

## Comprehensive Spending Review 2007

### Call for evidence: DfES/HM Treasury Joint Policy Review on Children and Young People

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Corporate Director – Children and young People's Services
Do you represent an organisation?  (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	Somerset County Council
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	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	X
Review of disabled children	X
Strategy for youth services	X
Review of high cost, high harm families	X

## **Annex B1: Terms of reference for the Children and Young People's Review (prevention strand of review)**

### Objective:

**To identify how services for children and young people from 0 to 19 and their families can build on the three principles identified in *Support for Parents, the best start for children*<sup>1</sup> – rights and responsibilities, progressive universalism and prevention - to improve outcomes for children and young people.**

What works in reaching out to the most vulnerable families to ensure they are able to take full advantage of service provision, especially in the early years?

- Health visitors
- Home Start
- Use of volunteers and mentors

What evidence is there of major barriers to developing a preventative system? Are there examples where you have overcome these barriers?

- Lack of funding for preventative work;
- The establishment of a preventative service has a risk that resources will be deployed to support the “worried well” and this can squeeze out the vulnerable, especially if provision is centre-based – more emphasis needed on peripatetic services and overcoming stigma
- Links between adult mental health and children's services – spanning services across the full breadth of the traditional Social Services remit;
- Families may be wary of “professionals” – the development of intermediary roles such as peer support projects, eg “community mothers” rather than midwives – more self help and training for those who have been through it to help others;
- Particular barriers for adolescents – a key area for investments to reduce the numbers of older children coming into care and being excluded;
- Overcoming the barriers - Singing Parents project – used creative art to build confidence and self-esteem, roles that span professions, rapid response for families in crisis, community outreach team, crashpad facilities (24/7)
- Too many assessors and not enough doers.

What evidence is available on how funding can be freed up at the acute end of provision to spend on preventative services?

- First step is to find better value for money options for acute, to free up capacity – packages of care built for individual children who would otherwise be in secure accommodation, or residential special schools, building local provision, investing in existing infrastructure;
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- Look at the incentives – are there more resources available to a family, or the professionals working with them, once a crisis has been reached – develop a culture of using less resources to prevent than would be required to intervene later;
- Reduce inflexibility across funding streams and professionals.

How can we build the capacity of parents, families and communities to shape the design and delivery of services for children and young people?

- Use those who have experienced problems to help others – this builds confidence and better design of services.

## **Annex B2: Terms of reference for the Review of Disabled Children**

### Objective:

**To improve outcomes and life chances of disabled children through the development of effective and accessible services for disabled children and their families.**

- The most-effective provision is to support care in the child's own home;
- Health services are too often delivered in a different place to education and care – there may be something to learn from the arrangements for YOTs, bringing all the people, management and funding together for an area;
- There needs to be clearer agreements with the families about what we can do and what outcomes we expect – and what the family will do. Sometimes our lack of trust of the parents means that we don't exploit direct payments – concern that they will not make best use of the resources
- We could learn from the experience of trading services with schools and other aspects of trading across the County Council – could this allow beneficial and valued services to expand, releasing capacity to help with the most vulnerable?
- Somerset Supporters – a scheme offering a service to families – someone to come into the home and look after the children for a short period to allow parents time to themselves – currently grant funded – could look to a trust and/or traded arrangements to widen access, potentially involving health as well.

## **Annex B3: Terms of reference for the Strategy for Youth Services**

### Objective:

**To review the current provision of youth services and support for young people with a view to identifying longer term policy directions that will bring about improvements in the life chances of young people.**

What are the barriers and enablers of effective Third Sector provision, including statutory commissioning capability?

- Voluntary sector often wants to operate at the high quality, specialist end of the service, which can be hard to accommodate within a universal service and within a cash-limited budget;
- Often very specialized area of interest than may not match county-wide priorities;
- There are genuine difficulties in getting different agencies working well together, but with more creativity and fewer rules it may be easier in the future.
- Grant aiding 3<sup>rd</sup> sector provision in a small and local way, playing to the strengths of the particular organization, matching to need, rather than trying to create an unwieldy partnership has a greater chance of success;
- It may be possible to float off bits of the existing local authority universal provision to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector – in Somerset the model used for Adult Social Care has been successful, giving greater access to funding and more flexibility;
- There is a risk that we are not challenging enough of the contribution the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector makes to improving outcomes.

What can be done to improve the ability of universal provision to identify and provide a service to those with greater needs?

- Integrate strands of provision – Connexions, youth services, etc
- Common assessment, information sharing
- More localized provision.

Which projects and programmes in the last five years have had a proven and sustained impact and brought innovation to delivery of services for young people?

- PROMISE mentoring scheme – sustained engagement, use of high quality volunteers for our most vulnerable young people;
- Peer mentoring projects;
- Somerset Young Carers project
- Somerset Rural Youth Project
- Projects such as midnight basketball and street work.

What encourages young people to try new and different kinds of activities from those they already do?

- Taster sessions are great but there needs to be scope for continuity
- Somerset Active Sports Partnership – taking sports to where the children are

What evidence is there of the benefits that arise from young people's involvement in design and provision of their activities? What evidence is there of how outcomes have improved as a result?

- South Petherton Young Parish Council

What attracts people to the youth work workforce? What is less attractive about membership of this workforce?

- There are routes to gain experience in working with young people that can lead to a career in youth work, for example, PROMISE mentoring, volunteering;
- Less attractive aspects include the hours, limited career opportunities (does this influence the gender balance?) – the Workforce strategy is important as there may be links into careers in extended school services and childcare initiatives

## **Annex B4: Terms of reference for the Review of High Cost, High Harm Families**

### Objective:

#### **To:**

- **improve services' effectiveness in preventing families from getting caught in a cycle of low attainment, high cost and high harm;**
- **For those families already in this category, to reduce the costs and harm they impose on others including their negative impact on children and young people; and**
- **to support families to emerge from being high cost, high harm on a *sustainable* basis.**

#### Evidence:

- Identifying the families is not the hard thing, the difficulties come after that.
- There is a need to be clear about our approach and our message – too often we muddle punishment and support.
- We may need a “fresh start” option - a dramatic approach, maybe a residential family centre linked to eviction from a council house – intervention that is thorough and complete, with sanctions and support, with a new house once able to cope – could this be piloted?
- Family Advice and Liaison Workers have worked well in Somerset, as has family learning delivered by the Adult Learning and Leisure service.