues, rewards and skills); it requires real substantial and ongoing resourced commitment from the Trust. There is a serious and very grave risk that the Children's Commissioner will fail to deliver on the outcome 'make a positive contribution' without adequate resources.

Support systems:

In order to sustain and improve the core business of the Children's Commissioner and enable her to continue to deliver, significant investment must be made to support this evolving role.

Recommendation:

Priority must be given by the Children's Trust Board to the appointment of administrative support, since this has seriously hampered the commissioner's recent efforts to make progress in many areas. Key areas, such as web site improvement, building a data base of children and young people's views, venue booking, co-ordinating and minuting meetings, responding to enquiries and correspondence are but a few.

Additional recommendation:

That the Web site becomes independent and 'child friendly' by recruiting young people in its future development, to make it more appealing and accessible to children and young people.

Children and Young People's Plan: To avoid tokenism and the previous retrospective consultation of children and young people, an overarching priority for 2007/08 is to secure their active involvement. Commencing August 2007, the Shadow Trust Board will receive training in the 'Act by Right' standards in advance of their audit of this year's plan. This will ensure that they are directly

involved in future updates and will begin with the Shadow Board evaluating the refresh against the 'Hear by Right' standards, utilising the 'what's changed tool'.

Shadow Trust Board: The Youth Action Council (YAK) is the County Council's mechanism for consultation. Currently YAK has an annual budget of some £30k as well as a dedicated worker, to facilitate this and co-ordinate the annual UK Youth Parliament elections - this results in well attended forums.

Recommendation: *For a strong Shadow Trust Board to develop and to secure attendance on a monthly basis, a firm commitment to funding is required, as an annual, ongoing dedicated budget. This is vital to avoid the Commissioner from being distracted from her day-to-day duties. This would include costs for: co-ordination, 8 meetings annually, transport, venues, activity equipment, refreshments and rewards.*

Children and young people's services:

Services for children, but in particular, youth services are currently not aligned with a distinct lack of provision for young people aged 16-18 years. Anecdotally, anti-social behaviour amongst young people peaks at the weekends, on a Friday and Saturday evening, when young people themselves are requesting that services be open at these times, with more 'things to do' and 'places to go' including Sundays. This has an impact on ALL services, including the police, fire and rescue service, leisure facilities and borough councils, not just those who traditionally provide youth services.

Recommendation: *Services for young people need to be 'joined up'. The current pilot for an Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) is a golden opportunity to reconfigure current provision. The IYSS steering group, therefore, should give serious consideration to inviting these partners to the debate and that future development must include the reconfiguration of service delivery when and where young people want and need them most.*

Children and young people's participation sub group: an established 'network' of professionals who meet bi-monthly.

Recommendation: *that partner agencies show their continued commitment by ensuring that this bi-monthly meeting has priority for each nominated 'children's champion'. They must be given the capacity and support to attend these meetings.*

Big Bruvver Project: It is anticipated that once a countywide overview has been achieved, this will then inform, shape and change the way that services are delivered to young people.

Recommendation: *That the views of these young people be listened to and acted upon as they should inform and shape the type of youth services that the most 'disengaged' are seeking.*

Employment opportunities for the most vulnerable: the commissioner has again received a direct approach from a young person regarding potential employment; funding is not forthcoming to enable this to happen.

Recommendation: *In order to offer further opportunities to the most vulnerable young people in Staffordshire and for this to be a future, realistic viable opportunity, then considerable resources (time, people/mentors, office base, equipment and funding) must be secured. The Trust has the potential to offer many opportunities to young people and the Board should consider how their agency employs vulnerable children and develop a policy to address this.*