

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 3 September 2020

Report of the Head of Service - Policy, Information and Commissioning (Start Well)

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Lancashire Youth Policy

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Executive Summary

In Lancashire, there are 279,800 children and young people aged 19 and under, accounting for 23% of the total population. Children and young people are critical to the successful delivery of the county council's vision of helping our residents to make Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper.

The Lancashire Youth Policy will provide a guiding framework for partners and stakeholders, including underpinning principles and areas for action, to help ensure that young people:

- are at the heart of and part of our policy making;
- are better supported to achieve their full potential; and
- ensure that our engagement is best in class.

The county council cannot deliver this policy without the support of partners. Subject to the agreement of the principles and priorities for action, Officers will continue to engage with children and young people, and with partners, to agree system leads for those areas which do not naturally fall within existing children's services governance and programme arrangements. As a result of that continued engagement, there may be a need for some further refinement of the proposed actions identified.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

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| (i) | Approve the principles, key issues and priorities for action set out within this report. |
| (ii) | Authorise the Executive Director for Education and Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, to complete the development of the Lancashire Youth Policy through ongoing engagement and participation with children and young people and, where there are areas for partnership action, with relevant partner organisations. |

Background and Advice

In Lancashire, there are 279,800 children and young people aged 19 and under, accounting for 23% of the total population. Children and young people are critical to the successful delivery of the county council's vision, helping our residents to make Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper.

The priorities within the county council's vision include a clear focus on achieving better outcomes for children and young people and specifically that *children, young people and their families are safe, healthy and achieve their full potential*.

The lives of children and young people are impacted by a multitude of factors, of which the support from the county council is just one element. Those factors also include the children and young people themselves, families, parents and carers and many other organisations, all of whom have vital roles in delivering the vision that has been agreed across the Lancashire Children, Young People and Families Partnership.

Work has begun to develop a Youth Policy for Lancashire which sets out how, across partner agencies, we will work with young people to help deliver our partnership priorities to:

- Improve the environment in which children and young people live, learn and work
- Support children, young people, and their parents to make healthy lifestyle choices and to build strong families, friendships, and healthy relationships;
- Provide children and young people with a good quality education and learning opportunity which matches their talents, ambitions, and aims and enables a positive transition to adulthood;
- Prevent the need for children to become looked after, stepping in when necessary to keep children and young people safe from harm;
- Support children and young people to influence decision making and bring about positive change for themselves and others.

There are many information sources and networks which highlight the views and needs of young people in Lancashire, and encourage their engagement in shaping our policies. For example, nearly 27,000 young people in Lancashire voted in the 2019 British Youth Council Make your Mark Campaign, highlighting issues such as the environment, mental health, and knife crime as issues important to them. Over 4,000 young people in Lancashire voted to elect the 10 Youth Members of Parliament and

their deputies and the Lancashire Youth Council, supported by the Child and Family Wellbeing Service, has around 140 members. We also engage with children and young people through our nurseries, schools, further education colleges and universities. However, to genuinely realise the potential of young people to help shape and deliver our vision we must do far more. The county council cannot do this alone, and we will need partners to support the delivery of the Policy and to play a lead role in the areas where they are best placed. We need to actively engage with partners in statutory, voluntary and faith sectors, through youth and community organisations schools, school councils, our colleges and universities to embed our engagement with young people and further encourage their participation.

The Youth Policy will provide a guiding framework to achieve this and includes underpinning principles and areas for action. This will help ensure the county council and all our partners collectively better support young people to achieve their full potential.

The Principles

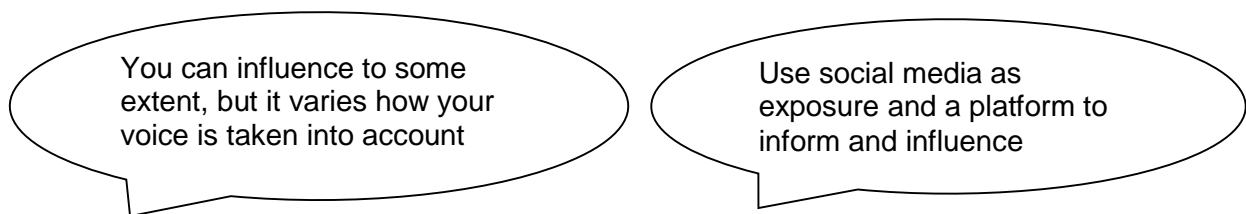
There are three proposed principles which will underpin the Policy:

- Young people help to shape policy and provision
- Services are of good quality, safe and provide opportunities for young people to develop knowledge, skills and competencies which support the delivery of the Partnership priorities
- Services and opportunities for participation are strengths-based and focus on developing the skills and attributes of young people.

Areas for Action

A number of immediate actions and have been developed with young people and using our data and intelligence about outcomes for children and young people in Lancashire. These also reflect the children and families partnership priorities and will be updated as our insight and engagement deepen, and our insight is enriched.

Priority 1: Put children and young people at the heart of our policy making and support them to influence decision making and bring about positive change for themselves and others



You can influence to some extent, but it varies how your voice is taken into account

Use social media as exposure and a platform to inform and influence

Key issues for Lancashire

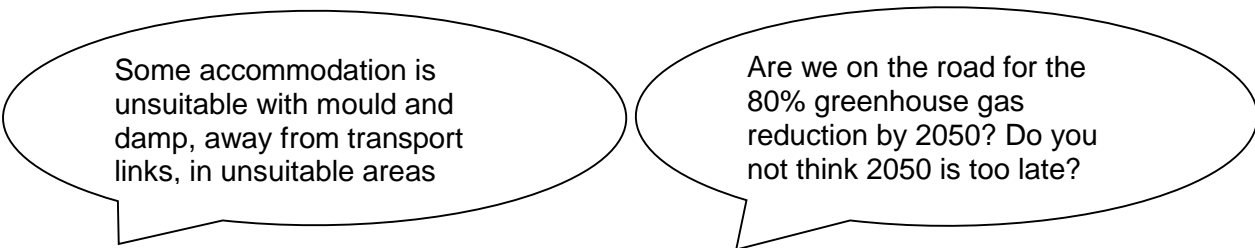
- **Increasing opportunities:** Young people do not always feel that they have opportunities to influence decision making and that where they do, this can be dependent on individual members of staff rather than an approach which is embedded across partnerships.
- **Improving communications:** Young people told us that they do not think that they are always considered in our communications, and that we need to do more to engage with them, in ways that work for them.

Areas for action

We will adopt a set of cross cutting principles for participation with young people, to make our engagement best in class:

- Increase opportunities for participation by children and young people
- Ensure that all children and young people can participate in decision making safely, if they choose to do so
- Ensure a sufficient range of resources and incentives are made available to support the participation of children and young people
- Ensure the children and young people's workforce have the necessary skills and knowledge to involve children and young people in decision making appropriately
- Support children and young people to acquire the necessary skills to develop and deliver their own participation activity and social action projects
- Provide accessible information and support, so that all children and young people can make informed decisions about their lives
- Ensure that children and young people receive appropriate feedback about any decision making that they have been involved with
- Respect the privacy of children and young people and not share their information without their permission, unless there is a legal duty to do so
- Evaluate the impact of participation by children and young people and share best practice and outcomes achieved

Priority 2: Improve the environment in which children and young people live, learn and work.



Some accommodation is unsuitable with mould and damp, away from transport links, in unsuitable areas

Are we on the road for the 80% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050? Do you not think 2050 is too late?

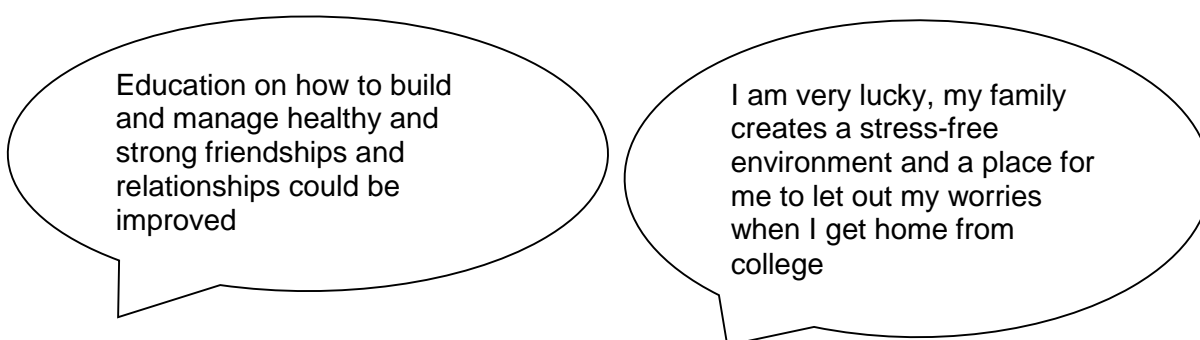
Key issues for Lancashire

- **Housing:** Young people have told us that they can struggle to find good quality places to live in areas in which they feel safe. We also know that there are areas of poorer housing stock in Lancashire. Poor housing conditions are associated with a wide range of health conditions, including respiratory infections, asthma, lead poisoning, injuries, and mental health.
- **Climate change:** Young people nationally and locally have told us that tackling climate change is one of their top priorities. Globally, the World Health Organisation has said that climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter.

Areas for action

- Work with our partners, including district councils and housing providers, to identify the opportunities for young people to play a more active role in shaping the places in which they live
- Improve the quality of supported accommodation for care leavers and homeless young people
- Create opportunities within the county council for young people to shape our response to the climate change agenda
- Work with our District Council partners to identify opportunities for young people to influence and develop campaigns at a local level to help reduce litter and waste.

Priority 3: Support children, young people and their parents to make healthy lifestyle choices and to build strong families, friendships and healthy relationships.



Key issues for Lancashire

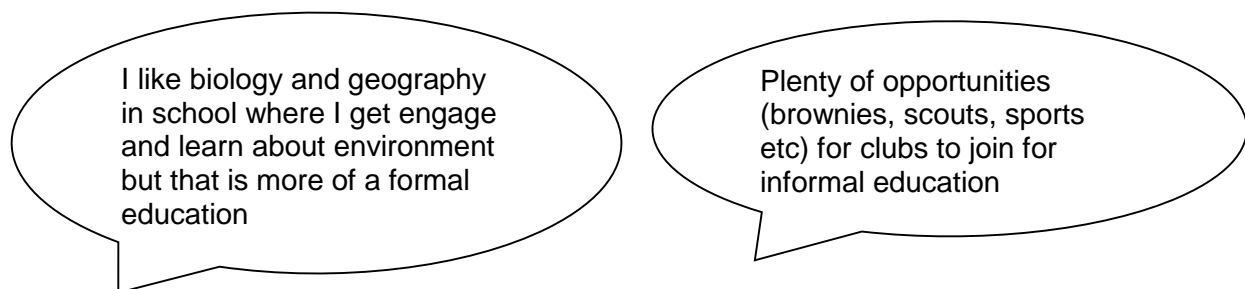
- **Play and social interaction:** Young people have told us that they sometimes struggle to develop friendships and it is not something they are "taught" to do. We also know from feedback from school colleagues that they have noticed young people are needing help to "learn how to play". For adolescent young people, the post Covid-19 period of more limited social interaction comes at a key stage in their brain development and could have long lasting impacts as they transition to adult life.

- **Family resilience:** Throughout the children's system, there is evidence of rising needs, arising in part because some families are struggling to cope. For families who are less resilient, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can lead to more division within families which impacts negatively on children and young people living within them.

Areas for action

- Work with partners to develop and promote opportunities for play and social interaction
- Work with partners to better understand and address the impact of digital poverty on children and young people
- Work with children and young people to shape the Family Safeguarding approach
- Work with young people to help develop skills to enable them to play an active role in maintaining and building family resilience.

Priority 4: Provide children and young people with a good quality education and learning opportunity which matches their talents, ambitions and aims and enables a positive transition to adulthood.



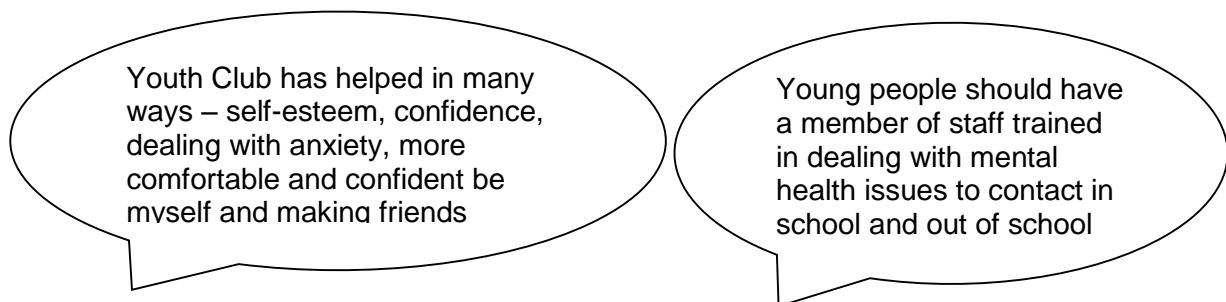
Key issues for Lancashire

- **Educational attainment:** Young people have told us that they recognise and value the important role that schools play in supporting their development. We know that there is more to do to improve educational outcomes for some young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- **Increasing informal learning opportunities:** Young people have told us that in some areas there are a good range of opportunities for informal learning, through sports clubs, Scouts and Guides for example. We know that for some young people, the flexibility of learning out of school during the Covid-19 pandemic has been helpful to them. We also know that some young people struggle to engage in a formal school setting, and a different approach is needed to help them achieve their full potential

Areas for action

- Continue to work with schools to develop local school networks, to share ideas and to help schools make links with wider networks of partners who can provide opportunities, help and advice
- Help to develop links between locality Youth Councils, voluntary sector groups and local school networks such as School Councils, so that young people have better opportunities to shape what works both locally and at County level
- Develop volunteering opportunities for young people, building on the experience of the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership, and Culture Hacks for example, to help provide informal and accredited learning opportunities
- Develop youth work apprenticeships and provide workforce development opportunities which can be accessed by partner organisations from across the children, young people and families partnership, so we help to develop and sustain the skills of youth workers.

Priority 5: Prevent the need for children to become looked after, and with compassion, step in when necessary to keep children and young people safe from harm.



Key issues for Lancashire

- **Expected increasing demand for services generally:** Young people told us about the importance of early help, including through schools, youth clubs and detached youth work. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic is leading to increased need across the system and we will need to provide resources across our partnerships to meet that need.
- **Emotional wellbeing and mental health:** Young people have told us that emotional wellbeing and mental health continues to be an important issue for them, although they have noticed some positive change in the support available, particularly within schools. We know that the use of online support platforms increased by over 30% during lockdown, referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are increasing and more unmet needs are expected to be identified as more children and young people return to schools and colleges in September.

Areas for action

- Work with our district councils, voluntary, community and faith sector partners to develop local youth provision for young people.
- Embed Targeted Youth Support within the Early Help and Family Safeguarding approaches.
- Co-produce solutions with children and young people and their families to build resilience and prevent emotional wellbeing and mental health issues
- Improve mental health support for children and young people embedded in schools and colleges, building on the learning from Mental Health Trailblazer Teams.

Next Steps

Subject to the agreement of the principles and priorities for action, Officers will continue to engage with children and young people, and with partners, to agree system leads for those areas which do not naturally fall within existing children's services governance and programme arrangements. As a result of that continued engagement, there may be a need for some further refinement of the proposed actions identified.

The Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board on the 3rd August 2020 has provided an opportunity for initial discussions with partner organisations. We are confident that there is broad support for the proposals and a commitment to work better together. Together we will improve the range of opportunities for young people to develop skills which will better support them as they transition to adulthood, and to help influence and shape Lancashire to be the place in which they want to live, work, visit and prosper.

Consultations

The principles, key issues and priorities for action have been discussed with The Lancashire Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

Members of the Lancashire Youth Council and Lancashire's Youth Members of Parliament have been engaged in discussion about the development of the Lancashire Youth Policy and have provided feedback on the issues that are important to them, which have helped to identify the key issues for Lancashire. We will be building on these engagements and through schools and colleges to extend our reach and to ensure that we hear and respond to the voices of all young people.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

There are no financial implications at this stage.

Equality and Cohesion

The Lancashire Youth Policy will, if agreed and implemented, contribute positively to meeting the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. In particular its principles will contribute to advancing equality of opportunity for children and young people and it will provide opportunities for their increased participation in public life. There is also an opportunity for the Policy to help foster good relations between people from different age groups if children and young people can see that they are playing an effective part in decision making which affects them. The Lancashire Youth Policy most directly impacts the age (young people) protected characteristics group but will also impact children and young people from other protected characteristics groups – e.g. disability, ethnicity – and its commitment to providing accessible information and support will ensure that all children and young people are able to participate if they choose to.

Risk management

Should the proposals be agreed, young people will be better supported and better able to contribute to the delivery of Lancashire County Council's corporate vision and that of the Children, Young People and Families Partnership.

Should the proposals not be agreed there is a significant risk that young people, who represent Lancashire's future, will have fewer opportunities to shape and contribute to activities which will help to make Lancashire the place in which they want to live, work, visit and prosper.

List of Background Papers

| Paper | Date | Contact/Tel |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|-------------|
| None | | |
| Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate | | |
| N/A | | |