report

Report of Assistant Director (Policy, Performance, and Development)

Meeting the Needs of Disabled Children: A Strategy to Improve Service Delivery in Culture and Community

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform members of the Culture and Community department's strategy and framework for improving services for disabled children and young people.

Information and Advice

2. The department's strategy is the outcome of a six-month project in 2004/5 to review our services for disabled children and young people. This work was influenced by national policy and legislation, including the Children Act 2004, Disability Discrimination Act 2005, and the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report "Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People". It was also informed by local work including the best value review "Promotion of Independence of Young Disabled Adults" and Children's Fund Disabled Children Work stream "End of Project Learning."

Vision

3. A cross service group of officers developed a vision for our services as "to provide, enable and develop opportunities for all disabled people within Culture and Community services through a co-ordinated approach".

4. The group identified issues around delivering this vision relating to

   a. values and goals,

   b. accessible information,

   c. equipment and resources,

   d. employment opportunities within the department,

   e. joining up services,

   f. user consultation and involvement, and

   g. measuring performance.

Research and Findings

5. Desk research and an audit of Culture and Community provision focused on inclusion of children and young adults aged 5-25, with no tight definition of disability.

6. This found that some of the department's services make a big impact on disabled young people's lives and others barely touch them. Our situation mirrored the national issues, including:

    a. limited knowledge of each other's work across services,

    b. unsystematic monitoring,

    c. narrow work experience opportunities for disabled young people, and

    d. need for cross –service learning and accessible and available information about services.

7. On the positive side, the project concluded that Culture and Community gives real opportunity for disabled children and young people to experience independence through freedom of choice.

Improvement Framework and Plan

8. Based on the project's findings, an improvement framework and strategy was devised, based around

    a. three key outcome themes: *information and access; economic wellbeing; leisure and social activities;* and

    b. three enabling themes: *policy; communication and representation; resources.*

9. Aims and objectives were set for each theme, as set out in the attachment. An improvement plan was drafted, which is being updated and linked to Culture and Community's Equality Action Plan.

Links to BVSR-Promoting the Independence of Young Disabled Adults

10. There are strong links with some areas of this Best Value Service Review's Improvement Plan, mainly in relation to working effectively with other agencies and partners, seeking external funding to develop a peer mentoring scheme, developing more accessible work experience and related programmes, and improving access to information.

Initial Progress on Outcomes

11. Good progress is being made on a number of actions in the improvement plan, as illustrated by the following examples.

12. As a step to improving *information and access*, the Young Pioneers Forum, with support of the Young People's Division's Disability Support Team, consulted with a variety of disabled young people about which ways of communicating information on services they would find most effective. They are collating the response and putting it on a CD.

13. In relation to the *economic wellbeing* outcome, work has started to improve disability equality awareness across Culture and Community. This includes a new one- day training course "DDA – Putting it into practice" devised and piloted as part of the learning and development programme for 2005/6. Feedback so far is very positive and will inform training commissioning for next year. The course material has the potential to form the basis of a good practice guide, which can be shared through the intranet to a wider group of staff.

14. Development of peer mentoring would help with all three outcomes by developing the life skills and capacity to succeed of the young people involved. Funding of £6,000 has been secured to pilot a small peer-mentoring project in Foxwood School during September 2005 to March 2006. To complement this, funding sources and potential partners are being explored to pilot a scheme whereby young disabled people will gain accreditation to mentor and act as role models to younger peers, supporting their access to culture, learning and social activities.

Statutory and Policy Implications

This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and Disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Community Services Select Committee note this report.

Steve Morley
Assistant Director (Policy, Performance, and Development)

Legal Services Comments

This matter falls within the general role of select committees set out within the Constitution. (JA 01.11.2005)

Director of Resources' Financial Comments

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Report: Culture and Community – Meeting the Needs of Disabled Children, a
Strategy to Improve Service Delivery

Electoral Division(s) Affected

All

Improvement Framework

Outcomes for Disabled Children and Young People

Theme	**Information and access**	**Economic well being**	**Leisure and social activities**
Aim	**Informed choice on use of Culture and Community services**	**More choices and better access to training and work experience**	**Increased choices and opportunities for leisure and social activities**
Objectives	**1.1** Increase in disabled children and young people accessing services	**2.1** Increased number of disabled employees. Consistent programme of employment and support measure across authority	**2.4, 4.1** Improved staff response to disability issues. Staff feel adequately supported in these issues.
	1.2 Increase in C&C service use by N.C.C. depts and external agencies	**2.2** Improved image of the County Council as a positive employer	**2.5** Flexible employee response to service user needs
	1.2 Culture and Community services included when establishing transition plans for young people and projects delivering services	**2.3** A system of consistent support enabling flexible response to employment and retention need	**4.2** Expansion of services available to disabled children and young people
		2.4 Common disability equalities awareness and information across department	

Enabling Processes

Policy	Communication and representation	Resources

Aim

Overarching departmental policy assuring consistency of service delivery

Effective communication within the department and with other departments and agencies. People enabled to promote the range of Culture and Community Services on partnership groups

Support for a flexible effective response

Objectives

3.1 High profile and systematic approach to and promotion of disability equality within department and council

3.1 Centralised source of expertise to promote disability equality issues and influence strategy

3.1 Underpinning common approach to disability issues.
Staff enabled to respond flexibly and quickly

3.2 High rating in LGA Equality Audit, due to inclusive services.
Services praised for their success

3.4 Increase in numbers of disabled children and young person choosing to access our services
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3.6 Strong departmental lead on disability and equality issues

3.3 Knowledge of where, when and by whom our services are used

3.5 5.1. Increase in use of our services and joined-up working. Integration of services

3.3 Positive action to equalise any disparity.

3.3, 4.3 Source and redeploy resources to where they are most needed