

ASSEMBLY

22 February 2012

Title: Annual Report of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum	
Report of: Divisional Director, Targeted Support	
Open	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Divisional Director: Christine Pryor	
Accountable Director: Helen Jenner	
Summary This report provides a summary of the work of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum (BAD Youth Forum) during 2011.	
Recommendation The Assembly is recommended to continue to provide member support for the Forum and its associated campaigns, particularly in relation to anti-bullying and sexual and reproductive health.	
Reasons The work of the BAD Youth Forum forms a fundamental part of the Council's Engagement Strategy. It seeks to influence policy and service delivery by ensuring that the views of young people are heard and acted upon. By involving young people in shaping Council services we are helping to make sure that services are appropriate and meet their needs: this has an impact on the effectiveness of services, thus providing better value for money. The work of the Forum also helps to develop the communication, social and leadership skills of the young people involved: through their activities the young people learn how to participate in a democracy. The Forum is therefore helping to grow future political leaders. Specifically, the Forum supports the Council's Policy House in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better Together – a borough with low levels of anti-social behaviour, and where residents support authorities in getting problems solved;• Better Together – a borough where people feel involved, and feel included, in the decisions that affect them;• Better Together – a borough with a range of positive activities for young people;• Better Together – a borough that safeguards, children, young people and adults;• Better Health and Wellbeing – a borough which meets the needs of disabled children, young people and adults.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The BAD Youth Forum is now in its tenth year. Each year, sixty young people aged 13-19, are elected from all secondary schools and a selection of youth groups in the Borough.
- 1.2 In 2011, the Youth Forum selected the three issues that it considered impacted the most on the lives of young people living in the Borough. The selection process took into account the views expressed by all young people who voted on the Forum's Election Day by collecting information from a short questionnaire on the back of the ballot papers.
- 1.3 Sub groups were consequently set up to work on crime, leisure and education. Another sub group was established to enable the Council and external partner organisations to consult with the Forum. The young people worked on a range of projects within these four sub-groups.
- 1.4 The Barking and Dagenham UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) representatives were also elected from the BAD Youth Forum. These representatives, known as Member of Youth Parliament and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament, attended monthly regional meetings. They recently attended an annual UKYP debate in the House of Commons.

2. Proposals and Issues

Outline of the Work of the Sub-groups

2.1 Crime

This group worked on an anti-bullying project, designed to help young people identify and deal with bullying. It provided information and a range of techniques on how to cope with bullying: it encouraged young people to seek support if they were being bullied. It also provided information about personal safety

In order to fund the project, the chair of the sub-group applied for and secured O2 'Think Big' funding of £400. This enabled the Youth Forum members to be trained by Kidscape, an anti-bullying charity, so that they could deliver training to young people themselves. The resulting workshop was delivered to five schools and the Pupil Referral Unit, reaching approximately one hundred and fifty young people.

The group also reviewed all secondary school anti-bullying policies: it made recommendations as to how the policies could be more effective and pupil friendly. These recommendations will form part of the Director's next report to school governors.

2.2 Leisure

This group focussed on reviewing local youth centres: the aim was to raise the profile of youth centres in the Borough and to publicise the activities/facilities on offer to young people. The young people developed criteria and a comprehensive set of questions to ask both youth workers and young people attending the centres, thus ensuring a true reflection of the youth club. The young people will publish this

information on the Council website and the Youth4Us/ Streetbase micro-sites, as well as via a press release.

2.3 Education

This group focused on sexual and reproductive health. They developed a sexual health workshop which was delivered to five youth groups throughout the Borough. Each group gave very positive feedback. The workshop included information about relationships, sexually transmitted infections and contraception. It gave young people the opportunity to:

- participate in a condom demonstration, with and without 'beer goggles': this is a resource which helps young people understand the impact of being drunk;
- try on a 'pregnancy belly': this is a resource which helps young people gain an understanding of how it physically feels to be pregnant;
- participate in an interactive quiz, to increase their awareness of sexual and reproductive health.

2.4 Consultation

A number of Council officers and organisations consulted this group on a range of topics including:

- local children's workforce development;
- volunteering (Ofsted);
- tenant participation (Housing);
- Safeguarding Children's Board website;
- The Skills Centre.

As a result of consultation with the Forum on the use of colours for floors and walls, the Skills Centre Commissioning Board has agreed to colour theme each floor of the centre in order to give each floor a distinct identify: this is to help young people find their way around the building's six floors. Young people's comments have also shaped the layout and design of the Safeguarding Children's Board website.

2.6 UK Youth Parliament

As part of their role the UKYP representatives completed a scrutiny report focusing on education, access to higher education, unemployment and careers and futures. This report has been included as **Appendix A**.

3 Options Appraisal

N/A

4. Consultation

4.1 Consultation took place with young people during the election period on the issues which should be the focus for the work of the Forum. Each young person also consulted with their peers at the start of their BAD Youth Forum term. The BAD Youth Forum was also consulted with on various occasions.

5. Financial Implications

The BAD Youth Forum receives funding of £71,200 of which £61,200 supports three youth workers and £10,000 supports activities.

Implications completed by: Dawn Calvert, Group Manager: Adults and Children's Finance.

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5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Shahnaz Patel, Senior Solicitor, Safeguarding.

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6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. Other Implications

7.1 Risk Management

No implications.

7.2 Contractual Issues

No implications.

7.3 Staffing Issues

No implications.

8. Customer Impact

8.1 The Council commissions the BAD Youth Forum to provide a key channel for consultation and engagement with young people in the borough. Services across the Local Strategic Partnership are encouraged to bring relevant draft policies and strategies to the Forum to seek the views of young people, so that service design is informed by their feedback.

8.2 There are implications for young people should any action be taken on the issues raised concerning schools' anti-bullying policies and knowledge of sexual health. However, these implications should be seen as a positive step towards improving the ways in which we support young people on the issues of bullying and sexual health.

9. Safeguarding Children

9.1 Questionnaires completed in secondary schools and evaluations from anti-bullying workshops have shown that young people feel there is still an issue with bullying in

schools. Young people report that schools are not always dealing with bullying as well as they could or helping to resolve the issue.

- 9.2 The BAD Youth Forum's review of each secondary school's anti-bullying policy clearly showed a considerable difference in each school's approach to dealing with bullying. Forum members felt that some policies were not effective or pupil friendly: they knew from personal experience that what was documented in the policy was not consistent with what actually happened in the school. The potential implication of inconsistent and ineffective anti-bullying policies is that young people may not be receiving the support they need to deal with bullying: this can have a great impact on their ability to achieve positive outcomes.
- 9.3 The involvement of young people in reviewing anti-bullying policies has improved their confidence and knowledge in dealing with safeguarding issues. Suggestions made by the Forum to improve anti-bullying policies will impact positively on young people, although the implementation of these changes will need to be reviewed.

10. **Health Issues**

- 10.1 By delivering the sexual health workshops in a range of settings, Forum members were able to understand the lack of knowledge that young people of various ages have in relation to most aspects of sexual health. Due to a lack of effective sexual health education from home and school, young people as old as 16 had no knowledge at all of how to have safe sex, what to do if they had unprotected sex or what Sexually Transmitted Infections were and what the consequences of contracting them were. There are implications for young people who reach the age of being able to legally consent to having sex but with no knowledge of the unintended consequences.
- 10.2 There were discussions amongst Forum members about sexual health lessons in schools: most young people reported that there had either been no lessons or they were poorly taught and they did not learn anything from them. It is important to note that, according to young people, relationships and the confidence to say no to sex are often topics not included in Sex and Relationship Education lessons. Many young people do not understand the emotional impact of entering into a sexual relationship and are often not prepared. Therefore more needs to be done to teach young people the skills to resist the pressure to have sex.
- 10.3 For a range of reasons parents were unable to provide effective education at home on relationship and sex: these included culture, embarrassment and lack of parents' own knowledge. More needs to be done to support parents to talk to their children about relationships and sex through parenting programmes such as Speakeasy.
- 10.4 Following the issues raised by young people, there is more work to be done to improve the quality of sexual health education across both formal and non-formal educational settings. Integrated Youth Services will review its youth work curriculum across all its setting to ensure that sexual health is integrated into delivery. More youth workers need to be trained in condom distribution so they can provide contraceptive advice and services to the young people they come into contact with.

11. Crime and Disorder Issues

- 11.1 In Barking and Dagenham crime and disorder is often perceived to be mostly perpetrated by young people. In fact the recent disturbances showed that this is not the case. It is however the case that young people are most likely to be victims of crime. By considering crime and disorder issues the Youth Forum has had the opportunity to put forward the views of young people and ensure that their views are heard by those developing strategy and policy. Young people who are bullied are more prone to become involved in bullying; national research suggests that they may also become involved in low level criminal behaviour and anti-social behaviour. The work of the BAD Youth Forum to address bullying in schools is key to early intervention and identification of those at risk.

12. Property / Asset Issues

No implications

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

None.

List of appendices:

Appendix A - UKYP scrutiny report.