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| Meeting of: | Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | Thursday, 11 January 2024 |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee: | Learning and Culture |
| Report Title: | Youth Service Update 2022-2023 |
| Purpose of Report: | To update members of the progress made by the Youth Service this year. |
| Report Owner: | Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills |
| Responsible Officer: | Rhys Jones and Ve Van de Voorde – Youth Service Managers |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation: | Councillor Rhiannon Birch Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing |
| Policy Framework: | The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget. |
| <p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Service achieved the Silver Youth Work Quality Mark in October 2022. • The Youth Service has been making positive steps in relation to post-covid recovery and the service has been providing young people with new and exciting opportunities to support them achieving their full potential. These actions are outlined within the newly developed Curriculum Plan and Participation Policy. • The Youth Service’s European Social Fund (ESF) programmes Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W) ended in December 2022. A new Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) project within the Vale of Glamorgan named STRIVE has been launched to support both pre and post 16 learners in line with the new Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPF) guidance. The project incorporates the Youth Homelessness project. An update with regards to the Youth Service’s statutory duty in relation to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework is to be presented in a separate scrutiny report. | |

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the progress made by the Youth Service in the last 12 months and note the ongoing developments and achievements of the service.
2. That Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) receives a further progress update report in October 2024 regarding delivery, awareness of grants and potential risks post March 2025.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that Members of the Scrutiny Committee (Learning and Culture) continue to have oversight of Youth Service developments and delivery of service to vulnerable young people from across the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To ensure Members have a clear understanding of both the targeted and universal aspects of the Youth Service and are informed to scrutinise decision making around key workstreams.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Youth Service delivers services for young people (11–25-year-olds) in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has been embedded via a range of open-access universal provision including youth clubs, youth voice and rights projects, detached work, street-based and mobile provisions. The service also provides targeted interventions based on external funding, Strive (NEETS pre and post16), homelessness, Youth Wellbeing Service, SEREN pre and post 16, and rights ambassadors. All of the aforementioned projects have a youth-led focus on the needs of young people in each area of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 This report seeks to make Elected Members aware of the progress made in the Vale of Glamorgan and milestones achieved for those vulnerable young people in our communities.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The annual statistical release from National Audit Statistics reports that the number of young people registered and engaged with the Youth Service as a percentage of the youth population for the Vale of Glamorgan for 2022/23 was 14%. This represents a 7.5% increase on last year and reflects a positive trajectory during the period since the pandemic.
- 2.2 The Service succeeded in achieving the Silver Quality Mark for Youth Work in October 2022. The Silver Level of the Quality Mark focuses on ensuring that youth work recognises and promotes inclusive practice, celebrates

equality/diversity and ensures that provision is planned to meet young people's needs. The work ensures that activities make an impact on young people, with clear outcomes and is delivered by an appropriately experienced and qualified workforce who involve young people in decision-making.

- 2.3** The number of young people receiving a national accreditation as a result of involvement with the Service in 2022/23 was 2% which is a significant decrease on the previous year. This is primarily linked to the closure of the ESF projects and our open access provisions mainly focussing on increasing membership post pandemic. However, we have been undertaking an accreditation review for the service and are currently implementing measures to increase our accredited opportunities for young people within the LA.
- 2.4** The Vale Youth Service has a 100% success rate in staff being qualified to Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) qualifications. All staff undertake annual Safeguarding training and hold relevant First Aid certification. The service has supported 6 young people (YP) to register for Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work Practice, and 3 YP to register for Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work Practice and has provided placement opportunities. In addition, 12 youth workers completed their Detached and Outreach Level 3 qualification enabling the team to undertake street-based youth work and to gain new skills. Donna Parker won the 'Our Hero' award for learning and skills at the Council's Staff Awards ceremony.
- 2.5** The Universal Service supports young people through open-access opportunities and projects including youth clubs and street-based activities through the service's mobile provision (VPod). The service has delivered 470 open access sessions in 2022/23 through a varied weekly programme based on consultation with its members. A new Curriculum Plan was developed in consultation with young people outlining our Youth Offer for 2022-25. Through the Youth Support Grant received from Welsh Government, there will be an expansion of the outdoor offer for 2023-25.
- 2.6** In addition, successful school holiday programmes have been delivered throughout the year with activities such as cooking, archery, music, trips bushcraft and sports engaging 263 young people. Summer of Fun funding enabled the service to organise Youth Fests in Western, Central and Eastern Vale with partners which proved very popular with young people. As a service the aim is to build upon all external funding available to widen the reach and support for young people across the LA.
- 2.7** The Strive, Universal and Wellbeing teams now jointly staff the 4 Wellbeing After-school clubs in Whitmore, St Cyres, Llantwit, and Stanwell comprehensive schools for pupils in years 7 and 8. During the last academic year 171 pupils have benefitted from low level wellbeing support such as socialising, confidence building and having a sense of belonging within their school. Sessions focus on the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' and pupils can be referred by school staff based on SELFIE data.
- 2.8** The Youth Service facilitates a number of inclusion and wellbeing projects such as 'Gloves in the Gym' (supporting young people with confidence and positive behaviour through physical fitness), 'I Am Me' (Wellbeing group for LGBTQ young

people and allies) a 'Youthy 18 plus' (specialist older youth club) and 'Hive Guys' (a gardening project in partnership with other community groups) to support young people to develop life skills and improve their wellbeing.

- 2.9** The Universal Service has developed a new Participation Policy outlining the Youth Service's commitment to a rights-based practice in its youth work delivery. The Service provides a range of opportunities for young people to have their voices heard. These include the Vale Youth Council, Penarth Youth Action, the Vale Rights Ambassadors, Her Voice Wales project and the School Council Network. Members have attended 72 meetings and have accrued a total of 1790 volunteering hours in 2022/23 which have been recognised through in-house certificates and vouchers.
- 2.10** The Vale Youth Council launched in September 2022 with the purpose of enabling young people from across the LA to have their voices heard on Council matters. The focus for the Youth Council during its first year has been recruitment and establishing its Terms of Reference. A chair and vice chair were elected in April 2023 and now attend the Learning and Culture Scrutiny meetings.
- 2.11** The Her Voice Wales is a Girls' Rights group project aims to support young people to build the skills and confidence to become a champion of equality in their own communities and empower them to change perceptions and attitudes towards girls, so that girls can live free from gender inequality. The group has been looking at safety in the local community and have launched a campaign #WEDONTFEELSAFE. They were successful being awarded a Young Change Makers Grant by Plan UK which helped facilitate their campaign work. They have shared the results of their consultation with many stakeholder groups and key decision makers and their work has been instrumental in the launch of the Safe Places Scheme in the Vale of Glamorgan. A member of Her Voice Wales had an opportunity to be part of a 'Girls Take Over Day' to mark International Day of the Girl in October 2022. This young person took over the role of First Minister of Wales for the day.
- 2.12** The Vale Rights Ambassadors Project provides young people in the Vale of Glamorgan with an opportunity to raise awareness of the UNCRC and the National Participation Standards. In 2022/23, 6 new Rights Ambassadors completed the Agored Cymru accreditation course in children's rights. The members deliver rights workshops to children, young people and adults across the LA. The project also supports primary and secondary schools with the Super and Student Ambassadors schemes from the Children's Commissioner for Wales. During 2022/23, 30 primary schools and 6 secondary schools were signed up to these schemes.
- 2.13** The Youth Service also facilitates a secondary School Council Network. It aims to provide school council members from all secondary schools in the Vale with a platform to share information, learn more about the education directorate in the local authority as well as engage in any consultation work. These meetings are hosted once a term and schools have a choice to attend in person or join online. The meetings are attended by the Cabinet Member for Education as well as senior leaders in the council. Key pieces of work include consultation on the Draft

Transgender Inclusion Toolkit and Additional Support for Young People discussions. Support is also given to school councils e.g., signposting to resources and consultation opportunities and training for teachers and governors.

- 2.14** The Youth Service has a longstanding partnership arrangement with Urdd Gobaith Cymru to provide Welsh language youth work in the Vale, and they feed into our local authority Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP). They provide a youth worker based at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg and provide a Welsh language youth club and various holiday activities. They also facilitate Welsh language lunchtime clubs in 3 of the Vale's English medium schools to enhance young people's Welsh language skills.
- 2.15** The Youth Service has partnered up with the YMCA Healthy Relationship Service, a specialist and confidential Sexual Health and Relationship Service, to provide targeted support to small groups of young people aged 11-18 in the Vale of Glamorgan in a range of different youth settings and schools. They also coordinate and develop the C-Card Scheme on behalf of the Youth Service in the Vale of Glamorgan. The C-Card scheme is a confidential scheme offering free sexual health items and information to support all young people aged 13-25 years. They have delivered C-Card Assessors training to 36 professionals.
- 2.16** The Homelessness Prevention team have supported 68 young people through 2022/2023, of which 11 continued from the previous year who required support to complete their Year 11 education and integrate into post-16 provisions. The team have secured accommodation with the local housing team and housing associations, supported lodgings and alternative housing arrangements for 5 young people and 4 families. Two young people have also returned home. All of the aforementioned individuals remain in their accommodation successfully with support. A pilot of school schemes and support was very successful and has continued well into this year, supporting 26 young people within the school environment.
- 2.17** Llamau was not commissioned to carry out an additional role in 2022/2023, instead the service opted to increase the capacity of the prevention team due to demand in schools. This has enabled us to employ another staff member, increasing capacity and reach. The approach has proven to be very successful, and further group work provision has been implemented in one of the secondary schools.
- 2.18** The Wellbeing Service is funded by Families First and a team of mentors provides wellbeing support to young people aged 10-16 referred through the Families First Advice Line who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The main aims are to improve social and emotional wellbeing, increase confidence and resilience, build capacity to consider risk and make reasoned decisions, develop positive attitudes/ behaviour and raise aspirations. The Wellbeing Service received 169 referrals in 2022/23 and delivered 1752 mentoring sessions. Mentoring interventions have been delivered face-to-face, one-to-one and to groups during the school term, in the community through outdoor sessions, wellbeing walks and supporting young people to attend youth clubs and community groups. '5 Ways to Wellbeing' workshops were delivered to

groups of young people in all secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan, 483 young people benefitted from these workshops. The team has continued to deliver Mental Health First Aid training, 29 school staff and professionals were trained in 2022/23.

- 2.19** The service is piloting a targeted disability youth provision 'Hub Club' in partnership with Vale People First utilising the YMCA provision, 30 learners with a range of protected characteristics are currently undergoing a range of informal learning opportunities utilizing 'healthy living' in order to gain nationally recognised qualifications; over time with enhanced support, confidence building and skill building of staff we aim to transition learners into open access provisions, enabling learners to access many more opportunities available to them.
- 2.20** The service continues to lead on the Seren network (WG initiative dedicated to supporting Wales's most able state educated learners into leading Universities), There were 455 Seren learners from years 12 and 13 at the beginning of 2022-2023 academic year and seven events were held and consisted of support towards study. The aim was to support the YP with upcoming admissions tests in the autumn. Workshops such as Talk About Communication, and test preparation sessions were held, after the exam period. An Oxford University experience day was held along with a Vet's Day so learners could become informed about applying to a Veterinary school or Oxford University in year 13.
- 2.21** The Strive project Pre16 aspect works within all Vale secondary schools with learners identified as 'at risk' of becoming NEET post16 utilising the early identification tool via school and SIMS data. Through mentoring and coaching the learners work towards bespoke support and informal learning from BTEC SWEET qualifications, the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award, or delivery of ACU or Highfields awards. This provision is now funded under Shared Prosperity Funding.
- 2.22** The Strive project Post16 works with Careers Wales to identify those learners who are classed as NEET. The impact of this team can be seen within the Youth Engagement and Progression update report which is also on this agenda.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Reducing the percentage of young people from becoming NEET is set out in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy. It helps support the national and local indicator of percentage of young people in education, employment, or training, under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.
- 3.2** Collaboration takes place with internal and external partners including agencies, education and training providers, Careers Wales, Urdd, Third Sector Partners, local businesses, Charities and Welsh Government, to help meet the wellbeing objective.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** Climate change and nature implications affect young people accessing employment or education. The Corporate Plan 2020-2025 Objectives including 'to support learning, employment, and sustainable economic growth', is relevant to the work in relation to climate change and economical use of natural resources.
- 4.2** Most meetings with partners, stakeholders and internal staff are held over Microsoft Teams to help minimise transport between meeting locations and impact on emissions.
- 4.3** By using digital management of information systems within the LA, we can move towards a paperless service. To support this work, the Youth Service are undertaking impact assessments to use digital methods for consent to reduce the carbon footprint further.
- 4.4** With the implementation of the wider electric pool car strategies from the Council, it is expected that these will be used, once available, along with carpooling with other staff when available to attend face-to-face meetings.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** Youth Service is funded via core budget of £892,503.
- 5.2** Full funding 2023/24 (not including central recharges-as now coded centrally) totals £1,914.624. This is split between 53% grant funding and 47% core funding; this represents an increase of 4% of grant funding on last year.
- 5.3** The additional grant funding allocation from Welsh Government is not guaranteed beyond the end of 2025 which makes forward planning difficult. This is being utilised to enhance existing provision rather than creating projects which are not sustainable.
- 5.4** Two members of staff who are undertaking participation work in line with the Council's Public Engagement Strategy have been funded by Youth Service reserves up until 2025 which is not sustainable in the longer term. There is no additional funding at present to continue this participation work in the longer term. The impact is that this will significantly restrict the service's ability to engage with YP.

Employment

- 5.5** Grant funding makes up 53% of the youth service staffing costs which increases risk as grants are not sustainable, there is uncertainty with regards the Youth Support Grant and Shared prosperity funding post March 2025.

- 5.6** Recruitment into the service has been a challenge locally and is consistent with the national situation. Work with Human Resources and the Legal team is ongoing to consider options to recruit unqualified staff who may have other equivalent qualifications and relevant experience of working with young people in other settings and provide them with the opportunity to become a qualified youth support worker. This will re-engage staff with a coherent route to become registered with the Education Workforce Council as Youth Workers.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.7** The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Service's use of the CAPITA ONE management information system to ensure monitoring of equality of access to open access and targeted intervention opportunities being delivered. Close working takes place with the equalities team to identify training for staff and volunteers in order to develop their awareness of working with these vulnerable groups.

6. Background Papers

None.