
From: Pappas, Glenn P
Sent: 22 May 2018 12:26
To: Bowen, Karen
Subject: Scrutiny Committee Consideration Today of Reshaping of Youth Services Report

Dear Councillor,

Reshaping of Youth Services

We are writing to express our continued opposition to the proposed Reshaping of Youth Services, and to respond to a number of points in the Report on the matter to be considered by the Scrutiny (Learning and Culture) Committee meeting on 22nd May.

Since the Scrutiny Committee last considered the previous Report of the Cabinet Member on this matter on 26th March, we have seen or heard nothing to allay our concerns that the proposals will lead to drastic cuts to the high quality service provided by qualified youth workers and the slashing of working hours and earnings of staff.

The proposals in the Report threaten to end the provision of Universal Access Youth Services as well as the closure of Youth Centres, especially in the Rural Vale. They also entail the largest number of redundancies yet seen in Vale of Glamorgan Council along with a huge drop in earnings for current full-time staff as 61 part-time staff are replaced by 7 staff working 25 hours, 39 weeks a year. We consider that this proposed, extremely damaging restructure of Youth Services is completely unnecessary, particularly as paragraph 38 of the report states that 'the driver for changes to the staffing structure is not to deliver financial savings'

The Report lacks clear information and detail to provide evidence to support the proposals, and in particular frequently fails to clearly differentiate between points relating to Targeted Provision and those concerning Universal Provision which faces the brunt of the cuts.

Staff hours for Universal Provision

We challenge the assertion in Paragraph 16 that 'The delivery of youth work will be available in all areas at a level at least comparable with current levels.' This paragraph goes on to state 'Under the proposal's we would seek to increase staff hours for universal provision to 9,480 per annum', but provides no evidence of how this figure is arrived at.

At a meeting on 16th April with staff, the work of the peripatetic universal staff was outlined. The number of staff has been reduced to 7 plus a senior worker; staff interested in the posts were told that they can expect to work in schools during the day and to work up to three evenings a week peripatetic. The example given was that they would work with a school in an afternoon, youth action group early evening and then move on to a "Universal provision" later in the evening.

This means that the majority of their time will be spent NOT working for Universal youth provision but would be targeted at those likely to be excluded from school or NEETS or the targeted Youth Action Groups. At the moment 100% of the Universal staff work in the evenings on Universal Provision. Under the proposals described on 16th April it would be considerably less than 50% of the new staff hours. Universal youth work can only take part out of school hours, to

get anywhere near the hours in the report the staff would have to work every evening with no time to deliver the school based work at all.

For example if all 7 staff worked 6 hours 3 evenings a week, this gives a maximum 126 hours per week work on Universal Provision, 4914 hours over 39 weeks. This is around half the 9,480 hours claimed in Paragraph 16 and a significant reduction from the current 165.5 hours per week, 6123.5 hours per annum stated in Paragraph 13. Changing from having 50-60 part-time, local Youth Workers to 7 staff 'operating in a peripatetic manner' will reduce the continuity of contact for young people with the same Youth Workers and greatly diminish the opportunity to develop relationships which is fundamental to youth work. This is especially so of the proposal 'to create a pool from the new staff team who will be available to act as cover should sickness or absence occur' (paragraph 17).

Redundancies and changes to staff hours

The proposals mean that most of the current 52 part-time staff face redundancy due to the lack of suitable posts in the new structure. This would mean the highest number of redundancies in Vale of Glamorgan Council yet seen. The report sets out no rationale for this other than 'recruitment and retention issues associated with the current workforce used to deliver universal services' referred to in Paragraph 3.

We do not accept that any such issues result from staff being part-time, and should in any case be capable of being dealt with by Youth Service Management. Any such difficulties do not justify making large numbers of dedicated staff redundant, which would also mean the council losing valuable experienced Youth Workers.

We also oppose the reduction in working hours for current full-time staff to 25 hours a week for 39 weeks a year which will result in a huge loss of earnings. The proposed changes to both full-time and part-time hours would mean detrimental changes for most staff and for many there would be no suitable post – indeed some people have chosen to leave the service already as they do not see a place for themselves in the proposed structure. These changes are unnecessary and would cause huge disruption for the youth work team.

Increased reliance on volunteers community groups and volunteers for provision of services

Paragraph 18 says 'By increasing community group participation, it is hoped that this will increase the youth provision available to young people'. The Report does not provide any evidence to demonstrate that this is likely to be the case in reality. We are concerned that there is no guarantee of continuing services if they depend on community and voluntary provision.

The Community-led Youth Pack says - 'the Council is assuming that no existing staff will transfer to the community service.... However there will be access to a youth service manager, plus regular communication with the Youth Service team and telephone support. If you will be using volunteers, initially the Vale of Glamorgan youth service will assist in recruitment, however in the fullness of time you will need to think about how to recruit them and ensure they are suitable' It is clear that the Council intends to transfer responsibility for many Youth Services to community and voluntary groups, and that there will be a decreasing amount of support available to these groups over time. Experience from neighbouring Local Authorities has shown that the withdrawal of Council provision has led to the virtual collapse of Youth Services.

Duke of Edinburgh scheme

Current experience in the delivery of Duke of Edinburgh Award provision is informative. Much provision is now provided by schools and while some schools are doing this very well, young people are generally restricted to one opportunity to engage in this activity (in Year 9).

The outsourcing of non-school DofE provision in Vale of Glamorgan to a voluntary sector group has not proved successful; it has been expensive and has resulted in a large drop in uptake by young people.

Crime and disorder

Paragraph 47 on Crime and disorder implications is very different from the previous report when it said that there were none.

The entry is very misleading as the points made refer to the targeted service; young people who have considerable support from youth offending services have a risk assessment but that is a tiny percentage of young people who use universal services. In the Universal service it's very much about preventing young people from entering the criminal justice system. The reality is that there are considerable crime and disorder implications. All of the Rural Vale Youth Centres were opened because of crime and disorder in the area, it is logical that when youth workers are withdrawn there will be a risk of an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Consultation

Paragraph 19 refers to consultation with the Trade Unions; unfortunately we have found the consultation process to be very unsatisfactory. There have been many delays in providing information to the Trade Unions, Unions have not been included in consultation meetings with staff, and there have been changes made to processes relating to the restructure without consultation with the Unions. As a result there has been no opportunity to consider alternatives to the proposals or to reach any agreement on a restructure of Youth Services.

Llantwit Major Youth Centre

Paragraph 39 states 'In securing a tenant for the Youth Centre building it is envisaged that financial savings will be made on the current running costs'. There is serious reason to doubt that a tenant will in fact be secured as the required £150,000 of remedial work on the building is a major disincentive for any interested community or voluntary group

The results of the current proposals will be that most young people will no longer have the option of approaching a qualified youth worker. In the most rural areas, youth work will be performed by volunteers only and not qualified youth workers; and with a universal access team of only 7 members of staff spread across the region, it will be impossible to build trust or rapport with young people, some of whom will have learning difficulties. The Report also does not address concerns we previously raised over Special Needs provision and Safeguarding and whistleblowing issues.

In these circumstances we consider that it is impossible for the Scrutiny Committee to reasonably agree to these proposals and therefore call on you to reject

Glenn Pappas
Unison Branch Secretary
Vale of Glamorgan Council Branch
tel: 01446 709578
mob: 07969 188406
e-mail: gppappas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk