

**The Integrated Youth Strategy for Woking 2015-2020
Vision and Priorities**

Supporting young people to achieve their full potential

1.0 Our Vision

- 1.1 The vision that drives the Integrated Youth Strategy for Woking is ***support for young people to achieve their full potential***. Establishing a local Youth Offer, as part of wider early help and prevention arrangements, is an integral part of implementing the strategy. The Youth Offer consists of a wide range of provision and support for young people across the Borough. It provides all young people with access to positive activities and opportunities to engage in youth work. It also targets young people that need additional support. Therefore, some services are targeted in geographical areas that experience high levels of deprivation because of the link between poverty and poor outcomes. Services are also targeted at specific groups of young people, such as those in local authority care, those that have learning difficulties and disabilities and young carers, because research demonstrates that these factors can also result in poor outcomes.

2.0 Our Priorities for Action

- 2.1 The priorities for action were identified through reviewing data and information, drawing on the experience of practitioners and consulting young people. They address existing and emerging patterns of need across the borough and will guide commissioning and planning over the next five years. Each priority aligns with an outcome in Surrey Young People's Outcomes Framework. Monitoring, review and evaluation of the services funded or provided directly by Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council, feedback from young people and practitioners and ongoing needs assessment will ensure that changing patterns of need are identified and addressed during the life of this strategy. The priorities are as outlined below:

Priority 1: Improving young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health

- 2.2 The Mental Health Foundation defines emotional wellbeing as, *'a positive sense of wellbeing which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life.'* Improving young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health emerged as one of the top priorities in consultations with young people and practitioners along with a need to support young people to improve their confidence, self esteem, sense of achievement and aspirations. It was also identified as a local priority in Surrey County Council's One in Ten Needs Assessment and is closely connected to improving young people's resilience, one of the outcomes in the Surrey Young People's Outcomes Framework.
- 2.3 While there is currently no data on the scale and impact of this issue in Woking practitioners report that more young people are presenting with complex mental

health and emotional wellbeing needs. Surrey County Council's One in Ten Needs Assessment states that an estimated 10% of children and young people aged between 5 and 16 years old may have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder. Research on the impact of poor emotional well being and mental health suggests that young people can develop protective factors during adolescence that reduce the risk and severity of emotional and behavioural disorders. These protective factors include a positive attachment to school, family and community; positive peer influence; opportunities to succeed; problem solving skills; and positive 'social capital' indicators, for example, friends, support networks, valued social roles and positive views on their neighbourhoods. National research indicates that the severity and duration of mental health problems can be reduced when young people have quick access to effective help and support. Engaging in positive activities, youth work and one to one support can assist young people to build on and develop protective factors and provide early access to effective help when necessary.

Priority 2: Reducing risky behaviour – substance misuse, smoking, anti-social behaviour and improving sexual health

- 2.4 Taking action to reduce risky behaviour involves supporting young people to make informed choices and decisions. This is an outcome in Surrey Young People's Outcomes Framework. Engaging in risky behaviour during adolescence can have a negative impact on young people's life chances and prevent them from fully participating in society. The young people consulted about the strategy say that they want to know the truth about issues such as sex and relationships and the risks and harms of misusing substances. They want to learn about these things in ways that are interesting and to have access to information about where to go for services and support in a variety of formats.
- 2.5 While there is no data on the prevalence of substance misuse in Woking, practitioners say that more young people are using legal highs and cannabis. National research indicates that most young people do not use illicit drugs or binge drink, and among those who do only a minority will develop serious problems. Surrey Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2014 asserts that substance misuse in young people is associated with behavioural, physical and mental health problems. The majority of young people accessing specialist treatment services in Surrey are Alcohol and Cannabis users. However, smoking also has negative effects on long term health; a recent survey into the smoking habits amongst young people in Surrey showed that although most children had not tried smoking in year 7, by year 13 nearly 80% had tried smoking at least once with nearly 30% classed as a regular smoker.
- 2.6 Unplanned teenage pregnancy also has a negative impact on young people's life chances. Although the teenage pregnancy rate in Woking is well below the national average; the rate is much higher in neighbourhoods that experience high levels of deprivation. National research indicates that Sexually Transmitted Infections are more common among young people than any other group. Two-thirds of cases of Chlamydia are among young men and women aged 16-24 years. However, young people are the group least likely to access sexual health advice and treatment in traditional clinical

settings. This indicates a need to provide sexual health services for young people in community settings.

- 2.7 Woking Anti-social Behaviour Team recognises that public perception of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour can be much worse than the reality. Never-the-less, being involved in anti-social behaviour puts young people at risk of entering the Juvenile Justice System which, in turn, has a negative impact on their chances of participating fully in society.

Priority 3: Meeting the needs of young people that require additional support in their transition from adolescence to adulthood

- 2.8 Most young people in Woking make a positive transition through adolescence into adulthood. However, a few young people need additional support to help them to participate in society. Practitioners identified the need to support young people with low level underlying issues that can escalate and prevent them from achieving their full potential. Young people consulted as part of the development of this strategy identified the barriers that some young people face and said that those who need additional support should have good access to it. Both groups are in favour of targeting provision in neighbourhoods that experience high levels of need.
- 2.9 There are a variety of factors that make a negative impact on young people's life chances. In Woking, research indicates that young people who grow up in poverty or in areas with high levels of need are more likely to require additional support. Data also indicates that factors such as speaking English as an additional language, having a learning disability or being a young carer can also affect young people's outcomes as they grow up. Other factors that make a negative impact on positive transitions through adolescence to adulthood include being looked after by the local authority, having a Gypsy, Roma Traveller heritage or facing the barriers experienced by young people who are Gay, Lesbian, bi-sexual or transgendered. Surrey Young People's Outcomes Framework identifies groups of young people that need targeted support to assist their transition into adulthood because of the barriers they face. These include young people who:
- Have special educational needs
 - Are looked after or are care leavers
 - Are on Child Protection Plans
 - Are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET
 - Are young parents
 - Have caring responsibilities
 - Are from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities
 - Have offended
 - Have protected characteristics including sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief where this results in them facing barriers to participation in society.

Priority 4: Improving young people’s experience of the local transport system – cost and safety

- 2.10 Young people have identified the cost of public transport as an important issue across the county. Those that were consulted as part of the development of this strategy said that the cost of public transport in and around Woking is too high, that it is unreliable and does not operate frequently enough. A few young people say that the cost of peak time travel in the morning is affecting their ability to arrive at school or college on time. Surrey Young People’s Outcome Framework identifies shortcomings in the transport system as one of the barriers that can prevent young people in participating in education, employment and training.
- 2.11 Young people also raised the importance of being and feeling safe when using public transport. This issue was particularly important for young people who are LGBT who say that they regularly experience abuse when walking around the town or using public transport.

Priority 5: Ensuring that facilities are accessible to young people and fit for purpose

- 2.12 Across Woking there are a multitude of facilities and assets provided by a range of statutory, voluntary and faith based groups where activity for young people takes place. In many cases these are shared built spaces for example community centres where youth activity takes place at certain times, although in some cases the facility / asset is predominately seen as a facility for young people to access i.e.: skate parks, climbing boulders and play areas. In addition there are a wealth of assets which may not be currently accessible for use by Young People but which could be if the appropriate ‘brokering’ for use of such asset takes place.
- 2.13 Irrespective of the type of asset there are associated costs with maintaining such and particularly in the case of built facilities many of our venues are in ageing-stock which will, in due course require significant investment. The development of the Integrated Youth Strategy gives us the opportunity to jointly assess the level, scope and offer of existing provision and to rationalise such provision as maybe appropriate after engaging with Young People on whether such provision is in the right place and offers the right configuration and offer to meet their needs. This opportunity will also help us to verify the opportunity and in certain cases validate the level of support for potential new infrastructure in Woking which Young people may wish to access eg: cultural music venue, a Youth Café or a Indoor Skate Park.

Priority 6: Promoting the Youth Offer

- 2.14 Promoting the Youth Offer effectively is important in ensuring that young people and practitioners know what is available in local areas. It is closely linked to supporting young people to make informed decisions about the use of their free time; one of the outcomes in Surrey Young People’s Outcomes Framework. The young people consulted as part of the development of this strategy say they want to know about all the activities that are available. Practitioners say that sharing information about

services and resources will help them to promote the Youth Offer, make effective referrals, signpost and improve collaborative working. Volunteers, in particular want to know more about services for young people across the borough.

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