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**Youth Focus Update**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1** This report summarises the progress of the Youth Focus initiative to date. It also outlines key actions to develop structures that will encourage the involvement of young people in community planning and other democratic and citizenship activities.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** That the Community Planning Management Group notes the current position regarding Youth Focus and the Youth Service proposals to further develop youth participation activities.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** Youth Focus was established in 2008 to facilitate the involvement of young people (14 to 25) in youth participation activities and in particular community planning. Youth Focus is a “brand name” and image developed by young people to represent youth participation activities.
- 3.2** Youth Focus meetings were set up to correspond with the full Community Planning Partnership. This involved holding meetings four times a year, usually two weeks prior to the full partnership, with young people from across Argyll and Bute. The meetings enabled participants to become familiar with and develop a consensus view on key agenda items by taking part in discussions and workshops. The meeting is chaired by young people and is kept as interactive as possible. At the end of each meeting, two reps are chosen by their peers to attend the full partnership and represent the views of the group. They subsequently feed back through the Young Scot website, Youth Forums, youth groups and at the next Youth Focus meeting.
- 3.3** Since its first meeting; Youth Focus has covered topics such as equal opportunities, community engagement and an introduction to Community Planning. Eight young people have been supported to attend the full partnership meetings as representatives of Youth Focus.

- 3.4** Young people taking part were supported by the Young Scot/Dialogue Youth Worker and area based CLD Youth Work staff. The recent Best Value Review of Community Learning and Development instigated a restructuring of CLD with significant changes to structures and service delivery. A move away from area based teams to authority wide functional teams has resulted in the formation of a Youth Services Team. Another noteworthy change has been the transfer of the Young Scot/Dialogue Youth Worker into the Youth Services team.
- 3.5** During this transition period it has not been possible to support Youth Focus activities.

#### **4. Moving Forward.**

- 4.1** As is the case with all of Argyll and Bute community planning structures, a successful Youth Focus group depends on an active and vibrant local scene. The establishment of the Youth Services team will enable us to provide consistent and more effective support to the existing network of area based youth forums, which will in turn link young people into Youth Focus
- 4.2** The integration of the Young Scot/Dialogue Youth worker into the Youth Services team will allow for improved “joined up working” on projects such as Youth Focus. We are currently reviewing Youth Focus with a view to restarting the CPP meetings at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.3** Bute and Cowal Local Area Planning group are considering the option of having one of their meetings designated a Youth Focus meeting with the agenda given over to local young people and youth work organisations. This will enable them to highlight local issues, best practice and other relevant youth matters with LACPG members. If agreed, this model will be piloted in November 2010.

#### **5. Conclusion**

- 4.1** Young People are under represented in most stages of the Community Planning process. This is not a criticism but rather a reflection of how the process is implemented – formal meetings, jargon, agendas which may appear irrelevant to young people, daytime meetings when they are at school/college/work etc.
- 4.2** Young people should be considered valuable members of our communities, both in terms of the roles they currently fulfil and the potential they have to shape the future –

*“Organising public services around the needs and aspirations of service users and citizens is fundamental in our approach to*

*reforming public services. Children and young people are an important and challenging group in this. Involving them now is an investment in the future of our public services, ensuring that they are responsive to our changing needs in coming years, but also an investment in citizenship for Scotland.”*

### **Engaging Young People in Community Planning 2006**

- 4.2** One of the Youth Service’s six main outcomes is that “young people are involved in democratic, civic and voluntary activities” - links with community planning are an important part of this process.
- 4.3** Young people in Argyll and Bute can potentially become involved in democratic structures build capacity and voice their opinions on several levels:-
- Area based Youth Forums
  - Argyll and Bute Youth Forum
  - Scottish Youth Parliament
  - Youth Focus – CPP meeting
  - Youth Focus – LACPG meeting

These opportunities present a robust and progressive structure for young people with clear links to community planning.

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