

Unite Updated Response to Proposed Cuts to the Youth Service

The following comments are made to clarify the Unite/CYWU response to the proposed budget cuts to the Youth Service and also in response to Management's Response to the Unite proposals.

- Unite opposes the proposed cuts to the frontline services that the Youth Service currently offers and finds the proposed cuts to the Youth Service unacceptable. While Unite accepts that Management do not propose to eradicate the Youth Service, a cut of 79% will severely reduce the services available to young people across the Bradford District. A radically reduced Youth Service budget would have a severe impact on the young people of Bradford and its communities which Unite finds unacceptable given the levels of poverty, underachievement, lack of access to employment and vulnerable groups of young people in the Bradford District.
- The response from young people and the public regarding the proposed cuts to the Youth Service has been unprecedented and clearly shows that the Youth Service is a valued and much needed service for the young people of Bradford. The Youth Service is unique in that young people engage with the service on a voluntary basis.
- Not only does the Youth Service offer valuable and essential support to many of the more vulnerable young people of the Bradford District, it also offers a 'front door' to higher level and more expensive services. The radical reduction of the Youth Service will inevitably lead to large numbers of young people not receiving the support they so desperately need with many being left to suffer in silence as they fail to access any support at all. Alternatively, other, more expensive services will find themselves pressed to deal with young people whose problems and issues may escalate or who become criminalised, making a mockery of any policies around early intervention and prevention.
- Unite notes that the figure of £12m - £15m quoted as being brought into Bradford by the voluntary sector is a ball park figure that can not be substantiated and should not, therefore be used as a rationale for cutting Bradford Council's Youth Service.
- Management appear to be changing the proposals for the cuts to the Youth Service. The original proposal was to cut the Youth Service budget by £1m in 2014-2015 and a further £2.2m in 2015 – 2016. With a proposed move into Neighbourhood Services 'as soon as possible' giving a 'half year effect in 2014/15 and full year effect in 2015/16', it appears that Management are now proposing to bring the cuts to the Youth Service forward making a £2.1m cut in 2014/15 and a £1.1m cut in 2015/16.
- Unite notes that the Youth Service has already suffered a £1.7m cut over the last 3 years which is essentially a third of its budget.
- Unite's earlier proposals in terms of cuts to the Youth Service budget appear to have been misinterpreted. To clarify, Unite proposes a maximum 25% cut to the Youth Service budget over the coming 2 years with a 20% (£800k) in 2014/15 and 5% (£200k) in 2015/16.

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- Unite would resist any compulsory redundancies and are confident that our proposals would avoid the need to make any.
- Many youth workers and managers have strong fund raising skills and have been influential in bringing large sums of money into the Bradford area for the benefit of services to young people, even over the last decade of healthier budgets, and in previous years where budgets were restricted. The Unite proposal will afford the Youth Service the opportunity to use some of the existing skills in the service in terms of income generation and alternative delivery methods.
- Unite feels that there has been a lack of transparency in terms of the Youth Service budget which has made any meaningful consultation in terms of cuts to the Youth Service budget difficult. We are also aware that year on year there has been an underspend in the Youth Service due to the creative ways in which many of its staff continue to deliver services to young people. This year, the Youth Service has made additional savings in order to contribute to the Council's wider funding issues despite the fact that in the same year, an additional £50k was found at the 11th hour to finance a social action programme, a further £10k per area (£50k/£60k) to fund Voice and Influence work and an additional £20k per constituency (£100k) for the Youth Opportunity Fund. Unite is lacking in clear financial information regarding Youth Service budgets and would welcome further, more detailed, transparent and less contradictory information regarding the budgets in order that a true consultation in terms of budget reductions can take place with Unions.
- Management state that the Youth Service is currently exploring alternative methods of delivery *'in relation to delivery around public health issues, sports activity and work with schools in the district'*. Unite would welcome further details on this.
- Unite continues to endorse and support ASPECT's response to the Council's proposed budget reductions, but also proposes the following recommendations as a response to the Council's proposed budget reductions to the Youth Service.

1 x Head of Service

2 x Senior Managers to include one to undertake the role of a business manager to explore income generation and alternative methods of service delivery and the other to explore capacity building initiatives including partnerships, cost recovery initiatives and volunteering.

6 x Advanced Practitioners to undertake the operational management of the Youth Service, staff management and additional responsibilities including local partnerships, local fund raising and specific programme/youth initiatives.

1 x Information, Advice and Guidance leader at Advanced Practitioner level to operationally manage information, advice and guidance across the District.

All current permanent staff at JNC 20-23 and JNC 16 – 19 to remain in post with JNC 20-23 staff to undertake additional responsibilities around vulnerable young people and JNC 16-19 staff to maintain responsibility for youth work delivery on a Ward basis. All current part time staff to also remain in post.

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All vacant posts to remain unfilled.

- We would also call for a long overdue review of youth work in Bradford District overseen by an independent, respected and well known youth work academic to look at the full picture of the delivery of Youth Work in the District, both statutory and voluntary and to identify good practice that could be replicated, duplication of effort in all areas, gaps in provision and emerging needs of young people and the District and to inform the development of alternative methods of service delivery where necessary and appropriate.
- In a District where the youth population continues to rise with a projection of 50% of the residents being under 25 years within the next decade and a District where 1 in 4 young people currently live in poverty, Unite feels that it would be nothing short of ridiculous to reduce the Youth Service budget to £800k over a period of 2 years. Consultations over the last few weeks have highlighted the importance of the Youth Service to young people, their families and their communities and Unite emphasises the importance of minimising reductions of such an important service to young people over the coming 2 years in order to ensure that all possible avenues in terms of income generation and service delivery methods are explored while maintaining a quality service for young people.

Unite argues that the proposals above will allow developments and initiatives to be explored to grow a dynamic service to young people that would be in a much better position to both meet the needs of young people, the District and be better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

Management Response to UNITE's position on the Youth Service Budget Reductions 2014/16

This was set out in an email dated the 28th January 2014, received from [REDACTED], steward. The document is titled 'Unite proposal for Bradford Youth Service2.

Management's response

- Unite notes the figure of £12 - £15m brought into the district by the voluntary sector that in their view is a ballpark figure and should not be used as part of the rationale for reductions. The figures have been given by Young Lives Bradford from a snapshot survey and refers to the whole of children and young people's voluntary services – not just the youth service age range. This was set out in the Executive proposal and is not part of the rationale for reductions. The proposal does establish a commissioner to oversee voluntary sector provision and ensure that the Council is meeting its duty to deliver positive activities.

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- Management are not changing the proposals to reduce the Youth Service. To realise the proposed £3.2m reduction by the end of 2015/16 there would have to be full effect in place by March 2015 to make the £2.2m savings. This would require the implementation of the proposal with immediate effect. This is due to the time required to agree a new structure, interview for the remaining jobs, time to hear appeals, redeployment opportunities to be sought, both in children's and corporately. Staff and managers may decide to apply for Voluntary Redundancy reducing capacity to see through the changes. So the implementation and transfer to the Neighbourhood Service would take place with immediate effect to minimise disruption to the service.
- All Departments have been asked to front load the savings where possible and bring them forward. It is likely to take 6 months to see the structural changes through giving a part year effect to the savings to be realised from staffing reductions. The timeline has not altered.
- Unite have said that their earlier proposals in terms of cuts to the Youth Service budget appear to have been misinterpreted. Unite proposes a maximum 25% cut to the Youth Service budget over the coming 2 years with a 20% (£800k) in 2014/15 and 5% (£200k) in 2015/16. Management accept that this was misunderstood by management who had not realised that it was a cumulative figure. So this is accepted and noted.
- Unite feels that there has been a lack of transparency in terms of the Youth Service budget. Management have shared headline budget spend as appropriate and as part of the consultation and feedback process.
- Unite would welcome further details on this: the Youth Service is currently exploring alternative methods of delivery *'in relation to delivery around public health issues, sports activity and work with schools in the district'*. Management will ask the Youth Service management team to keep Unite informed on these developments.