



Response to Youth Justice Agency Corporate Plan 2006 – 2009 and Business Plan 2006 – 2007

Include Youth very much welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Agency's corporate plan. Representatives of Include Youth attending the two planning days facilitated by the Agency. The comments below are intended to support the views expressed at the events as well raise issues that were not addressed. We have also attempted to keep our comments brief.

Consultation

Include Youth is disappointed at the consultation process undertaken by the Agency. We appreciate that the consultation period was shortened by the postal strike but adjustments should have been made accordingly. We are sure that Ministers would understand the reasons for any delay.

Include Youth would have appreciated the time to have consulted, through the Young Voices Project, with young people who have experienced the services of the Agency. We do not believe that one meeting between the CEO and NICCY panel is sufficient as consultation. The Agency needs to develop strategies, processes and the skills and competencies to be able to consult directly with young people.

Additionally Include Youth assumes that a “young people” friendly version of the plan will be produced, one that takes account of the literacy ability of the majority of young people who work with the Youth Justice Agency.

Business plan – we are unable to identify the business plan for 2006-2007 and suggest that there should be a clear identification of the actions to be undertaken in the next year.

Values

Include Youth fully endorses the values as outlined by the Agency and welcomes all statements that confirm that the YJA sees itself as a child care agency. We are, therefore, somewhat puzzled by the fact that no mention is made of children's rights and more particularly the UNCRC which the UK is a signatory of. We would urge the Agency to include a statement that endorses and promotes the rights of the children and young people that it works with, highlighting the Best Interests Principle.

Additionally the use of language is important throughout the document; we are particularly about concerned at the reference made to young people as offenders. They are

children first and foremost and user of the YJAs services. Referring to them as **offenders** simply reinforces the stereotype of these young people.

Operating Environment

Planning Assumptions

- 👉 The 2nd assumption concerns partnership working and Community Services, surely this should be an assumption for all Directorates within the Agency.
- 👉 The final assumption concerns devolution and appears (albeit unintentionally) dismissive of the impact of devolution on the Agency. The impact of devolution is unknown at this time.

Key Business Areas

1. Reducing Offending

The 2nd paragraph discusses steps to stop offending using restorative youth conferences. The Agency Mission is articulated as reducing youth crime and therefore it should not just youth conferencing who has this responsibility. Alternatively that line could be altered to say restorative process which would then include all aspects of the Agency.

Key Performance Indicator – reduction in levels of offending by children – this is a totally ineffective KPI unless there is a figure. We appreciate the challenges involved in measuring reduction of offending levels and that a number of factors are outside of the Agency's control. However how will your performance be judged unless you state by how much you wish to reduce offending? Where is the measurement of success?

2. Increasing Confidence in the Youth Justice Agency

Include Youth endorses the sentiments expressed in this paragraph. Confidence in the Youth Justice system is key to its success. However making explicit at the end of that paragraph the “interests of victims” suggests that they are the most important stakeholder of the system.

3. Developing Restorative Justice

We endorse that restorative justice should be a whole system approach from the use of formal youth and family group conferencing to the more informal restorative processes used generally with young people.

We are concerned with regards to the emphasis placed in this section that the notion of making amends and redress appears to be slanted towards the victim. Without a doubt the victim has a pivotal role within any restorative process but there are a number of stages before redress such as recognition and taking of responsibility by the young person. This process should be more clearly articulated.

KPI – we would like to see the satisfaction of the young people and their families included in this section.

Main strategies – the Agency should also publicise feedback with regards to the process of young people and their families.

It is regrettable that in this section there is no mention of a whole system/community approach where there could be some recognition of the on-going developments in community based restorative justice.

4. Delivering positive outcomes

KPI – there should be some recognition of the measurement of soft outcomes also.

Main strategies – This section contains some of the few mentions of the voice of young people. This should be a separate performance area where it is clearly identified how the voice of young people is included in the planning and delivery of services throughout the Agency. The young people of all the services are key stakeholders and clear mechanisms should be in place enhance their participation.

It is also regrettable that there is no mention in this section of the interface between youth justice and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. It would seem to Include Youth that lack of appropriate CAMH services at all tiers has an adverse impact on the young people that YJA seeks to serve.

5. Ensuring Safe and Appropriate Use of Custody

Include Youth applauds the Agency on the work it is undertaking and continues to undertake in making custody provision as child appropriate as difficulty. It is however difficult to comment of KPIs when there are none. The inclusion of “XX” in this section gives no indication of what is to be attempted.

Include Youth would be happy to elaborate on any aspect of our response.

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