

Devon Youth Service: Commissioning Intentions for Draft Specification

Report of the Head of Communities

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation:

Members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- Note the report and note the requirements that will form the basis of the invitation to tender for Youth Services for Devon and consider whether it wishes to make any further comments to Cabinet.

The invitation to tender reflects the requirements, budget and terms outlined here:

a) Requirements

- A universal offer based on open access via 8 youth hubs
- Outreach and targeted support for more vulnerable young people
- Advice, guidance and support to voluntary and community groups across the county
- Focussed support to young people at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

b) Budget

- £1.78 million (TBC)

c) Terms

- 5 years (3+2) from 1st April 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Devon County Council's contract with DYS Space Ltd for youth services in Devon was due to expire on 31 January 2020. The current contract was awarded following a restricted tender. The nature of the procurement exercise undertaken means there is very limited room for manoeuvre in terms of extending the existing arrangements.

1.2 Representations were made at a “market warming” event with potential bidders on 15th May to extend the current contract by 2 months in order to allow more time for small providers to explore banding together to bid. It is considered that these are reasonable grounds to allow a short extension. DYS Space is willing to continue to provide the service in line with the existing arrangements until 31 March 2020 so commissioners have a fixed deadline of 1 April 2020 to conclude the Council’s retender.

2. Background

2.1 In 2014, the (in-house) youth service was very significantly revised:

- Number of youth and community centres reduced from 32 to 8
- Budget reduced from £3M to £1.65M
- Staff resource reduced from 114FTE to 50 FTE

2.2 Following a procurement exercise in 2016, DYS Space was established as a staff mutual and awarded a three-year contract by DCC to provide a youth service in Devon beginning in February 2017.

2.3 DYS Space has nine buildings in its portfolio. There are eight Youth and Community Centres (in Barnstaple, Bideford, Exeter, Exmouth, Newton Abbot, Okehampton, Tiverton, and Totnes) which are bases for open access youth work. These centres are also used as a base for the targeted and outreach youth work which takes place in other places (to best suit the needs of young people).

2.4 As well as the hubs, DYS Space has a building in Dawlish to support its work with young people in mainstream schools who are at risk of permanent exclusion.

2.5 There is a sense both nationally and locally that young people face increasingly complex challenges (including, but not limited to county lines drug trafficking, knife crime and sexual exploitation) and that a compelling youth service offer is important in response.

2.6 Devon can be proud of having retained investment in an infrastructure that supports both a universal and targeted offer and there are some signs that, after a period out of the policy limelight, Government might be contemplating new requirements for Local Authorities in terms of a youth offer that would contain both a universal and a targeted element.

3. Requirements for the future

3.1 The Council is not recommending fundamental changes to the model of youth service provision across the county.

3.2 Rather, commissioners will be inviting Cabinet to agree that the core offer to be made available from 1st April should consist of the same key components:

- A universal offer based on open access via 8 youth hubs
- Outreach and targeted support for more vulnerable young people
- Advice, guidance and support to voluntary and community groups across the county
- Focussed support to young people at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education
- Specific support in order to access the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

3.3 To ensure continuity of service provision, commissioners recommend that successful provider(s) be required to operate out of the existing eight youth hubs:

- Georgies - 21 St George's Street, Barnstaple, EX32 7AU
- 100 Club - Wear Barton Road, Exeter, EX2 7EH
- Rushbrook Centre - Station Road, Totnes, TQ95HW
- The Hive – 61 Imperial Road, Exmouth, EX81AX
- Room 13 – St James Street, Okehampton, EX20 1DW
- Bideford YC - Kingsley Road, Bideford, EX39 2PF
- Tiverton YC - Bolham Road, Tiverton, EX16 6SG
- The Junction – Wain Lane, Newton Abbot TQ12 2SH

3.4 Commissioners recommend building into the specification and contract that, over the duration of the new contract, that there is an expectation that the provider(s) will work with the Council to continuously review the location of the eight youth hubs against the needs of young people in Devon with the flexibility to respond to changing needs.

3.5 In addition to the buildings listed above, Red Rock (Sandy Lane, Dawlish EX7 0AF) will continue to be made available to provide support to young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education.

3.6 It is also expected that there will be a (temporary) presence from the provider in both Cranbrook and Sherford until a permanent facility is built and handed over to the respective town councils. As new developments are likely to emerge across the County over the lifetime of the new contract we would suggest retaining the same flexibility to vary the contract to reflect the need for additional youth provision.

3.7 The table below summarises the procurement timeline:

Finalisation of specification and ITT	July 2019
Tender Launches	Aug 2019
Tender Closes	Oct 2019
Evaluation and Approval	Nov – Dec 2019
Contract Award	Jan 2020
Mobilisation including TUPE	Jan 2020 – March 2020
Contract Starts	1 st April 2020

3.8 The timetable is tight and does not allow for a detailed review of youth services across Devon before commissioners go out to the market. Instead, it is recommended that the Council plans now to undertake such a review once a provider is confirmed to inform the future development of the service.

3.9 It is suggested that a review focuses on a refreshed needs analysis and mapping existing provision to consider how well the Council is supporting young people across the county. As part of that, commissioners would consider if the right configuration of buildings are delivering the right services in the right places. Children's Scrutiny Committee have indicated that they would be keen to work with commissioners on such a review.

3.10 In the meantime, to maximise the likelihood of being able to appoint a provider with the values and experience the Council consider young people should have access to, it is recommended building into the evaluation, a requirement for bidders to describe convincingly both a track record of and future approach to providing excellent services for all young people; with tailored services for young people needing more help.

3.11 Informed by helpful comments from a wide range of colleagues within and beyond the Council, as well as members of this committee (in a workshop on 8th May 2019) and from potential suppliers (in the market warming event on 15th May 2019) commissioners want to

develop an evaluation framework that ensures the Council awards a contract in line with the following principles:

DCC want to work with a provider who is able to demonstrate they can and will:

- Listen to young people
- Build trust and understanding
- Start with what's interesting to and what matters to young people
- Reach out to those young people furthest away from statutory services
- Engage with all young people and is equipped to work with young people with a variety of difficult or challenging life situations
- Create opportunities for young people to learn about and develop skills, knowledge and resilience to improve their mental health and wellbeing
- Understand issues facing and needs of young people and have the flexibility to respond to changing local needs
- Innovate
- Collaborate
- Deliver

3.12 As well as a compelling universal and targeted offer, it is suggested that:

- i. There will be a continuing need for the provider to engage with and support the many voluntary and community sector organisations who offer valuable services to young people in areas of the county not supported by a hub;
- ii. There will be a continuing need for the provider to provide effective interventions for young people who are at risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream education;
- iii. There is a valuable contribution to be made in supporting young people to access the Duke of Edinburgh scheme

3.13 The Council has identified a base budget of c. £1.75m to support the tender. It is the intention of commissioners to award the contract on a rising fixed-fee, guaranteeing income to the provider and acknowledging the likelihood that some costs will increase. However, the onus will be on the provider to absorb increases that turn out to be greater than the fixed fee.

3.14 The budget identified will cover the costs of the core specification. However, we do know that the pressures faced by young people are significant, and that there are areas of the county where a provider could target more resource on building the capacity and capability of the voluntary and community sector. The Council will continue to invest in an offer of

youth work that is both universal and targeted in its nature and in doing so provides a prime example of a cost-effective approach to both prevention (the universal offer) and early intervention (the outreach / targeted work).

4. Options/Alternatives

- 4.1 In 2017, the Council restricted the procurement exercise to Mutuals under Regulation 77 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Contracts awarded under Regulation 77 are limited to 3 years in length. Consequently, there has not been enough time to undertake a root-and-branch review of the youth service if the Council are to appoint and mobilise a provider by early 2020.
- 4.2 Commissioners are aiming to award a new contract (for up to 5 years on a 3+2 basis), in order to secure a coherent youth service offer in the short-term and to create the time and space for a more fundamental review after a provider has been appointed, taking account of both local issues and any national policy changes.
- 4.3 Commissioners have also explored whether there is scope to enhance the existing offer and it is considered there is, subject to identifying additional resource. The developments at Cranbrook and Sherford have highlighted gaps in the Council's service offer – gaps that are likely to be in further evidence as more developments emerge in the county over coming years – and we know that, even as things stand, there are areas in the county where additional youth work capacity would be helpful.
- 4.4 Commissioners consider the contract could usefully invite the provider to deploy both additional staff and if additional resource were to be identified, to help local communities grow their own capacity and capability to commission and / or provide youth services.

5. Consultation with Children's Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1 In order to test and develop the Council's approach and to inform its future requirements, a positive and productive workshop for members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee was held on Wednesday 8th May.
- 5.2 This session included a high-level review of the national context and developing policy landscape, alongside a review of delivery of the existing service – DYS Space, against key contract headings:

- Open Access

- Targeted Support
- Community Support

5.3 Open Access - Open Access sessions run in all 8 of the youth hubs across the County. A minimum of 3 sessions are run weekly at each centre and cover a range of ages and needs. Sessions vary in content, depending on issues and opportunities presented by young people within that location.

In 2018/19 a total of 1461 sessions were held and involved 23,069 visits from an identified 1300 young people.

In addition, there have been weekly sessions held at Cranbrook as part of the Council's s106 funding for temporary support until a permanent youth facility is built. DYS Space are also developing an offer to work within the new town of Sherford to develop the temporary youth offer there.

5.4 Targeted Support - This area of work provides contact with young people on a formal 1-2-1 or on a small group basis, in large part to support development and resilience. DYS Space use a defined youth intervention framework (Transformative Evaluation) that is built on working with the young person to look at the issues they are facing and to draw up a plan together that defines support and interventions provided by the youth worker, wider professionals and other people in the young person's life.

The Youth Worker and the young person will then regularly assess progress throughout the intervention. There is no hard time limit set for this support, though this typically lasts for around 6 months. There are normally around 150 young people in receipt of targeted support at any time, which equates to around 3500 individual and group sessions each year. 80% of young people see an improvement in outcomes and outlook, from the point of entry to when they leave.

Many different issues are referenced by those young people in receipt of targeted support including Mental Health - Low Self Esteem/Depression/Anxiety; Anger; Schooling; Parental Issues and conflict; Self Harm; Suicidal thoughts; Substance Misuse; Relationships and Sexual health. Referrals into targeted support come from a range of sources and agencies across the system supporting children and young people.

A further example of targeted group work has been the intervention developed in the Newton Abbot area where a specific plan was put in place to work with young people at risk resulting from reports of escalating violent and gang behaviour within the area. This was potentially placing young people in danger alongside having a wider impact on the town and on the ability of DYS Space to deliver a safe place for young people to experience open access sessions in the town. This innovative and agile response, in partnership, has had a significant and positive impact.

5.5 Community Support - There are many independent organisations running successful youth opportunities across Devon. An essential part of the contract relates to the support provided by DYS Space to organisations and volunteers to continue to build good quality youth work throughout the County. In the past year alone, DYS Space have provided regular advice, support and training to over 40 different youth organisations in Devon.

Alongside this, a £100,000 grant is administered by DYS Space on the Council's behalf. Youth organisations can bid against this fund for a range of things. All bids are evaluated by a board of young people who set the priorities for the year. Grants range from £18 to £5,000 for youth groups, scouts, summer opportunities etc. The youth infrastructure network of VOICE is also supported through the programme and provides an important opportunity to the youth organisations across the county to share learning and discuss issues.

5.6 Key points from the discussion with Children's Scrutiny Committee.

- Members noted the national context around youth work and the growing recognition and value of this work across national policy makers.
- Devon's comparative funding and commitment to Youth Services far exceeded that of most peer Local Authorities
- Members supported the proposed commissioning intentions and acknowledged the rationale for not recommissioning a different model due to current timescales and constraints
- Members would welcome a wider review of youth provision once a new provider has been appointed and a commitment over time to review the locations and remit of the eight youth hubs
- Members discussed their concerns around the historic cuts to youth service budgets and noted the implications of moving from universal open access to targeted provision alone. Members were keen that the service focuses on early-intervention and preventative work and that a significant commitment to open access is maintained.

5.7 Members would wish to continue to see ongoing development and a commitment from the future provider which: -

- Helped to join with other agencies focussed on career opportunities and apprenticeships
- Reaches out to hard to reach groups e.g. young people living in deprivation and within food poverty
- Supports sector sustainability – ideally in extending the voluntary network to cover the whole of Devon
- Provides flexibility over where support is provided e.g. hubs, outreach, pop-up, mobile
- Supports an increase in referrals from key partners e.g. police and youth justice
- Improved links with education e.g. the development of educational outreach programme with schools to reduce the numbers of pupils likely to off-roll
- Ensures the service is place-based, innovative and experimental
- Can reflect recent learning from Cranbrook and Sherford – Members are keen to ensure that new developments are future-proofed for youth provision
- Reviews Key Performance Indicators to ensure outcomes for Young People continue to be understood and monitored.

6. Wider Consultation

6.1 In addition to input from Members, this work has been informed by a wide range of colleagues, from across CoPHEP, Children's Services, as well as Finance, Legal, Estates and Procurement alongside discussions with colleagues from the Clinical Commissioning Group and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

6.2 A further key step was the market warming event on Wednesday 15th May. Input from the session highlighted:

- Support for the intention to retender;
- Support for the model described;
- Representation made that additional money should be found given the importance of youth work;
- Representation that additional time within the process should be considered in order to facilitate bids from small providers.

6.3 There was lively debate about whether a youth service needs to employ only trained youth workers. If there was a consensus view to emerge, it was perhaps that whilst youth work

training is very important, the Council should seek to commission a service that has and will seek to retain a good mix of skills so as not to completely rule out different staffing models.

- 6.4 Finally, and crucially, the Council's Participation Team are facilitating focus group sessions with young people in each of the four localities as well as engagement with Devon's Members of Youth Parliament, to ensure their views can be included in the draft specification.

7. Summary

- 7.1 Over the course of the current contract, the landscape has continued to shift for young people. Across Devon we've seen changes in issues, behaviours, and adolescent risks; with emerging themes around gangs and knife crime and further links to County Lines and Child Exploitation.
- 7.2 There is a continuing need for a service that can help build the resilience of young people by identifying and responding quickly to the needs and / or issues facing them. There is strong support for a universal offer and anecdotal evidence tells us that young people form trusting relationships with the youth service because it is open to everyone.
- 7.3 One of the most important aspects young people value through effective quality youth work is the honest and non-judgemental space it creates – it is somewhere they feel safe to talk and feel listened to.
- 7.4 At a national level, concerns about young people being exploited by adults, knife crime, school exclusion and poor mental health have dominated the youth agenda.
- 7.5 Government recently announced that they are reviewing the guidance that sets out local authorities' duty to provide appropriate local youth services¹. In addition to this a new Youth Charter will be developed to set out a vision for young people over the next generation and beyond. In October 2018, the Home Secretary announced a £200m Youth Endowment Fund². Delivered over 10 years, the Fund will deliver transformative change by focussing on those most at risk of involvement in serious violence, diverting young people away from becoming serious offenders.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-youth-charter-to-support-young-people-across-the-country>

² Home Office Youth Endowment Fund Prospectus Dec 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-endowment-fund-call-for-proposals>

7.6 The 'All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs (APPG), Youth Work Inquiry, Final Report, April 2019³' described the 'ideal form' of youth work as;

- Universal open access for all young people regardless of any defined needs or deficits
- More formal 1:1 and/or group sessions to explore issues and challenges
- Specific and tailored support for identified or complex needs

7.7 The invitation to tender pack will invite bidders to tell us how they can respond positively to all of these issues and, in addition, work in effective partnerships to build the capacity and capability of voluntary sector organisations supporting young people across the county (in areas not within easy reach of one of the eight youth hubs).

7.8 Rather than run the risk of jeopardising continuity of provision at this point, because of the very short window the Council has within which to conclude the tender exercise, commissioners feel the sensible course of action is to require the successful bidder to use all the existing buildings and to discuss with the Council the case for any change(s) during the lifetime of the contract.

Simon Kitchen
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Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity, Councillor Roger Croad

³ 'All-Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs (APPG), Youth Work Inquiry, Final Report, April 2019'