

Transforming Services for Young People

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Organisation: Surrey County Council

Country: United Kingdom

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Recreation, culture and religion, Social protection

Type: Public Service

Launched in: 2012

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

From 2009-2012, Services for Young People (SYP) underwent a transformation from delivering services to young people to commissioning outcomes for young people, whilst reducing its budget by GBP 4.5 million or 25%. Since then, the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Surrey has more than halved, standing at 429 at the end of March 2014, with national data showing that Surrey had the joint lowest NEET proportion in England between November 2013 and January 2014.

Why the innovation was developed

There were a number of key drivers of the transformation of Surrey SYP. Firstly, it was about responding to need. Between 2003 and 2012, at any one time, around 1,000 young people were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Surrey. Despite considerable investment and much excellent work by practitioners, Surrey County Council had not achieved lasting social change. Secondly, there was a political focus on improving outcomes for young people. The Leader of the Council had publicly announced he wanted 'no young person to be NEET in Surrey'. And thirdly, the service needed to reduce its budget by 25% over three years. It was not possible for SYP to reconcile these seemingly conflicting challenges by continuing to deliver services in the same way – instead it needed to transform so that it could achieve significantly more with significantly less.

Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

- Achieve lasting social change by reducing the number of young people in Surrey not in education, employment or training (NEET)
 - Meet political objective of having no young people categorised as NEET in Surrey
 - Reduce the budget for Services for Young People by 25%.
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Main beneficiaries

Government bodies, Government staff, High-risk populations, Low-income groups, Students, Young people

Results

Efficiency

Radical improvements were achieved whilst reducing the budget by GBP 4.5 million or 25% between 2009 and 2013. In spite of this budget reduction, frontline services were improved – for example, by 2013, the number of staff working directly with vulnerable young people had actually risen compared to 2009.

Effectiveness

The transformation of SYP, working closely with our partners, has to date achieved significant and unprecedented improvements in outcomes for young people across a range of social policy issues, including participation, youth offending and homelessness. Between January 2012 and January 2014 the number of young people who were NEET in Surrey has reduced by 60%, with national data showing how Surrey had the joint lowest proportion of young people who were NEET of all local authorities in England in 2013/14. Between 2009 and 2013, Surrey achieved a 90% reduction in the number of young people who were first-time entrants to the criminal justice system. Since November 2012, the Youth Support Service has engaged over 290 young people who presented as at risk of becoming homeless, leading to the lowest ever rate of youth homelessness in Surrey.

Service quality

Responsiveness:

Involvement in Local Prevention activity had a statistically significant positive impact on young people's school attendance, in particular for those with lower-level special educational needs and/or disabilities.

"[The youth worker] helps me with my homework or if I'm having any other problems at school. [...] They're there to help you improve for work." Young person supported by Local Prevention Framework

"They told me [at school] that I might find it difficult to do ICT at college because of the personal issues I had at the time. [...] [The youth workers] here listen to us though and they helped me with my personal issues rather than just telling me that I wasn't suitable." Young person supported by Local Prevention Framework

Reliability:

26 SCC Youth Centres have achieved the National Youth Agency Quality Mark of Level 1 by the end of 2013

90% successful progression to post-16 education, training and employment achieved by the Year 11/12 Transition commission for young people who were identified as at risk of becoming NEET in 2013.

"I wouldn't have been here, no way! I'm feeling confident that I'll still be here at the end of the year" Young person supported by Year 11/12 Transition Commission

User satisfaction

Surveys showed high satisfaction by the young people with the centres.

"[The youth worker here] has been helping me to find an apprenticeship in child care. I knew this was what I wanted to do but I didn't really know how to go about doing it [...] [the staff here] are supporting me and I feel confident that I'll find something eventually." Young person involved in centre based youth work in Surrey

"If you have problems you can come here and discuss them rather than not knowing what to do and also not knowing who to talk to [...] we can sit down and talk about things and know it won't get out to all our mates or parents" Young person involved in centre based youth work in Surrey

Evaluation

Development

Design

The journey began with the most comprehensive needs assessment of young people ever undertaken in Surrey, drawing together data and intelligence from a wide range of sources and partners as well as the perceptions and views of young people in Surrey. It highlighted that while the majority of the 100,000 13-19 year olds in Surrey make a successful transition to adulthood, around 10,000 (or 'One in Ten', the title of the published needs assessment report) faced additional, often multiple, barriers to making this transition. Designing a system that better targeted this group, who were more at risk of poorer outcomes than their peers, quickly emerged as a focus of the transformation.

Building on this needs assessment, the project team undertook an extensive consultation with young people, partners and stakeholders to co-design a young people's outcomes framework. The framework that emerged had a clear focus around developing young people's economic wellbeing, the key performance measure being young people's participation in education, training and employment (PETE) from the ages of 16 to 19.

Testing

- The next stage involved options appraisal of potential delivery vehicles for the County Council's priority outcomes and developing a business case for change.
 - This process explored a wide range of possibilities, in consultation with young people, staff and partners, as well as extensive exploration of how service overheads might be reduced.
 - It also introduced a new logic model to local government commissioning – the logical framework – which has been developed over the last 30 years in the field of international development.
 - Following this approach enabled the design of a system where the logical links between commissioned activity and the social change that Surrey CC wanted to achieve (increased PETE) had been tested, whilst providing clarity from the outset on how impact would be measured.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- The transformation towards outcomes meant a significant shift in mindset for potential providers as well as SCC staff and Members. Particular focus was given to developing the market's understanding of co-production, outcomes based commissioning and logical frameworks, which were to be at the heart of SYP's approach.
- The SYP business case was approved by the Council's Cabinet in December 2010 and started a formal restructure of SYP and a procurement exercise to identify the best providers of the newly-designed operating models during 2011. Whilst successful in achieving its intended results, the complexity of the procurement was a shock to the system for some third sector providers. Despite this, there were examples of really innovative practices, including involving young people as co-commissioners of local services through youth task groups - decision-making panels comprising young people, elected Members and partners. The procurement exercise won an award for 'Best Public Procurement' in 2012 from the *Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply*, particularly acknowledging the success in reshaping the market to get better value, rather than simply squeezing the supply chain in response to budget pressures.
- A final crucial dimension of the transformation was change management. The major budget cuts faced and the time frame in which to implement the changes meant strong leadership was essential to get the process started quickly, to maintain the Council's ambition throughout, and to overcome constraints. Whilst the vision for change was not, at first, universally supported, the focus on outcomes and clarity of goal were key factors in its eventual success. Alongside this, considerable effort was put into engaging staff throughout the process and protecting or even increasing front-line delivery wherever possible.

Resources used:

- The change management was done by a programme team comprising both in-house staff and external consultants, whose inputs were mostly focussed on the conceptual stages, programme management and targeted training.
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Diffusion

Since April 2012, the SYP model has continued to evolve in response to changing needs of young people. During 2013 SYP re-commissioned its Local Prevention Framework, in response to an initial service evaluation, through a streamlined procurement process. Since its inception in January 2012, the integrated Youth Support Service (YSS) has proved particularly resilient in the face of ongoing change, being identified as the best delivery vehicle for new work around homelessness, Children in Need, and mental health, whilst also establishing a re-engagement offer for young people who would otherwise be NEET. This demonstrates the power of an integrated, holistic delivery model that places service-users at the centre, rather than services that are narrowly defined by the specific function they provide.

The change management process was also supported through continuous learning. In 2013 a comprehensive internal review was carried out by Richard Stockley and Chris Tisdall (the author of this case study) and in 2014 Birmingham University and Governance International were commissioned to undertake an external evaluation.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- This case study suggests that a determined focus on outcomes as a basis for transformation, rather than narrowly pursuing efficiency improvements, may be a highly productive way of achieving a cost-effective service.
- It provides a high profile and valuable template for how radical change can be managed positively, whilst simultaneously undertaking substantial budget cuts.
- It highlights the value of involving young people in co-production, including co-commissioning of outcomes and services for young people.
- It provides a unique range of examples of outcomes-based commissions, established in response to locally identified needs and priorities for young people
- It demonstrates the value of the comprehensive application of a logical framework approach to commissioning services in the context of a Local Authority
- It suggests that successfully going through a period of radical change can equip an organisation to continue evolving and improving in response to a changing profile of need, in a moving environment.

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