

Children & Young People's Network Meeting

20 October 2015

Minutes

Sarah McClusky - B&NES Strategic Commissioning Officer:

- Information on Draft Commissioning Framework for involving CYP and
- The Draft Participation contract Specification

Re the draft Commissioning Framework – members agreed that the language used in the document was very difficult to engage with, It was thought that all commissioning and consultation documents would be improved by making them easier to read and understand – not only for the purpose of involving young people but for our own benefit too!

It was discussed that young people could and should be involved in consultations about all services (not just those aimed at them directly) as they will all impact on their lives in some way and they are also the next generation of adult service users who will have to live with the results.

Southside young advocates who were present told the meeting that young people value having a say but there is often not much feedback as to how their input was valued or what the outcomes were. Sometimes young people have asked for one thing at a consultation and something different has been the outcome – with no explanation as to reasons this choice was made. It makes some young people wonder what value engaging in the process is.

It was suggested that young people are told the percentage value their input will have in the overall consultation.

Observations were made that sometimes the richest insights from young people come from those who do not come forward so easily. Longer deadlines are needed in consultation to allow these young people to participate fully – as well as more flexible approaches to consultation.

Commissions must also respect the time-frame involved.

Cllr Michael Evans - Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Cllr Evans is an ex teacher who worked in Singapore. He is just finding his way and learning about children's services in B&NES. He offered to be a spokes-person for the sectors concerns to Ashley Ayres. Cllr Evans is interested in meeting other VCS

organisations in the area and to know what VCS services are available in B&NES. You can reach him at: Michael_Evans@bathnes.gov.uk .

We discussed how we can work together with other agencies to fill the gaps in service provision for children & young people locally. It was agreed that we should share more about our services with schools. Those in the school forums are generally well informed but not the generality.

We discussed other ways (apart from funding) the Local Authority can support the VCS.

- An endorsement of our services from B&NES is incredibly valuable in terms of fundraising
- Auditing our safeguarding processes
- Training – especially accredited training. We discussed how we would like access to more free training and how little this would actually cost B&NES to reserve a few places in each training course for VCS participants.
- Relationships between the Commissioners and organisations need to recognise the fact that B&NES generally only part fund the services we provide. They act as if they are the only body to whom we are accountable when it may be that the bulk of the funding comes from outside the LA.
- The LA need to recognise and celebrate the amount of funding VCS organisations bring into B&NES from external grant funders.
- Recognition – we would like the LA to support us to celebrate what the sector brings to B&NES – not the volunteer awards but recognition of the value and contribution of the organisations. Stories of people and communities that have thrived. An event where organisations could come together to celebrate. It was discussed that St John's and Quartet might contribute resources to this idea.

Reps Reports

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Working Group. The CSE Policy in B&NES was developed a year ago after awareness that local young people were being exploited.

A Virtual Team was set up involving practitioners from different services who could work 1 to 1 with young people at risk. Mentoring Plus have 1 team member in the Virtual Team (The Willow Team). The team includes members from Youth Connect, Project 28, Kevin Clark from the Integrated Working Team and they are hoping to broaden the team. Jamie reports that it is useful in terms of professional development and it is a benefit to have someone 'Willow trained' in the organisation - but it does come with a caseload and there are no resources to fund the additional

time involved. Referral forms to the social care duty team are different to the usual ones.

The Virtual team has not been inundated – numbers have levelled out.

More general CSE Training is available to the sector via Rachel Ringham (details are in every e-bulletin in the training section).

Members pointed out that there were worrying inadequacies in the CSE process.

CSE is abuse and there needs to be a social worker involved as early as possible or the risk may not be reduced. This is not addressed in the current strategy:

When a concern is raised by an organisation a form is filled in about the risk to that young person. Instead of being treated as risk of abuse and a social worker allocated, the case is sent to a panel for assessment. It will then depend on the skills of that panel to assess the situation and the resources available as to how the case is processed.

If the case does not meet thresholds care for their safety may still rest with the VCS organisation making the referral if no-one else is working with that young person – e.g. home-educated, no social worker or allocated worker from elsewhere.

Disabled and additional needs children/young people are at increased risk of CSE – members were concerned that there was insufficient expertise available to support these cases.

- ACTION - Roz Lambert – our LSCB Rep will relay these concerns to the LSCB

Early Help Strategy. This strategy is currently in consultation until 30 November - please read Network News section of the November e-bulletin for details of how to respond.

The draft strategy was discussed by the members present.

The Document – members agreed it was a lot easier to read than the policy document and this was a step in the right direction.

Define: Fulfilling Family Life – how is this defined and what about fulfilment outside the family or those young people who have no family life.

Measurement of outcomes – members discussed outcome stars in this respect and thought there should be some standardised tool used across all services working with a child or young person which, alongside a narrative, would be

beneficial and would enable us to collate outcomes across services. A tool used by the Tavistock Centre was mentioned as an alternative possibility.

Universal Services – these are not referenced as part of Early Help but are often the first point of contact by a child, young person or family with any service. The funds available for Universal services have been reduced and diverted to targeted provision. This can only be to the detriment of noticing need for early help.

Partnerships – it was stated that this is a good time to create partnerships within the sector in B&NES to contribute to Early Help.

Reps on the Early Help Board – Reps report it has been beneficial to have more than one VCS rep present in many ways.