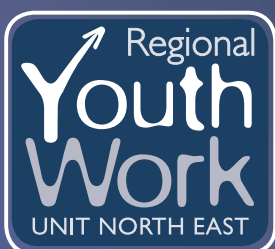


PROPOSAL

Network of Integrated Youth Support Services: North East



Undertaken by the
Regional Youth Work Unit - North East
Supported by
Government Office North East



Background

In recent months, there have been significant advances in the introduction of Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) in the North East. Although, the development of these services has been different in each Local Authority (LA) area, but has brought with it a number of common issues and challenges. Each area has reconfigured or restructured services in the context of local need and local determination. Each of the 12 services in the region has an distinctive structure with varying configurations ranging from multidisciplinary working to full integration.

Each structural choice has brought with it a range of challenges which are common across the region:

- the restructuring of teams and co-location
- the change in management structures and accountability
- the maintenance or dilution of boundaries between professions
- significant workforce development issues
- combining budgets and agreeing priority spending
- involvement and inclusion of the voluntary sector

Many of these issues have been discussed at both Regional Principal Youth Officers (PYOs) Group and the Regional Forum for Voluntary Youth Organisations (RFVYO). Both groups have been supported by the Regional Youth Work Unit for a number of years and the groups are well attended with colleagues across the region. However, both groups have also discussed their changing role and remit in the context of the development of integrated youth support services.

Proposal

Attendees at both the Regional Principal Officers Group and the Regional Forum for Voluntary Youth Organisations have gained from the opportunity to meet with colleagues away from the normal work environment, share good practice and develop common responses to issues and concerns. Within the context of the emergent integrated youth support services in the region, one vital group is missing – a Regional Heads of IYSS.

This proposal has two key elements:

- the establishment of a Regional Heads of IYSS in the North East
- the development of a network of IYSS including the new Heads of IYSS Group, the LA Youth Work Leads (formally PYOs) Group and the RFVYOs.

The Network of Integrated Youth Support Service: North East will fulfil a number of functions:

- provide a meeting place for colleagues with similar roles and responsibilities from the statutory and voluntary youth sector
- create three distinct but interlinked groups which will benefit both members and their services/organisations
- create a common platform for sharing issues and concerns in relation to

integrated youth support services

- develop a regional focus for discussion and debate as integrated youth support services develop in the North East
- improve communication and understanding both within Local Authority structures and between the Local Authorities and Voluntary Youth Sector in the region

The Structure

Network of Integrated Youth Support Services: North East



The network will consist of three distinct but inter-related groups: Heads of IYSS Group, RFVYO and LA Youth Work Leads Group. Each group will hold its own meetings and the substantive agenda will be developed by members of that group. However, each agenda will also include information and updates from the other two groups. There will also be space created in the agenda where colleagues from one or both the other groups can be invited to attend the meeting. Agenda's constructed in this matter should assist and benefit the wider understanding within the network. Each group will meet alternately at the Regional Youth Work Unit and Government Office North East. The meetings will take place on a quarterly basis and last for half a day.

Twice a year all members of the network will be invited to attend a development and discussion day, to take place at a suitable venue in the North East. The structure and content of the day will include:

- contributions from the three network groups
- discussion of common issues and challenges
- developing collective responses to regional and national issues
- creating an open space for dialogue and informal communication
- sharing examples of good practice
- inviting contributions from experts and colleagues in other areas

Although the day is primarily designed for members of the network, colleagues may choose to invite other practitioners/managers to attend. The day will also be an opportunity for other stakeholders to contribute to the development of the network. The day may also offer the space for national partners such as the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) or Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to promote and share current initiatives or future plans. As the network develops, one of the two bi-annual days may develop into a conference where a range of stakeholders and partners may be invited.

Resources

The Regional Youth Work Unit and Government Office North East have both agreed to contribute time and human resources to the development of the network. The Regional Youth Work Unit has supported the Regional PYOs Group and the RFVYO for a number of years. This has been made possible through a long standing Service Level Agreement between the 12 Local Authority Youth Services in the North East and the Unit. The Unit will be delighted to support the development and provide the secretariat for the network and the new Heads of IYSS Group.

However, the on-going support for all three groups will be consolidated by a continuing Service Level Agreement with the 12 new Integrated Youth Support Services within the region.

With the added support of Government Office North East, Children and Learners Team, it will be possible to support all three groups within the network, coordinate the bi-annual meetings and develop an annual regional conference.

Benefits

The Network of Integrated Youth Support Services: North East will provide a number of clear benefits to both its members and the wider support services to young people in our region.

- Developing a focal point for the emergent Integrated Youth Support Services in the region
- The sharing of good practice across the region
- Developing common responses to shared concerns
- Providing a platform for informal discussion and sharing of problems

and anxieties

- Providing a collective support mechanism for members of each group
- Creating a meeting place for colleagues from both the statutory and voluntary youth support services
- Using local knowledge to expand regional understanding of the emergent Integrated Youth Support Services
- Enhancing the ability of managers to improve their own services and provision to young people

Conclusion

The development of the Network of Integrated Youth Support Services: North East provides an outstanding opportunity to improve the way we deliver services to young people in our region. Through the sharing of good practice and the development of a greater understanding of how our services are developing, the network will provide an excellent focal point and platform for colleagues in both the statutory and voluntary youth sector. By linking the different elements of integrated youth support services in a coherent network, the North East will be able to demonstrate the benefits that coordinated and integrated thinking will bring to services in our region.