

SCRUTINY OF THE MEDWAY YOUTH SERVICE

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FOREWORD

The review group accepted the challenge of undertaking a detailed examination of the provision of services for young people in Medway.

During the past few years investment in the youth service has not been as one might have expected; but the enthusiasm for the service amongst officers, members and users is overwhelmingly positive.

Members sought to exercise the minds of those that were giving evidence and the information that they provided forms the basis for the conclusions that we have reached in this report.

Young people in Medway should expect an excellent service that is focused on their needs, which we acknowledge are constantly changing. This is the challenge for the future, young people only have one chance to succeed and we must not fail them.

It is in partnership that effective services can be developed and delivered to young people. Members have a duty to support the service and ensure that it can go from strength to strength. In addition, the service should ensure that it promotes its achievements via the local media.

Councillor Ron Hewett
Chairman
Education & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

1. The Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a review group to undertake an inquiry into the Medway Youth Service on 26 November 2003. They agreed that the membership of the group would comprise: -

Councillor Matthew Fearn – Conservative
Councillor Richard Guichard – Liberal Democrat
Councillor Ron Hewett (Chairman) - Conservative
Councillor Mark Last - Labour
Rebecca Jinks – Medway Youth Parliament
2. In addition, Councillors Paul Foster and Adam Price have attended individual evidence sessions as substitutes for their colleagues.
3. The terms of reference for the review were as follows: -
 - Examine the range of services to young people being provided by Medway Council and partners to assess provision at a local level and by doing so, assist in the self-evaluation preparation for any forthcoming Ofsted inspection(s) of the service
 - Review the Council’s performance against the 22 national youth standards contained in the national framework – “Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services”, examining whether we are developing a ‘Youth Service fit for the 21st century’.
4. The Transforming Youth Work framework was issued by the Department for Education and Skills in December 2002. This set out a blueprint for local authorities on how youth services should be developed and for the first time ever, it set out a series of key standards which the service would be judged on by Ofsted.
5. It was clear to members from the outset that Medway Youth Service is under-resourced and falls some way short of the key target in the framework which expects that a local authority will spend £100 per annum for each 13– 19 year living in the local area. Therefore as well as viewing the targets as a matter for scrutiny, the group was keen to focus on the wider issue of the general performance and direction of the service, so it could make recommendations on how to use resources in the most effective ways.
6. Senior officers with responsibility for the Youth Service were questioned a number of times over the four and a half months that the review took place. In addition a focus group of full and part time youth service officers was held, as well as evidence being taken from a number of officers in other council departments, statutory partners and voluntary sector organisations and two

Cabinet portfolio holders including the member responsible for the service. Where it was not possible to meet with a number of individuals, written evidence was provided. A full timetable of witnesses and evidence received is outlined overleaf.

7. As a time limited inquiry, it was unfortunately not possible to speak to everyone who would have had useful information to provide members. In particular, the group would have liked to have had the opportunity to investigate the way youth services operate in other local authorities. This report therefore contains little in the way of comparative information with other similar sized local authorities.
8. Members intend to scrutinise the performance of Medway Youth Service on a regular basis and further work, including examination of comparative services, will take place at a later stage.
9. The full list of witnesses, evidence sessions and written submissions received is outlined overleaf : -

Date of session	Witnesses
17 December 2003	Scoping meeting attended by: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose Collinson – Director of Education and Leisure • Tele Amuludun – Youth Strategy Manager
19 January 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tele Amuludun – Youth Strategy Manager • Mairi Jones – Assistant Director, Leisure
3 February 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Banks – Part Time Sailing Instructor • Angela Benjamin – Part Time Detached Volunteer • Ian Bodsworth – Part Time Worker – Parkwood and Millenium Volunteers • Jenni Davis – Part Time - Duke of Edinburgh's and Participation Worker • Jacqui Hackwell – Full Time – Duke of Edinburgh's Award • Kevin Kitchener – Full Time – Strood Youth Centre • Trevor Peen – Full Time – Medway Outdoor Education Centre • Karen Self – Full Time – Parkwood Youth Centre • Roy Smith – Full Time Detached Worker • Tina Stevens – Part Time – Strood Youth Centre
18 March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geoff Waters – Operations Manager – Youth Service • Tele Amuludun – Youth Strategy Manager • Mairi Jones – Assistant Director, Leisure • PC Paul Spreadbridge – Youth Crime Reduction Officer
22 March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy Trute – Medway Connexions Manager • Rose Collinson – Director of Education and Leisure • Louise Matthews – Head of Community Safety and Drugs • Amerjit Biringh – Community Safety Street Team Officer • Surjit Biringh - Community Safety Street Team Officer
15 April 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Holbrook – Project Director, Sunlight Centre • Surinder Dhindsa – Chair, Medway Ethnic Minority Forum • Penne Clarkson – VSU Kent Youth • Councillor Les Wicks – Portfolio Holder for Education

29 April 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abigail Curran – Kent Scouts • David Brake – District Commissioner – Strood • Graham Hancock – District Commissioner – Medway • Barry Clout – Kent Council Voluntary Youth Services • Councillor Angela Prodger – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety • Ian Sparling – Youth Offending Team Manager
5 May 2004	Final meeting to conclude the review attended by: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose Collinson – Director of Education and Leisure • Mairi Jones – Assistant Director, Leisure

Visits to Medway Youth Service run facilities: -

Date	Facility and Attendees
26 March 2004	Parkwood Youth Centre – Rainham Councillors Matthew Fearn and Richard Guichard
31 March 2004	Strood Youth Centre Councillor Matthew Fearn and Mark Last
27 April 2004	Visit with detached team to Weeds Wood and Walderslade Councillor Ron Hewett and Rebecca Jinks, Medway Youth Parliament

Written evidence was received from: -

Date	Name and Designation
23 February 2004	Councillor Angela Prodger – Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
1 March 2004	Councillor Ian Burt – Walderslade Ward
8 March 2004	Mark Allinson – Acting Head of Arts
12 March 2004	Claire Moore – Senior Sports Development Officer
14 March 2004	Councillor Mark Jones – River Ward
15 March 2004	Catherine Smith – Rural Strategy Manager
6 April 2004	Donna Mills – Children’s Fund Manager

SECTION ONE

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE 22 YOUTH STANDARDS

Funding of the Medway Youth Service

10. It would be fair to say that there is widespread agreement amongst members and officers who we spoke to that the Medway Youth Service is underfunded. A combination of an historical lack of investment in services inherited from Kent in 1998 and the fact that there were not many facilities based in Medway at this time, left Medway Council with a difficult task to bring the service to a level comparable with that in place at other local authorities.
11. Funding has increased in recent years, from a figure of £762,300 in 2001/02, to £987,540 in 2002/03, to £1,075,000 in 2003/04 and finally to a figure of £1,231,900 in 2004/05 with £75,000 of this allocated to neighbourhood projects. However when judged against the Transforming Youth Work framework that recommends that £100 is spent per 13 – 19 old, with approximately 24,000 young people in Medway, it is anticipated that we would have a budget in the region of £2.4 million for the service.
12. Since April 2003, the Youth Service has had a separate Formula Spending Share (FSS) notification. This indicates the level of resources the government would expect a Youth Service to receive. The budgetary position of the Education and Leisure Directorate in the last two years has held back the investment which is required in the service. An original growth bid of around £650,000 in 2004/05 had to be shelved as a result of a settlement which left the Directorate having to find substantial savings from within its budget that is not delegated to schools.
13. To compound this the threat of capping in the event of Medway opting for a council tax increase of double figures was a reality and a budget that avoided this eventuality had to be set. Also the requirement to passport increases in funding directly to schools has meant there being little in the non-delegated budget left to fund increases for services such as those for youth.
14. Nevertheless, members must address the position where Medway is ranked 133rd out of 134 local authorities in spend per 13 – 19 year old. As a forward thinking local authority embarking upon a series of large regeneration schemes, which alongside with a huge expansion of student numbers locally, it is incredibly important that there is a

commitment to securing additional investment in our youth service. We appreciate that in the context of competing demands for a limited budget, members have hard choices to make. Our hope is that this report outlines the case for substantial investment in the Medway Youth Service over the coming years, so greater opportunities are made available to young people who require access to the service (**Review Finding 1**)

15. External funding has been a critical way of topping up the income of the service over the last few years. In 2003/04 income from external funding totalled £231,000. A number of time limited sources of funding such as monies from the Single Regeneration Budget have now come to an end, which is reflected in the lower amount available in 2004/05 (thought to be in the region of £170,000).
16. There are many sources of external funding available to fund projects for work with 13 – 19 year olds, but the problems appear to lie in the capacity, expertise and time required to identify bids, write them and have exit strategies in place for when funding ends. They cannot be a substitute for revenue funding and are generally useful for supporting specific projects with target groups.
17. Members are pleased that the youth service finance officer has been identified as the lead person for attracting external funding. She sits on the council's Corporate Bidding Group and has access to the Corporate Bidding Unit for advice and assistance. We would make an appeal for the Youth Service to be considered a key area of priority when programmes to attract external funding are established. In view of the extent to which Medway is behind other authorities in terms of funding, this is justified (**Review Finding 2**).

Performance against the 22 Youth Standards

18. The Transforming Youth Work – Resourcing Excellent Youth Services document sets out clearly the expectations that the Department for Education and Skills has for the delivery of a Youth Service. Key indicators provide targets to meet on the quantity, quality, accessibility and inclusiveness of services. In terms of how officers evaluate Medway Youth Service performance against the targets, these are the notable areas where performance is good: -
 - We meet the target for access to appropriate facilities but are heavily reliant on the voluntary sector to provide service in areas where the statutory service is not present
 - With the exception of Woodies all provision meets the target for opening hours
 - Access to on-line youth services

- The target relating to number of contacts is met due to the success of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme (1500 young people participated via the service in 2003/04)
 - Young people's democracy, the Youth Parliament is viewed as an example of very good practice
 - Formal arrangements with the voluntary sector, Connexions, partners and schools
19. Key areas where targets are not being met and improvements are required include: -
- Developing alternative learning schemes with the youth service to taking a lead in developing appropriate partnerships.
 - Information and data for youth services delivered by other departments to be fed back so service user satisfaction can be measured
 - Lack of provision in Chatham
 - Improved analysis of feedback from users and outcomes of achievements from activities
 - Number of qualified staff
 - Spend on training and professional development of staff
20. The service will be judged on its performance at any forthcoming Ofsted inspection.

Best Value Review and implications of play service budget for 2004/05

21. Members are concerned at the length of time it has taken to implement the findings of the Best Value Review of services to young people that was completed in late 2002. Indeed it seems that due to financial constraints it is unlikely that the area based model recommended for the youth service will ever be implemented. Certainly substantial investment would be required to establish this model and as reflected above, budget settlements for Education have made it impossible to take this outcome forward so far.
22. The amalgamation of the youth and play services, agreed by that review is however proceeding and it is expected this will be concluded during this financial year. Of concern to members is the budget decision to effectively establish a zero budget for the play service in 2004/05, making them completely reliant on generating income in order to provide

a service. Members believe that such income targets are very challenging and may not be achieved.

23. We are very concerned about the impact that the income targets for the play service within a newly amalgamated youth and play service will have for the delivery of youth service activities in this financial year **(Review Finding 3)**.

SECTION TWO

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Multi Agency Working

24. The youth service is only one of number of council departments that delivers services to young people. Whilst it has contact with significant numbers of young people, other departments such as Arts, Sports Development, Youth Offending Team and many others are also involved. There is therefore a requirement to ensure that services provided by the local authority are joined up, avoid repetition and do not undermine each others objectives.
25. A plethora of multi-agency partnerships exist in Medway which bring the key local authority players as well important partners such as the police and health bodies together. These multi-agency responses are required to design services which meet the needs of young people, as well as being a forum for developing effective strategies to deal with anti-social behaviour and disaffected young people.
26. We understand from our evidence sessions that in the past the youth service has not taken a particularly pro-active role in such partnerships and is not always present at meetings where their voice needs to be heard. Members believe that the youth service is now in a stronger position to take a more pro-active role in partnerships through its Youth Strategy Manager. This is a key area to be addressed (**Review Finding 4**).

Relationships with colleagues

Youth Offending Team

27. There is a great deal of expertise within the local authority which members feel is not being utilised by the youth service. One particular example is that of the Youth Offending Team (YOT), which works with young people who have committed crime or are at risk of doing so. A number of years ago it appears that there were lots of intentions to establish effective relationships with YOT. However, members uncovered little in the way of evidence which suggested that an effective partnership has been established and feel that this is a missed opportunity.
28. YOT gather a large amount of intelligence about young people that they come into contact with and information such as youth crime trends could be very valuable to the youth service when planning young

people's activities. We recommend that the service makes greater use of expertise in the YOT so it can make a more effective contribution to the crime reduction agenda. There could also be a reciprocal arrangement where particularly the outreach team could work closer with YOT (**Review Finding 5**). This recommendation aligns well with emerging themes in the Children Bill.

Police

29. In the course of our evidence gathering, members spoke to PC Paul Spreadbridge, a Youth Crime Reduction Officer based at Rainham Police Station. One of the major issues concerning him was the recent loss of a Youth Service officer who had previously accompanied the police on drugs education visits to local schools. For the police this had been a significant loss in expertise and a link to the service. Replacing an individual with these skills is not easy but it is extremely important that a relationship with the police is maintained.
30. Two youth crime reduction officers are also due to retire from the service over the coming year, which will result in the loss of dedicated officers with a great deal of experience. Close partnership working between the police and service must be maintained with the replacements for these officers and if additional resources are made available to the Youth Service, reinstating involvement in the drugs education programme should be a priority (**Review Finding 6**).

Community Safety

31. Tensions between the Youth Service outreach team and community safety officers exist and the group have sought to understand the reason for such difficulties and to try and identify a way forward. There are a number of key issues which were raised by those based in the two services: -
 - Outreach workers feel their work can be undermined by Community Safety Street Team officers whose primary concern is to 'move on' young people
 - Problems with young people not differentiating between the services, with outreach workers being perceived as being Community Safety Officers
 - Community Safety Officers feel they have to carry out work which an outreach team is better placed to do
 - Lack of response from the Youth Service to referrals made about young people by Community Safety Officers
32. During the course of the review members were pleased to see efforts made to establish a better relationship between the two services, with Youth Service initiated proposals relating to greater sharing of

information. These will ensure that each service is aware of each others activities in Medway and help to foster a greater mutual understanding of each others roles. This is to be welcomed but we would say that there is much to do to improve the relationship between the teams and avoid the situation where both feel that each others efforts are being undermined (**Review Findings 7 and 8**).

Voluntary Sector Links

33. Members spoke to a number of voluntary sector organisations during the review to get a feel for the contribution that they make to services for young people in Medway. The extent of provision was surprising to members, although the volume of voluntary sector provision is similar to the national picture.
34. One example of statistics provided to us, was the number of contacts that the local scouting movement has. The Medway Council area has 38 Scout Groups with over 2278 young people between the ages of 6-25 attending on a weekly basis. Over 565 adults and helpers support these young people.
35. When you break down the figures even further, it is calculated that around 18% of males aged 6 – 18 are involved in the scouting movement in the Strood area (including the Peninsula). This places into perspective the sheer scale and contribution of organisations such as the scouts in Medway.
36. A common theme arising from our discussions with voluntary sector providers was their feeling that communication needs to be greatly improved and they would welcome better links with the Medway Youth Service. Members believe that arrangements with the Kent Council for Voluntary Youth Services to provide a link with the sector are not sufficient. Organisations such as the scouting movement would welcome the opportunity to share resources and this could prove to very beneficial to the Youth Service in years to come (**Review Finding 9**)
37. Members also had an interesting discussion with Peter Holbrook, Project Director of the Sunlight Centre, Gillingham. As well as outlining the contribution that the centre is making to the regeneration of that part of Medway, he highlighted the extent to which the centre was going into a number of areas in Medway and establishing youth services through monies obtained from organisations such as the Children's Fund (which is due to end in 2006).
38. He provided members with a very persuasive argument that he was able to deliver effective community based solutions in areas such as the White Road estate, Chatham, at a fraction of the cost that the council could deliver. We feel it would certainly be appropriate for the service to engage in dialogue with organisations such as the Sunlight Centre and consider whether greater amounts of funding could be

delegated to the voluntary sector via service level agreements in 2005/06 (**Review Finding 10**).

Children Bill

39. The Children Bill is the first fundamental reorganisation of Children's Services for a number of decades. The Bill will provide opportunities to bring professionals together to deliver services to young people and will involve the establishment of Children's Trusts in most local authorities by 2006 and in all by 2008.
40. More integrated services for young people will present the Youth Service with the chance to work closely with individuals who currently deal with the service's target group but have no formal arrangement to work together at present. Information sharing across services currently located in different departments will make it far easier to develop positive solutions.
41. We feel that due to under-resourcing, the youth service does have a lack of expertise in many key areas and we look forward to the opportunities that the Bill presents for people to work across current boundaries (**Review Finding 11**).

SECTION THREE

THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE SERVICE

42. This final section of the report focuses on those areas which we feel require attention and should shape the future direction of the service. In addition we highlight a number of other issues which have been discussed during the evidence gathering process on which we wish to outline our views.

Outreach Youth Work

43. We have been very impressed with the quality of outreach youth work taking place in areas of Medway such as Weeds Wood, Walderslade, Chatham, The Vineries and the Hoo Peninsula. What is delivered is of a high quality and provides many young people with a link to the service that they wouldn't otherwise have.
44. On a visit with the team to Weeds Wood and Walderslade in late April 2004, group members saw for themselves the effective relationships that the officers had built up with the young people that they had met. Impromptu games of football and discussions with young females about sexual health issues forms a valuable contribution towards engaging with young people who have the potential to cause problems for their local community.
45. We would argue that the quantity of outreach provision in Medway is completely insufficient in relation to the level of need. We have heard from the officers themselves, other agencies and Cabinet portfolio holders that the current position of one team operating in 3 or 4 different areas at any one time is not enough. There is also the problem that once the outreach team has made an impact and established relationships in one area, they are then moved on elsewhere leaving those young people with no link to the service.
46. This situation is in our minds unacceptable and an expansion of the service is required to at least the previous level where there used to be three different outreach teams operating. We believe that this is not a sensible area to be making budget savings in, when the community safety team, YOT and police often have to intervene when it is too late. The service should have early intervention at the forefront of its objectives and a well – resourced outreach team should be at the heart of this (**Review Finding 12**).
47. The previous section explored difficulties that can arise with the objectives of the community safety and we would expect that additional resources for outreach work will help the Community Safety Team to focus their efforts on dealing with persistent anti-social behaviour.

Certainly the situation where referrals to the youth service are not acted on helps no-one **(Review Finding 13)**.

Inclusion

48. A key target highlighted in the previous Youth Service Plan for 2003/04 was a need to improve participation rates of ethnic minorities in youth services. Our discussions with Youth Service staff, as well as Surinder Dhindsa – Chair of the Ethnic Minority Forum have led us believe that there is still a great deal of progress to be made in ensuring that the service is truly inclusive.
49. Surinder Dhindsa in particular raised concerns with us about the lack of participation of ethnic minority groups in mainstream services and the danger that existed in encouraging a separateness that leads to a divided community. This is a position we do not want to reach in Medway and it is incumbent on us to develop a Youth Service whose range of activities reflects the diverse range of needs of all who live here **(Review Finding 14)**.
50. A survey of young people from ethnic minorities is also currently being undertaken by the Ethnic Minority Forum with funding from the Youth Service. It is imperative that the results of this feed into the future development of services and does not just sit on the shelf **(Review Finding 15)**.

Recruitment, Retention and Training

51. As outlined in section one, the Youth Service faces a huge difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff to deliver sessions to young people. We have 7 nationally qualified staff, when the youth standard would expect us to have around 60.
52. This is certainly not just a Medway problem, nationally there is a lack of qualified youth workers, but here the problem does seem to be more acute than elsewhere. The service needs to focus on the reasons for difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff and identify ways of attracting people. In our discussions with Youth Service staff, they certainly felt that there was a perception problem in that Youth Work was not viewed as a career in the same way that other forms of employment are.
53. Medway has an abundance of part time workers in the service and we like the idea of encouraging part timers to be upgraded to a full time post, by performing two part time roles. This is a matter that the management of the service should consider, in addition to prioritising training for young people to become session leaders **(Review Finding 16)**.

Connexions

54. As part of a general review of the youth service it was felt appropriate to scrutinise the progress that Connexions was making. Connexions is slightly different in that it is not managed by the local authority, but by a local board on which Medway Council is represented. Wendy Trute, the Connexions Manager for Medway attended an evidence session with members and there were a number of matters arising from the meeting that we wish to highlight.
55. We are disappointed that an appropriate central point for a Connexions access point in Chatham is still to be identified. Despite much effort being exerted to identify a suitable building, Medway still does not have the drop-in centre that is required for a service that has grown considerably over the last few years. Medway Council should work to assist Connexions in any way it can (**Review Finding 17**).
56. Connexions is now a significant service in Medway. There are now over 30 Personal Advisors based in a variety of settings from schools to council departments. There are specialist advisors for groups such as those at risk of exclusion and looked after children as well as a universal service which can be accessed by all 13– 19 year olds. Members identify however a lack of understanding of the differences between the universal and specialist service amongst schools, parents and users. Medway Council can assist in generating publicity of the excellent work being undertaken by Connexions PA's and this is something that the youth service could play a role in partnership with the local board too (**Review Finding 18**).
57. Members also identify that more robust referral systems to other agencies must be developed. Currently it is felt that PA's are not equipped with all the information they require to make appropriate referrals and this a matter that the Connexions local board should address. Indeed other agencies also need to be made fully aware of the work being conducted by Connexions PA's in Medway (**Review Finding 19**).

Collection and use of data

58. One of the clear issues identified in the analysis of performance against the 22 national youth standards was poor collection of data and feedback from service users. It is not possible currently to assess the satisfaction levels that users have in the services that we provide. Also, it was not possible for the group to see figures for the number of contacts over the year due to these figures not being collated electronically on one database. We believe that the new youth standards mean that these figures will be expected by an inspection team from Ofsted.

59. There is also the matter of usage of data and information that is obtained. Collecting information is only worthwhile if it is acted upon. There is a perception amongst some within the service that reports filed on their work (ie an outreach visit) are not used and are simply filed away. We must ensure that collection, monitoring and use of data and information is improved **(Review Finding 20)**.

Consultation regarding major regeneration projects

60. This review has taken place against the backdrop of an exciting series of regeneration projects in Medway that are set to change the face of the towns. Chatham Vision, Waterfront proposals in various locations and the growth of higher education provision are set to make the local area more vibrant and also lead to a significant growth in the population.
61. As a group of members undertaking scrutiny of youth services we would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of ensuring that facilities for young people are secured in the series of major developments taking place over the coming years. The Building Schools for the Future project and opportunities for extended schools provision provide excellent chances to develop youth service provision in areas of Medway that currently lack local authority provision **(Review Finding 21)**.
62. Capital projects are often funded by new developments via Section 106 agreements. These are sums of money secured from a developer for community facilities such as schools and community centres in return for the granting of planning permission. We would like to request that the Development and Environment Directorate attaches importance to opportunities that exist to secure additional youth and play facilities as part of a Section 106 agreement for major new developments **(Review Finding 22)**.
63. The difficulty does remain however, that revenue funding must be secured to run new facilities that are capital funded in this way. It is impossible therefore to ignore the fact that additional revenue funding would need to be identified to develop new provision.
64. As part of the Chatham Vision consultation, a response has been made by members. They have emphasised that if Chatham is to become a city centre for Medway, it is imperative that a youth service facility is included in the plans. It is a real concern to us that there is no youth centre in Chatham at present, a situation that redevelopment of Chatham town centre must rectify **(Review Finding 23)**.

Medway Youth Parliament

65. We were pleased to have Rebecca Jinks of the Medway Youth Parliament on the review group providing an effective voice for young people in Medway. The Youth Parliament is an impressive organisation, as recognised in the most recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Education Authority and is an example to other local authorities of how to develop young people's democracy at a local level.
66. As one matter of caution however, there is a tendency at times for the council to feel that it only needs to consult the youth parliament when considering the needs of young people. Whilst the parliament has representatives from all secondary schools and youth organisations in Medway, they are not completely representative of all young people. We feel that the parliament could be used more as a means to make contact with harder to reach young people. In addition, our view is that consultation needs to take place on a much wider basis with young people (**Review Finding 24**).

Becoming a more effective service

67. In concluding the report there a number of other matters that we wish to highlight having heard evidence from a wide range of sources.
68. We feel that the service needs to respond better to identified needs and deliver solutions more quickly. Young people's needs are always changing and different year groups have contrasting views on what they would like provided. It is therefore important that the service can deliver what is required before that cohort have moved on. We did get the impression at times in evidence gathering that there is no shortage of excellent ideas in the service but the time taken to deliver solutions has been too slow (**Review Finding 25**).
69. Too often newspapers are full of negative stories about young people, so it is important that as a council we counter this imbalance with information and positive stories about young people's achievements. We really think we need to bang the drum for young people and the work of the youth service and be more pro-active in utilising the expertise of the council's communications team (**Review Finding 26**).
70. Finally we are of the view that not enough work has been undertaken to explore the range of good practice employed by other youth service's across the country. Unfortunately as part of this review we have not had the opportunity to explore in detail the range of models at other local authorities and we did not want to delay publication of this report for the purpose of doing so. We would recommend that officers establish a relationship with a similar sized authority (Brighton and Calderdale have been identified as possibilities) to explore ways in

which services for young people in Medway can be developed (**Review Finding 27**).

CONCLUSION

71. This report has sought to identify those areas where improvements are required in order for the Youth Service to have a favourable outcome from an inspection in the near future. It has not focused on the outstanding examples of good practice delivered in Medway, such as activities at the Medway Outdoor Education Centre, the 1500 young people who have benefited from Youth Service Duke of Edinburgh award scheme in 2003/04 and good sessions delivered in brick based provision.
72. A real concern that members have is that the service is very reliant on the skills and expertise of a relatively small number of highly motivated individuals. If a number of these moved on elsewhere, then the ability of the service to function effectively would be compromised. A key issue for us is the lack of nationally qualified staff which places huge pressure on part time and unqualified youth workers. This is not a sustainable position for the service to be in and considerable efforts must be made to recruit and retain more well qualified full time members of staff.
73. The recruitment of an experienced Operations Manager who commenced working for Medway in October 2003 has made a huge difference to the service. Several witnesses spoke of his hard work and enthusiasm for the job. We believe that along with the Head of Service, they can deliver the improvements that are identified in this report.
(Review Finding 28)
74. It is imperative that effective links with partners both within Medway Council and externally are developed. Members believe that the service should be a lead player in multi-agency settings and has a key role to play in developing Council wide policy on services for young people. In the past the service has not performed this role adequately.
75. We believe that a greater degree of political commitment to services for young people is required. This report should not be interpreted as a criticism of any individual member. Instead we hope it's a great deal for food for thought for every member of the council. Investment in the Youth Service is likely to reap the benefits of reduced levels of anti – social behaviour, youth crime and long-term costs for society in the future

REVIEW FINDINGS

1. Over the next few years additional investment in the youth service should be accelerated, so that spending is raised to a level more in line with the recommended figure of £2.4 million in the DfES Transforming Youth Work document.
2. We recommend that the service focuses on maximising income that can be generated through external funding and suggest that the Corporate Bidding Unit prioritises bidding for youth related activities as a means of increasing income for the service.
3. Members are very concerned about the impact that the income targets for the Play Service within a newly amalgamated youth and play service will have for the delivery of youth service activities in this financial year.
4. The Youth Service should take a more pro-active role on multi-agency partnerships to lead on strategies for engaging disaffected young people.
5. We recommend that the service makes greater use of expertise in the Youth Offending Team so it can make a more effective contribution to the crime reduction agenda.
6. The close partnership working between Medway Police and the Youth Service needs to be maintained, particularly in the light of the forthcoming retirement of youth crime reduction officers.
7. We welcome the establishment of a greater dialogue between the youth service and the community safety team. A closer working relationship must be established so occasions when each others work is undermined can be reduced.
8. The very different roles of the Community Safety Team and Youth Service outreach team should be more clearly defined and we would recommend the development of protocols to encourage mutual understanding of their respective roles.
9. The Youth Service should reassess its arrangements for communication with the voluntary sector, as the group feels there is a need to develop closer relationships with external organisations that deliver youth services in Medway.
10. Consideration should be given to the establishment of more Service Level Agreements with voluntary sector organisations who have a track record in delivering cost effective services to local communities.

11. The group recognises the opportunities that will be presented by the Children Bill that will provide a chance to allow workers with qualities and qualifications useful to the youth service to work across boundaries.
12. Outreach youth work is currently massively under-resourced and very few young people who need contact with such teams can access the service. We strongly urge the Cabinet to consider an expansion of this service in 2005/06.
13. Lack of response and action in relation to referrals from the Community Safety Team has been a barrier to finding solutions for young people. We would hope that extra resources for outreach work would enable a more responsive service to be provided.
14. Youth services should be inclusive and be accessible to all members of the community. It is essential for the principles of equality and inclusion to be central in all service provision.
15. There needs to be a greater understanding of the different communities in Medway and the results of the Ethnic Minority survey should inform the future development of services.
16. Lack of nationally qualified staff is a key concern and priority should be given to recruiting and retaining new staff, as well as training more young people as leaders to deliver youth sessions.
17. A central Connexions access point in Medway is critical to the effective delivery of the service and must be a matter of urgent priority.
18. Improving understanding of the roles of the service and knowledge of the range of Connexions personal advisors is a matter which the Youth Service should instigate through liaison with the Connexions local management committee.
19. We would recommend that Connexions develops robust referral systems.
20. Data collection, monitoring and usage must be improved so the service has a clearer idea of number of service users and satisfaction levels.
21. Facilities and opportunities for young people should be considered by all aspects of the council's decision making process when undertaking regeneration projects and extended schools provision.
22. The Development and Environment Directorate are asked to prioritise the inclusion of play and youth facilities in Section 106 agreements when negotiating the terms for large developments.
23. We recommend that the Chatham Vision proposals include provision for a Youth Service facility.

24. The group applauds the excellent work of the Medway Youth Parliament and its achievements in being an effective voice for young people. We would however recommend to the Council, that when consulting young people it is not sufficient to only seek the views of the parliament.
25. The service needs to be more responsive to identified needs and deliver solutions in a more timely fashion.
26. The service should be more pro-active in publicising its work and encouraging local media to accentuate the positive reporting of young people in Medway.
27. Greater use should be made of experiences at youth services elsewhere in the country, to learn from good practice and investigate whether such approaches could be employed in Medway.
28. Members welcome the positive impact that the relatively recent appointment of an Operations Manager for the service has had.