

AGENDA ITEM 4
ES/001/11 Appendix 1

Committee	Executive Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	25 January 2011	

Scrutiny Review-

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Introduction

On the 7th December 2010, Cabinet considered report **CAB/031/10** by the Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games concerning the Government announcement earlier this year, of an in-year reduction to the 2010/11 Area Based Grant (ABG) allocation for Essex County Council. This grant funded the whole of the Connexions Service, which is part of the wider Integrated Youth Service within Schools, Children and Families.

The decisions resolved were

1. That the Integrated Youth Service be restructured to make the required savings of £7 million, with these reductions predominantly coming from the Connexions arm of the service as set out in report CAB/031/10.
2. That the estimated redundancy costs of £4 million be funded by way of withdrawal from the Waste Reserve, and the replenishment of the Reserve be incorporated in the future budget proposals as set out in report CAB/031/10.
3. That a core team (6 posts) be retained within the new Employability and Skills Unit and the existing SEN posts located within the Adult Transitions Service as set out in report CAB/031/10.
4. That the remaining youth service resource be redesigned as a more targeted service that will support both local integrated working and be aligned with the Council's Transformation Programme, as set out in report **CAB/031/10**.

The decisions went to "call in" which allowed for the scrutiny of the decisions prior to their implementation. The concerns raised as part of the "call in" process have been worked through and this document outlines how we are now moving to the implementation of these decisions within the agreements made as a result of the call in.

Summary

Following discussions between Cllr Castle and Cllr Tom Smith–Hughes, Cllr Castle has agreed to consider using some of the recently notified Early Intervention Grant to support retaining additional capacity within ECC to maintain IAG services, whilst the All-Age Careers Guidance Service comes on stream, and some additional services to support young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

At the time of making the proposals to decommission Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services in Essex the funding available within the Early Intervention Grant had not been notified.

The current proposals within the cabinet decision make provision to retain 6 core posts within the new Employability and Skills team. These posts will provide a tracking and NEET intervention function for young people and provide within the team an IAG subject matter expert to liaise with schools and young people and the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service. A website will be developed to provide further support to young people and their families and to schools. It has been recognised that until the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service comes on stream we are at risk of removing all information, advice and guidance services for young people for a period of time and are unable to support schools in developing the skills and expertise to take over their new responsibilities. It has also been recognised that, as we move towards Raising of the Participation Age, we will need to retain some further capacity to work directly with young people who are NEET.

Therefore the following proposals are for an interim period only and are likely to cease by September 2012.

It is proposed on an interim basis to create:

IAG Careers Guidance specialists

New posts to support schools to deliver independent information advice and guidance to young people in the period leading to the development of the All- Age Careers Guidance Service.

These posts will be required to be skilled to NVQ level 6 to enable them to transfer to the new service, if appropriate. The posts will work in geographical quadrants - numbers allocated to an area will vary according to need.

NEET Intervention posts

We will create a number of new posts to support the current 5 posts within the new Employability and Skills team to work directly with NEET young people, to guide them into provision and employment opportunities or to refer them to more targeted services. Again all of these posts will be deployed on a quadrant basis according to need. High NEET areas will have more posts.

Employment Recruitment Support posts

Posts to work alongside the NEET Intervention posts to offer specific employment and recruitment support services to young people seeking employment. These posts will support young people through every aspect of the process. There will be capacity for each quadrant.

SEN Transition support posts

Additional capacity will be created within the Transition Pathway Service to manage the statutory duties around Learning Difficulty Assessments.

The IAG Careers Guidance Specialists will enable Essex to retain a workforce to directly support schools and young people in making future choices and reducing the chances of young people falling NEET whilst the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service comes on stream. They will also support schools in their new duties and provide a key role in the development of NEET prevention strategies

The NEET Intervention Posts and Employment Recruitment Support posts will work directly with young people to re-engage them, support them into education, training and employment opportunities and refer vulnerable young people to more appropriate targeted services. These will form part of the NEET Reduction function of the Employability and Skills Unit.

The posts will work alongside existing strategies for NEET within the Council and provide additional capacity to support Raising of the Participation Age.

Funding & Delivery Models

A total of up to £1.5 million has been set aside from the Early Intervention Grant to fund the interim arrangements as we move forward to the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service.

It is anticipated that all new posts will be fully funded from the Early Intervention Grant and will be capped at EST spinal point 32 or equivalent ensuring total project budget remains below £1.5 million.

The exact number of posts in each aspect of the service will be determined following further consultation and work on the costs of posts. Due to the fact we are currently not in a position to finally determine how long the transition arrangements will need to be in place it is not easy to tell exactly the total numbers of staff and grades. For example if indications are that the project will run to April 2012 we will try to ensure that we bolster NEET reduction support and SEN transition. However if we are expected to stretch the interim arrangements for a full financial year we will need to consider further the number of posts we can fund and what their function will be.

The new posts will begin operating immediately after the decommissioning of Connexions is complete, it is expected that this will be at the end of July 2011. The interim arrangements will remain in place until either April or July 2012 when the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service will begin.

It is anticipated that these interim posts will be integrated into the Employability & Skills team in the first instance. After this period the posts will either transfer to the new All-Age Careers Guidance Service, if appropriate, or be released at the end of their fixed term contracts.