

Rural Services APPG

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services
7th May 2019 at 2.30pm
Room N, Portcullis House, London

RURAL YOUTH

The purpose of the meeting was to consider matters relating to the challenges for young people in rural areas. With speakers from youth service providers currently members of the Rural Services Network.

PRESENT

Philip Dunne MP (Ludlow)

Dr David Drew MP (Stroud)

Bill Wiggin MP (North Herefordshire)

Nigel Huddleston MP (Mid Worcestershire)

Cat Smith MP (Lancaster & Fleetwood)

Lord Cameron of Dillington

Ishita Pawar-Kumar (Defra)

Jonny Haseldine (Parliamentary Assistant Anne Marie Morris MP)

Liam Budd (Political Advisor Cat Smith MP)

Antony Bennett (Senior Parliamentary Researcher Jo Churchill MP)

Lizzie Swan (Office of Ruth George MP)

External Speakers

Adam Peel (Research Officer – National Youth Agency)

Hannah Graham (Policy & Youth Engagement Manager – UK Youth)

Joshua Olasehinde (UK Youth Voice – Bierley, West Yorkshire)

Connor Strange (UK Youth Voice – Ammanford, Carmarthenshire)

Xavier Davies (UK Youth Voice – North East)

David Roe, (Transitions Manager – CSW Group)

In attendance

Graham Biggs MBE (RSN)

Jon Turner (RSN)

1. Introduction

Philip Dunne MP (Chair of APPG for Rural Services)

2. Apologies for Absence

Bishop Alan (St Albans)

Bishop Christine (Newcastle)

Bishop Steven (Ely)

Baroness Byford

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE

The Lord Crathorne KCVO

Lord Teverson

Anne-Marie Morris MP (Newton Abbot)

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP

Amanda Fearn (Development Director, National Youth Agency)

Michael Whiting (Membership Executive, UK Youth)

Joe Porter (UK Youth Voice – Endon, Staffordshire)

Kerrie Starkie (UK Youth – Morecambe, Lancashire)

Nik Harwood, (Chief Executive Officer, Young Somerset)

David Inman (Secretariat, Rural Services Network)

3. Minutes of the AGM – 12.12.18

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12.12.18 were circulated and noted.

4. Social Care Report update

The Chair reported that a meeting had been held with the Minister for Social Care where he was reassured that rural issues were being considered. However, the proposed Green Paper would unlikely be published until later in 2019, no date was available at this juncture.

5. Presentation: Challenges to Youth Services

Adam Peel, Research Office, National Youth Agency.

The Chair welcomed Adam to the meeting.

Adam explained that the National Youth Agency was a charity that had worked with Local Government for over 50 years to support councils to deliver and improve youth services for 8-25-year olds. Adam explained the NYA are the national body for youth work in England, setting the standards and qualifications that underpin practice in the youth sector.

Some of the key points from the presentation and questions were:

- Overall, public spending on ‘Services to Young People’ has reduced from just over £1 billion per year to £350 million in the space of 8 years across England.
- This is a drop of £670m, or about two-thirds. In real terms the reduction is around £850m when adjusted for inflation.

In Rural areas, in 2011/12, 66% of all authorities had a total net spend per head of the 11 – 19 aged population of over £100, this had fallen to 10% in 2016/17. (Urban = 55% to 20%)

Spending has therefore dropped drastically. However, in rural areas, the starting point for spending was, and remains, lower.

Public funding and levels of spend.

- Reductions overall but rural areas started from lower spend
- Universal services reduced the most
- Often less incentive for funders in rural areas when measured vs. ‘impact’

A question was raised about whether the funding of youth services was a statutory function requirement of local authorities and if so, was the funding still available?

Subsequent to the meeting Adam provided the following information

“It is clear that the biggest ‘drops’ in spend were in 2010/11 and 2012/13. However, as a result of the 2010 spending review in 2010/11 many previously ring-fenced targeted funds were also abolished as stand-alone funds; the Youth Opportunity Fund (£40.75m in 2010–11), the Youth Crime Action Plan (£11.98m in 2010–11), Challenge and Support (£3.9m in 2010–11), Intensive Intervention Grant (£2.8m in 2010–11), the Children’s Fund (£131.80m in 2010–11), the Positive Activities for Young People Programme (£94.5m in 2010–11), Youth Taskforce (£4.34m in 2010–11), Young People Substance Misuse (£7.0m in 2010–11) and Teenage Pregnancy (£27.5m in 2010–11).¹ Some were, however, retained in spending on Services to Young People and other areas have been addressed with other funding and services such as NCS, BIG, Step Up To Serve, and business CSR programmes.

The 2011 Select Committee investigation into ‘Services for Young People’ determined that these ring-fenced funds to youth services were incorporated into an all-encompassing Early Intervention Grant. However, as there was little statutory basis for a youth offer, and with cuts going into the Early Intervention Grant, this led *‘some local authorities to prioritise statutory and higher-risk services, such as children’s services, above youth services.’*²

Initial allocations of the EIG were based on the 2010/11 totals of the other grants it replaced. However, in line with the Government’s deficit reduction priorities total EIG

¹ House of Commons Education Committee, Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12, Vol. 1. (2011), p. 28 - 29.

² House of Commons Education Committee, Services for Young People: Third Report of the Session 2010-12, Vol. 1. (2011), p. 32. For an analysis which shows precisely this see also, Elaine Kelly, Tom Lee, Luke Sibieta and Tom Waters, *Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020* (IFS and Children’s Commissioner, 2018), esp. pp. 33 – 37

funding in 2011/12 was 11% less than in the prior year. The way the EIG was allocated changed in 2013/14 following alterations to the way local government received its funding from Whitehall, with the EIG being incorporated into baseline funding calculations for local authorities as part of the Business Rates Retention Scheme”.

Infrastructure support and the wider ‘eco-system’ of services that youth services sit within.

- More dispersed youth services in rural areas, and lack of ‘large’ hubs that can act to deliver a wider range of services.

Workforce and volunteer sustainability, training and development.

- Heavy reliance on volunteers, with little training or development for many
- Very fractured training pathways or opportunities to gain experience
- Lack of skills and expertise in some rural areas, e.g. drug abuse

Issues that are particular to youth services in rural areas, including for young people.

- Transport and access to education services
- Higher running costs for youth service providers – e.g. fuel costs
- Less opportunity for social mixing, limited diversity and cultural interaction
- Less opportunity for ‘participation’ whereas urban areas offer greater opportunities
- Extra demands on youth services due to issues affecting young people, isolation and mental health.

Youth Services in rural areas provide an important education function, which are not necessarily part of the formal education curriculum. For example, many of the sports activities offered by youth clubs.

The Chair thanked Adam for his excellent presentation.

6. Presentation: Challenges for Young people in rural areas

Hannah Graham, Policy & Youth Engagement Manager, UK Youth

UK Youth is a leading national charity committed to ensuring all young people are empowered to build bright futures, regardless of their background or circumstances. Many of the young people they reach face personal, circumstantial or systemic multiple barriers, which are often amplified if they are also based in a rural area. These issues can lead to exclusion, isolation or loss of belonging and identity.

Youth engagement is embedded in all its work at UK Youth and they support their members to involve young people in decision making in their youth organisations and in their wider community. UK Youth Voice members are their national campaigners who strengthen links between youth organisations, build relationships with decision makers and inspire other young people to take action on the things that matter to them the most.

There then followed three presentations by members of the UK Youth Voice, who represent rural communities from far-reaching rural communities across the UK.

[Connor Strange, \(Ammanford, Carmarthenshire\)](#) – *please click on the link*

[Joshua Olasehinde, \(Bierley, Yorkshire\)](#) – *please click on the link*

[Xavier Davies \(North East\)](#) - *please click on the link*

The Chair thanked Hannah, Connor, Joshua and Xavier for their excellent and inspiring presentations.

General Questions arising from the UK Youth presentations

There was a general debate about the inadequate services young people receive in rural areas to address mental health issues. Cat Smith MP suggested that young people have to wait far too long to access the services of GPs and that schools should provide some mental health support. The Chair explained that the Government was working with the NHS to provide mental health support in schools in the future.

The Chair had to leave the meeting and handed the Chair to Mr Graham Biggs.

The Next Step

The Chair explained that many of the service issues and challenges outlined in the meeting were, though not specifically in respect of “youth”, covered within the House of Lords Select Committee Report on Rural Economy published on Saturday 27th April. under the heading “Time for a Strategy for the Rural Economy”. Although the Heading refers to a strategy for the rural economy the report, quite properly, picks up – and makes recommendations on – a wide range of rural service and social issues necessary for a properly functioning and thriving rural economy.

This is a major win for the RSN and its Campaign launched on 1st March, 2019 calling for a Cross Government Rural Strategy. The Lord’s Report very strongly aligns with the RSN’s call – including for fair funding for rural councils, public services and community organisations.

The Chair explained that a series of regional workshops are being planned which will focus on a number of topics which require further evidence gathering to inform the Call on the Government to consider a Rural Strategy. RSN’s Rural Services APPG will be provide the mechanism to inform both MPs and Lords.

David Drew MP, was also keen for the evidence gathering to be used, where appropriate, to help to inform the future direction of the Adult & Social Care Green Paper.

The Chair explained that UK Youth and the other presenters who attended the APPG would be engaged fully in the next stage of the Call for Rural Strategy.

Furthermore, the UK Youth members would be given an opportunity to attend the 2020 Vulnerability Day in parliament with a Youth Session.

7. Presentation: Isolating Isolation – A lack of access to opportunities & loneliness in the countryside

Nik Harwood, CEO, Young Somerset

Unfortunately, Nik was unable to attend the event.

8. Presentation: Youth Employment/education/training in rural areas

David Roe, Transitions Manager, CSW Group.

The Chair welcomed David to the meeting.

David explained CSW Group are a not for profit company who deliver contracts that support young people into employment, education and training across the South West.

David said that he had sought feedback from young people, CSW workers, training providers and employers to provide evidence to support his presentation.

Some of the key points from the presentation and questions were:

Lack of Public Transport

- Limited public transport impacts on ability to find work, access services such as education and training and social opportunities which can lead to poor health including mental health
- Often young people cannot afford public transport or Wheels 2 Work schemes that would enable them to widen their search for employment
- Some jobs are available but often due to the timetable of public transport this can make it difficult or impossible to get to work on time
- Young People often have to rely on family for transport (if they have any) which has to fit around work other commitments which can hamper job searching, accessing opportunities
- Employer's located in rural areas say that it can be difficult to employ an apprentice / young person due to a lack of transport / poor public transport infrastructure
- Some young people lack confidence to access public transport

Lack of opportunity or lack of a sustainable opportunity

- **Small range of education providers** - In rural areas there are often less education providers than in urban areas limiting the choice of young people in these areas.

- **Lack of employment opportunities**
 - There are fewer apprenticeships available in rural versus urban areas. For example, in April this year in Plymouth there were 139 versus 24 apprenticeships in North Devon and Torridge.
- **lack of a sustainable employment**
 - Many jobs are seasonal which can result in lack of stability
 - Available jobs are often part-time
 - Many jobs are entry level with no prospect of progressing
 - Due to lack of wide range of opportunities many young people leave rural areas resulting in 'brain drain'. Some young people are not able to move away as not able to go into Higher Education and do not have the financial/social resources to enable moving away.

Lord Cameron of Dillington asked about the current status of the Wheels to Work Scheme. David did not know the full extent of current scheme. It was agreed that this matter would be investigated further in terms of how the scheme is funded and where it currently operates. The Defra representative suggested that some schemes were operated by ACRE members.

The Chair thanked David for his very informative presentation.

Meeting finished at 3:45pm