

Youth Services Provision Task Group

**Duration of the
Review** July 2011 – April 2012

**Task Group
Membership** Councillor Simon Chalk (Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Blake
Councillor Andrew Brazier
Councillor Gay Hopkins
Councillor Phil Mould
Councillor Luke Stephens
Co-opted Member, Mr Harry Bishop (Trinity High School)

**Overview and Scrutiny
Support Officer** Jess Bayley

**Date for Submission of
Report** April 2012

Chair's Foreword



**Councillor Simon
Chalk, Chair of the
Youth Services
Provision Task Group**

I proposed this review because having grown up in Redditch I was unaware of all the youth activities in Redditch promoting the belief that there were none. As a result of this review I have learnt that there are many youth activities in the Borough. Unfortunately, just as we as a Council haven't in the past been very good at promoting our excellent services many organisations that deliver youth services have not promoted their activities well to young people. Our recommendations aim to change this and other problems we have identified.

On behalf of the Task Group I would like to thank all the young people we consulted during the review. In particular, I would like to thank Mr Harry Bishop, who acted as a Co-opted member of the group and provided really useful information. I would also like to thank all the expert witnesses we interviewed for being so candid in the feedback they provided to us. Without this honesty we would have missed a lot of useful evidence.

I would similarly like to thank the other five elected members of the group for their hard work and the support Officer, Jess Bayley for her continued support.

I believe that these recommendations should be given serious consideration as advisory guidelines for future service delivery because ultimately this will shape the future for our young people.

Councillor Simon Chalk, Chair of the review.

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Introduction

The Youth Services Provision Task Group have completed a thorough review of youth services in Redditch over a ten month period. Evidence has been gathered from a variety of sources, including professional reports, written submissions and interviews with expert witnesses. The final list of recommendations proposed by the group are informed by this evidence.

The review has taken place at a time when arrangements for the delivery of youth services in Worcestershire have been in the process of changing. The new system for delivering youth services in the county will not become operational until mid-2012 and it is difficult at this stage to determine what impact the new framework will have on youth services or youth participation in positive activities within the Borough.

However, the Councillors are keen to be constructive and recognise that change can have a positive impact on service delivery when local circumstances, opportunities and barriers are recognised. The proposals contained in this report are primarily designed to help Worcestershire County Council to develop new youth service arrangements that will meet the needs of young people living in Redditch.

The review could not have been completed without invaluable assistance from expert witnesses who are experienced in providing youth services to young people, both in the Borough and in other parts of the county. The evidence provided by the young people consulted during the review was also essential as it ensured that all of the group's recommendations were informed by the needs of young people living in Redditch.

The members of the Youth Services Provision Task Group urge both Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council to approve and implement their recommendations to ensure that future youth service delivery meets the needs and priorities of Redditch youth.

Recommendations

We RECOMMEND that

- 1) Youth activities in Redditch should be promoted using the following communication tools:
 - a) a new dedicated Redditch youth website;
 - b) Worcestershire Plug and Play website;
 - c) local high schools' Frog Intranet systems; and
 - d) social networking platforms.
- 2) There should be a youth work co-ordinator for Redditch financed by funding held by Worcestershire County Council to help maximise the number of youth activities in the town.
- 3) The Redditch Commissioning Group should ensure that there is a seamless transition from the old system for delivering youth services to the new commissioning framework to make sure that gaps in service provision to young people in Redditch do not occur.
- 4) The Redditch Commissioning Group should seriously consider the following types of bids for funding:
 - a) bids for youth work to be delivered using a social enterprise model; and
 - b) bids requesting that the funding cover the costs of employing a trained youth worker as part of delivering a positive activity to young people.

Recommendations

- 5) **The Redditch Commissioning Group has been tasked with consulting with young people. We recommend that the following groups should be consulted as part of this process:**
 - a) **Redditch Student Council; and**
 - b) **a focus group of young offenders and young people at risk of offending.**

- 6) **The Redditch Community Safety Partnership / North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership should be invited to present information to the Redditch Commissioning Group about youth related crime and anti-social behaviour in Redditch as part of the new commissioning framework.**

- 7) **Redditch Borough Council should submit bids for positive activities funding in the new commissioning framework in partnership with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that have experience delivering youth activities and should offer to host these activities at Council owned *community centres* where appropriate.**

- 8) **Access to public transport has been consistently identified as a barrier to youth participation in positive activities. We recommend that to address this problem the following actions should be considered:**
 - a) **the remit of the WRVS Redditch Community Rides scheme should be extended to helping transport young people to different activities in the Borough and this pilot scheme should be extended beyond the current deadline of April 2012; and**
 - b) **Dial a Ride vehicles should be provided to transport young people to local events and festivities.**

Recommendations

- 9) **Links should be provided directly from the Frog intranet system used by local high schools to bus companies' websites to provide young people with access to up to date information about bus timetables and routes in Redditch.**

- 10) **The Youth Services Provision Task Group's findings and the content of the group's final report should be considered by the Redditch Commissioning Group prior to commissioning youth activities for the Borough.**

Background information

Objectives The review of youth services was launched at Redditch Borough Council in June 2011. At the time Councillors were concerned that there were limited opportunities available for young people to participate in youth activities in the Borough and they were keen to address this situation.

There were a number of key objectives to the review. This included the following:

- 1) Considering the implications of funding cuts and any changes to the model of service provision for the delivery of youth services in Redditch.
- 2) Investigating the potential for Redditch Borough Council services to address any gaps in service provision left following cuts at the county level.
- 3) Scrutinising the accessibility of current Redditch Borough Council services to young people and identifying any actions that could be taken to improve accessibility.
- 4) Investigating actions that could be taken to improve marketing of local youth related events that are currently delivered by the Council.
- 5) Analysing opportunities available for young people to participate in the arts and how these opportunities might be extended.
- 6) Reviewing the potential for services to be supported through sponsorship by private sector companies.
- 7) Investigating actions that could be taken to engage third sector organisations in delivering youth services suitable for the needs of local young people.
- 8) Scrutinising actions taken by other district Councils to address cuts to youth service provision.
- 9) Analysing and determining the financial implications of any actions that could be taken to address the provision of youth services in the Borough.
- 10) Consulting young people about their needs and priorities.

The group was not tasked with reviewing provision of sporting activities to young people as this formed the basis of a separate scrutiny review in 2011/12.

Background information

Approach to the Review

The Youth Services Provision Task Group review was launched at a time when Worcestershire County Council was reviewing youth service provision in the county. A key component of the review therefore involved monitoring developments with changes to youth service delivery in the Borough, though best practice arrangements in other parts of the country and opportunities and barriers to promoting greater participation in youth activities were also considered.

The group considered evidence from a variety of sources. Written evidence was obtained from scrutiny reviews completed by other local authorities on the subject of youth service delivery. The content of a report from the House of Commons Education Committee, *Services for Young People* (2011), was also reviewed to obtain information about national guidelines and trends.

At the local level representatives of both Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council were consulted with regard to both existing and proposed service delivery. Evidence was also obtained, through questionnaire feedback and face-to-face interviews, from local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations that already deliver independent youth services to young people living in Redditch. In addition, the group consulted groups and organisations that deliver youth services to young people living in other parts of the county in order to obtain evidence about best practice that could be implemented in the Borough.

Throughout the review attempts were made to consult with young people living in Redditch. The Redditch Student Council was consulted on two occasions by the group, though other young people were also interviewed. Students were also consulted during Local Democracy Day in October 2011.

The group consulted key expert witnesses as well as Redditch Student Council about their initial proposals. All of the feedback received by the group was considered by the Councillors and helped to inform their final recommendations.

Service Delivery - Context

Legal Context

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that positive activities were provided to young people outside school hours as far as was reasonably practicable. In two-tier authority areas, such as Worcestershire, the County Council was awarded this responsibility.

The statutory duty required the responsible local authority to provide young people aged 13-19 years old (and 20-24 years old for young people with learning disabilities) with access to positive leisure time activities (Worcestershire County Council, report, 26th May 2011, p 2). The Council needed either to directly provide facilities for positive activities, to assist other service deliverers in providing these activities or to make arrangements for facilitating access to the such facilities. Responsible local authorities were also required to consult young people about the activities and facilities available to youth in the area and to publicise up-to-date information about those activities. (House of Commons Education Committee, p 7, 2011).

Positive Activities

A key responsibility of Worcestershire County Council in this context is to ensure that positive activities are provided to young people. Positive activities are activities that young people participate in which may have a positive impact on their health, family, school or college life and even on the local community. A range of activities can be considered positive activities including: sports, cooking, music, participating in youth clubs, the arts, and learning about subjects such as substance abuse. (Worcestershire County Council, Consultation, 2011).

Worcestershire Youth Services – Previous Arrangements

In previous years Worcestershire County Council employed a team of youth workers who delivered positive activities directly to young people living in the county alongside Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups. In Redditch key bases were provided for youth services including Redditch Youth House, based on Ipsley Street close to the town centre, Arrow Vale Youth Centre, located close to Arrow Vale High School in Winyates, and Kingsley Youth Centre located close to Kingsley College in Woodrow.

Service Delivery - Context

Plug and Play

In 2007 Worcestershire County Council launched the *Plug and Play* website to promote positive youth activities taking place in the county to young people. The website can be accessed and updated for free by organisations delivering youth services and has been utilised by a variety of bodies, including Worcestershire County Council and Redditch Borough Council, to promote activities to young people. In 2010/11 125 Redditch based activities had been advertised on the website for the consideration of young people.

Worcestershire Youth Cabinet

Young people had also been consulted in Worcestershire through the Worcestershire Youth Cabinet. The Youth Cabinet comprises a group of young people, aged 11-18, including four youth representatives for Redditch Borough. The body is designed to provide a voice for young people in the county.

Redditch Borough Council – Services

Redditch Borough Council did at one time directly employ a youth service team which primarily delivered detached youth work in the Borough. This service ceased to be provided by the Council in 2006. However, Redditch Borough Council continues to deliver many activities in which young people can participate.

In particular the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services team delivers a number of services that can be utilised by young people. This includes sporting activities that can be accessed at a variety of locations, the Palace Youth Theatre and Morton Stanley Festival. The Palace Youth theatre are increasingly providing meeting outside the town centre to provide young people from local neighbourhoods with an opportunity to participate in the arts. In relation to sports the recently redeveloped Abbey Stadium should expand provision of positive sporting activities to all residents including young people.

Positive activities provided by Redditch Borough Council are promoted in a variety of ways. The Council's Leisure Services team promotes many leisure and sporting activities for young people on

Service Delivery - Context

Redditch Borough Council – Services

the *Plug and Play* website. Information about leisure activities is also provided on relevant sections of the Council's website whilst details about cultural and artistic events are often promoted on the Arts in Redditch (AiR) Partnership's website. Traditional print media has also been utilised in the past to promote leisure activities, both in the local press and in editions of the Council's magazine, *Redditch Matters*.

Increasingly Redditch Borough Council is utilising social media to inform residents from different generations about events, activities and services. This has included contributing information to the Big Local App, an independently managed application which provides information about activities in Redditch and Bromsgrove. The Council's Twitter feed in particular has received a lot of attention from external stakeholders. Unfortunately, in both cases it is difficult to determine to what extent young people have been interested in Council messages. However, following training of staff in social networking it is likely that more targeted marketing arrangements using social media will be utilised to advertise youth activities to young people. Indeed, already Facebook has been utilised by the Council to promote events and activities, such as the Morton Stanley Festival, primarily to young people.

Redditch Borough Council – Community Centres

The Council manages six community centres which can be hired by external bodies to deliver community activities, including youth activities. A discount hire rate is offered to VCS organisations. Local community groups have already recognised the value of these centres: currently Oakenshaw Community Centre is utilised by the independent youth group, The Ditch, and the Batchley Community Centre is used by the Batchley Support Group. There remains capacity at the majority of the centres to increase use of the facilities by outside organisations for the delivery of community based activities.

Redditch Partnership

The Redditch Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership in Redditch, has contributed to an increase in the provision of positive activities to young people and families living in Winyates as

Service Delivery - Context

Redditch Partnership

part of the ongoing Area of Highest Need project. This has included delivering family friendly activities at the Winyates Community Barn in partnership with the YMCA.

Redditch Student Council

The Redditch Student Council was introduced by Redditch Borough Council to provide young people with an opportunity to learn about and participate in an electoral process. A constitution had been developed for the Student Council and formal Student Council meetings, similar to official Committee meetings attended by elected Councillors, provided Student Councillors with an opportunity to participate in a democratic process. Originally all Student Councillors were elected to serve on the Student Council from the local High Schools based in the town. However, at a later date this election process had ceased to take place and instead students had been appointed from their local schools to the Student Council.

The Redditch Student Council had originally been supported by Redditch Borough Council's Youth Service Team. This arrangement ended when the Council ceased to employ a youth service. To address this gap a youth worker from Worcestershire County Council had subsequently been appointed to support the work of Redditch Student Council on a part-time basis.

During the course of the previous 15 years the Redditch Student Council had made a number of achievements, which included helping to facilitate the introduction of a basketball court in the Arrow Valley Park in Redditch. In recognition of the group's achievements FLOSS (Funding Lots of Super Stuff) funding had been awarded to the Student Council by Worcestershire County Council. Redditch Student Council utilised much of this funding to deliver activities in the Borough, though grants were also provided to VCS organisations that could demonstrate that the funding would have a positive impact on young people living in the Borough.

Unfortunately, by 2011 participation in Student Council meetings had started to decline. In addition, the number of local High Schools participating in the process had been reduced from six

Service Delivery - Context

Redditch Student Council

to four though each of these schools remained committed to maintaining a student body. The Student Councillors were increasingly struggling to commit to attending key meetings during the year due to clashes with examinations and other core functions in the academic timetable.

An internal review of Redditch Student Council is now in the process of taking place. In part this review was considered to be timely due to ongoing changes at the county level to youth service provision. However, a review should also help to address some of the current difficulties with the existing model of the Student Council.

The Student Council is aware of these developments. In March 2012 the Redditch Student Council was consulted by an independent youth worker regarding the future of the body. At the time of writing the outcome of these discussions remained to be clarified.

Redditch Borough Councillors currently remains committed to maintaining a Student Council in Redditch and it is likely that it will continue to exist in some form in future years. However, the group recognises that it is likely that current operating arrangements will alter to meet the needs of young people in the Borough.

Commissioning Framework

Worcestershire County Council Service Changes - Background

In 2011, as part of Worcestershire County Council's programme for budget reductions, expenditure was cut on positive activities by £1.4 million for the following three years. A budget of £1.1 million was allocated to positive activities in 2011/12, compared to £2.5 million in 2010/11. In a report to the Council's Cabinet on the subject, *Positive Activities for Young People*, it was determined that instead of delivering youth services directly to young people services would be commissioned from public, private and VCS organisations. (Worcestershire County Council (WCC), report, 26th May 2011, pp 2-3).

The decision to introduce a commissioning framework to deliver positive activities to young people has been made at a time when nationally strategic commissioning is being promoted as good practice. As part of this process it is not considered necessary for local authorities to be the default service providers. Instead, local authorities have a role to play in facilitating competition and innovation between the VCS, and social and private enterprises. (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011, p 36).

Similarly, Worcestershire County Council is not the only local authority that has reduced expenditure on positive activities for young people in recent years. A survey of local authorities conducted by the Confederation of Heads of Young Peoples' Services in February 2011 found that budget reductions averaged 28 per cent, though some authorities were cutting between 70 – 100 per cent of allocated budgets. (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011, p 32).

Worcestershire County Council recognised, however, that the budget reductions could potentially impact on youth services and young people. To mitigate this impact the Council resolved to: support the VCS to sustain and develop youth service provision; target resources at the most disadvantaged young people; and devolve responsibility for commissioning positive youth activities to the local level. The £1.1 million budget was to be divided between each of the six districts to use for youth service delivery. (WCC, report, 26th May 2011, p 3).

Commissioning Framework

Consultation

Worcestershire County Council launched a three month consultation exercise in May 2011 to provide interested stakeholders, including children and young people, with an opportunity to comment on the Council's proposals. A number of consultation events, facilitated and attended by young people, were held throughout the county, though many young people and interested stakeholders also completed a questionnaire in response to the consultation.

Youth Services Group – Consultation Response

In September 2011 the Youth Services Provision Task Group interviewed Peter Sugg, Capacity Building Manager, and County Councillor Jane Potter, Chair of the Redditch Local Children's Partnership, regarding the proposals detailed in the *Positive Activities for Young People* report. The interview provided members of the group with an opportunity to clarify the purpose of the proposed commissioning framework for youth services.

Based on this feedback and the evidence that had been gathered by the Councillors during the course of their review the Youth Services Provision Task Group responded to this consultation. (Appendix B).

Consultation Feedback

In total 2001 individuals participated in Worcestershire County Council's consultation event. There were a number of key themes in the feedback which included the following points:

- decision making at the local level was generally supported to ensure that local needs were met;
- it was considered important for young people to have an active role in decision-making; and
- local decisions needed to be informed by local stakeholders. (WCC, report, 24th November 2011, pp 3-4). A detailed summary of the feedback received by Worcestershire County Council during the consultation has been published by the Council in *ChS2 Positive Activities –Consultation Report*. (WCC, 8th November 2011).

Commissioning Framework

Approved Arrangements - Summary

On 24th November 2011 Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet made a number of decisions relating to the future delivery of positive activities to young people. It was agreed that the commissioning framework would be introduced from 2012/13 onwards, with services commissioned at the local district level. To ensure there was some continuity in service provision the County Council would cease to directly provide positive activities by 2014. (To view a list of the decisions made by Worcestershire County Council on this subject please refer to Appendix A, p 62).

Worcestershire County Council recognised that the VCS would require support to participate successfully in the commissioning framework. To address this situation £100,000 of the £1.1 million budget for positive activities was invested in the VCS to develop and sustain activities for young people as well as to provide infrastructure support to the sector. (WCC, report, 24th November 2011, pp 1-2).

The Council also recognised that unforeseen developments could impact on the continuing delivery of youth services in future years. It was agreed that from April 2012 an additional transitional support fund of £150,000 per year for the following three years would be made available to help address any such unforeseen circumstances. (WCC, report, 24th November 2011, p 1).

Funding Distribution - Rationale

Worcestershire County Council determined that the £1.1 million budget for positive activities would be divided between local areas in accordance with district boundaries. It was agreed that a new approach to allocating funding at the local level also needed to be adopted as by 2011 funding allocation was based on historical precedent rather than on evidence of need. (WCC, report, 26th May 2011, p 4).

In the new commissioning framework funding would be allocated to each district on a ratio of 70 per cent funding for need and 30 per cent for population, reflecting the population of young people aged 13-19 living in the district. The needs of the local youth population were addressed using

Commissioning Framework

Funding Distribution - Rationale

ACORN data, which is post-code sensitive and assesses the proportion of people who are classified as “hard-pressed”. (WCC, 24th May 2011, p 4, and WCC, 24th November 2011 pp 4-5).

Funding Allocation - Redditch

The budget that was allocated to deliver youth activities in Redditch in 2012/13 was established at £185,083. This represented a reduction of 23 per cent in funding for positive youth activities in the Borough when compared to the previous year. However, the budget allocation for Redditch compared favourably with other districts in the county and represented the smallest level of reduction in funding in the county. (WCC, Minutes, 24th November 2011, p 5).

Target Outcomes

Worcestershire County Council has identified that there are a number of key outcomes that should be targeted when commissioning positive activities for young people. In particular, the Council has decided that commissioned activities should be targeted at providing young people with a chance to learn new skills, reducing anti-social behaviour and tackling those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

The decision to encourage Commissioning Groups to target commissioning corresponds with national trends. Indeed in a submission to the House of Commons Education Committee the Department of Education listed one of the four key principles of youth services as being “a stronger focus for public funding on evidence-based targeted intervention with greater flexibility and responsibility for local areas to prioritise and allocate funding according to local need.” (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011, p 14).

Commissioning Groups

Responsibility for commissioning positive youth activities at the local level has been delegated by Worcestershire County Council to local Commissioning Groups. These Commissioning Groups will comprise of each of the County Councillors representing a district. In the Borough there will be eight members of the Redditch Commissioning Group who will all have an equal vote on the commissioning of services. The Commissioning Group will not be permitted to divide funding

Commissioning Framework

Commissioning Groups

between different electoral divisions. Instead, the Commissioning Group will be required to commission activities for the whole Borough that will meet the commissioning outcome targets.

Each Commissioning Group will need to consult with young people representing the youth of the district, though local discretion has been provided to organise consultation arrangements suitable for the local area. Commissioning Groups will be expected to assess applications for funding, to determine how these applications meet targets for funding and will also be expected to help monitor the impact of commissioned services at the local level. The County Councillors are receiving training to enable them to fulfil this responsibility effectively.

Local Children's Partnerships

Local Children's Partnerships, comprising representatives of local organisations that work with children and young people, will be invited to support Commissioning Groups in the new commissioning framework. Based on the expertise of members, the partnership should be able to provide valuable advice about current needs and circumstances, as well as to assist with monitoring the impact of commissioned services at the local level. The Local Children's Partnerships will also be expected to help Commissioning Groups to organise youth consultation processes. In Redditch, the Local Children's Partnership is already established as a sub-group of the Redditch Local Strategic Partnership and should be in an ideal position to support the Redditch Commissioning Group when the commissioning framework comes into affect.

Redditch Youth House and Youth Centres

During the Worcestershire County Council Cabinet meeting on 24th November 2011 consideration was also given to future use of Redditch Youth House, Arrow Valley Youth Centre and Kingsley Youth Centre. In a report on the subject of all youth assets in the county, *Future Youth Support Assets*, it was determined that many of the centres would no longer be required by the County Council once the local authority ceased to directly deliver youth services to young people. Instead, providers would be expected to identify possible locations for delivery. (WCC, report 2, 24th November 2011, p 5).

Commissioning Framework

Redditch Youth House and Youth Centres

In this context the continuing use of Redditch Youth House as a youth facility was no longer considered to be tenable. Instead, it was agreed that the Youth House, as a stand-alone building should be sold for redevelopment. The Youth Centres were not, however, suitable for resale. Instead it was agreed that an offer should be made to transfer the centres to Arrow Vale High School and Kingsley School respectively on condition that the buildings would remain available for community use. (WCC, Cabinet Minutes, 24th November 2011, minute 1307).

Evidence Gathering

Voluntary and Community Sector - Redditch

Questionnaires

The group recognised that it was important to consult with representatives of local VCS organisations during the review due to the increasing importance of VCS youth service delivery in the new commissioning framework. Unfortunately, due to the timescales available it was not possible to interview representatives of every VCS organisation delivering positive activities to young people in the Borough. However, it was possible to consult local VCS representatives through a mixture of questionnaire evidence and interviews.

The group produced a questionnaire that was designed to provide representatives of local VCS organisations with an opportunity to contribute to the review. (To view a template of this questionnaire please refer to Appendix C, p 82). The questionnaires were circulated to particular VCS organisations based in different parts of the Borough which were known to already deliver youth services to young people. Unfortunately only three completed questionnaires were received from the following organisations but the contents of all of the documents provided crucial evidence about local circumstances, challenges and opportunities in the sector.

Batchley Support Group Batchley Support Group is a community based neighbourhood association and registered charity which operates primarily in Batchley, Redditch. The group was consulted by the Councillors because the organisation has experience in delivering community based activities, including to young people, within Redditch.

The Ditch The Ditch is a youth project that meets on weekly basis and is based in Oakenshaw, Redditch. The Ditch is managed by the local neighbourhood Police Officer, though trained youth workers also provide support. The group decided to consult with representatives of The Ditch because the body provides a bespoke youth support service to young people living in a local neighbourhood.

Your Ideas Your Ideas is a youth and community project based in Matchborough, Redditch. The organisation delivers a number of youth activities and was selected because it operates from a base in one of the parts of the Borough that were developed as part of the new town in Redditch.

Evidence Gathering

Questionnaire Feedback

There were a number of key themes in the responses that were received in the completed questionnaires. This included the following points:

Basic Funding Needs: VCS organisations were particularly concerned about the potential for limited funding availability to act as a barrier to sustainable provision of quality youth and community activities. Limited funding can also be challenging for VCS organisations in relation to staffing costs, equipment and rents for premises. Provision of premises at reduced rates or peppercorn rents can effect whether a VCS organisation is able to provide youth services at a particular location.

Bidding Processes: Complicated and lengthy bid writing processes can create barriers to completing applications, particularly for smaller VCS service providers. Excessive bureaucracy in bidding processes was also considered to be an obstacle to the delivery of effective youth work. A number of respondents were prepared to work in partnership to bid for funding and to deliver youth activities in the new commissioning framework.

Redditch Borough Council's Community Centres: The Community Centres are currently used by a number of VCS organisations and are considered to be useful assets for the community. However, limited storage space, lack of access to kitchen facilities and restricted space for displaying youth art work in the centres at present limits the suitability of the centres as bases for youth activities.

Promotion: The majority of VCS organisations used a variety of methods to promote activities to young people, including traditional print media, word of mouth, referrals from other agencies and detached outreach work with young people. Most of the VCS organisations had developed a website to promote activities to young people, though limited reference was made to the use of social media and no mention was made of using *Plug and Play*.

Evidence Gathering

Questionnaire Feedback

Youth Workers: Support provided by trained, professional youth workers was considered to be key to effective delivery of youth services. Effective youth workers are able to develop positive relationships with young people and to break down barriers between generations. However, it takes time to develop effective relationships between youth workers and young people. In cases where funding for posts cannot be secured these relationships and the local knowledge are lost and will take time and resources to recover.

There were also some differences of opinion in the feedback received in the completed questionnaires.

In particular, provision of youth services at the local level divided the respondents. On the one hand the Councillors were informed that it was important to provide young people with access to positive activities in each district in Redditch because many young people would struggle to access activities in other parts of the Borough. On the other hand there were concerns that local level provision could encourage “tribalism” between groups of young people based in different parts of the Borough and that this tribalism could have a negative impact on social cohesion.

Concerns were also expressed regarding the disposal of the building assets that had previously been used as the bases for youth work, including Redditch Youth House and the two Youth Centres. It was suggested that these buildings should be made available to service providers in the new commissioning framework. However, this concern was not shared by all respondents.

Despite these difference each of the respondents was aware that a new commissioning framework had been introduced and all of the organisations were intending to bid for funding.

Evidence Gathering

What's Your Point?

The Task Group arranged to interview representatives of the youth group, What's Your Point? In January 2012. The interview was organised because the Councillors recognised that the organisation had been established in Bryant Place, Woodrow, as a bespoke venue for independent delivery of positive activities to young people and families living in the local neighbourhood.

What's Your Point? provided targeted services to individuals from difficult family backgrounds living in the local area, though participation in youth activities was open to all younger teenagers. Young people could participate in a variety of activities organised by What's Your Point, including cooking and art work, though Bryant Place also provided a safe haven for young people living in difficult circumstances.

Like the other local VCS organisations, funding availability often impacted on What's Your Point? Funding had to be obtained from external sources, though financial assistance had been provided by the Council in the form of a peppercorn rent for the use of Bryant Place. Funds were inevitably allocated to delivering core services. There was limited capacity to invest in staff training or to ensure that essential skills, such as bid writing techniques and ICT skills, remained up-to-date.

The majority of young people learned about What's Your Point through word of mouth from friends. The organisation was aware of the *Plug and Play* website and recognised the value of promoting activities on the internet. However, due to a lack of resources it had not been possible by early 2012 to develop a website and staff were unfamiliar with how to add content to *Plug and Play*.

Despite these obstacles What's Your Point was keen to work in a creative manner to meet the needs of local young people and was intending to participate in the new commissioning framework. In order to avoid duplication and to share understanding of best practice the organisation was keen to work in partnership with other service providers based in the area. In addition, local residents had expressed an interest in opening a community café at Bryant Place in order to provide a focal

Evidence Gathering

What's Your Point? point for the local community as well as an additional source of income to support the service.

External Youth Venues The Youth Services Task Group was keen to learn about youth services in other parts of the country. This information provided Members with an opportunity to identify examples of best practice that could be applied in Redditch as well as common trends in youth service delivery.

**Barcode Youth Café –
Weston-Super-Mare** The Barcode Youth Café is a facility provided by Weston-Super-Mare Town Council. The cafe was established in 2005 following a campaign by the Weston-Super-Mare Youth Council. The venue offers entertainment, activities, and a safe environment in which young people can socialise with their friends. Music nights, including musical performances and karaoke, could also be accessed at the venue on particular nights in the week.

A number of additional activities are delivered at the venue that provided young people with an opportunity to participate in positive activities. This includes access to library resources at the café, both through ICT access and support group work. Sexual health clinics and substance abuse sessions can also be accessed at the venue. Young people are provided with an opportunity to volunteer at the café, both with library support services as well as organising events.

Significant financial investment had been required to establish the venue. To support this process the cafe had received funding from the Big Lottery Fund. The Barcode Youth Café had, however, recognised the need to secure additional sources of funding. In particular, extra financial support was obtained through hiring facilities available at the venue out to external parties. (Weston-Super-Mare Town Council, 2012).

THE TRUNK - Bromsgrove

THE TRUNK was established in Charford, Bromsgrove, in 2009 in the premises of a former youth venue. The local community and local Councillors had been keen to retain a youth facility on the site and consequently, the Bromsgrove Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership in Bromsgrove,

Evidence Gathering

THE TRUNK - Bromsgrove

had obtained funding to retain the facility. Empowering People in Communities (EPIC) had secured a contract to manage the facility on behalf of the Bromsgrove Partnership and the local community. Representatives of EPIC provided evidence in person for the consideration of the group.

A variety of activities were available to young people aged 12 years or more at THE TRUNK, though the facility also provided a safe place for young people to gather. Initially, different youth sessions had been organised for young people of different age groups. However, this arrangement no longer applied because it had been considered important to provide young people of different ages, genders and backgrounds with an opportunity to mix. A Youth Committee had been established at THE TRUNK. This Youth Committee provided young people with an opportunity to make decisions about activities and use of equipment and encouraged young people to develop a sense of responsibility for the venue.

The group was advised that in order for young people to benefit from youth work there needed to be consistency in service delivery. EPIC had established additional youth groups in other parts of Bromsgrove district, including Catshill and Sidemoor, however, the introduction of youth services in Catshill had been challenging as service provision in the area in previous years had been inconsistent. Due to these gaps in service provision, and limited trust between young people and figures of authority, the organisation had had to undertake more extensive promotional work than usual in advance of the service's opening to attract young people. In particular, detached youth work, involving staff promoting the service at locations frequented by young people, had been necessary to develop awareness amongst young people.

There were a number of key factors that were identified as important to the successful delivery of youth work at THE TRUNK. The staff were all experienced and committed youth workers, and many had received professional training. Staff were employed as Sessional Youth Workers, and therefore were required to deliver services and activities at times and locations convenient for

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THE TRUNK - Bromsgrove

young people, rather than in accordance with traditional working practices. The organisation had also developed positive working relationships with partner organisations, including local representatives of the West Mercia Police Force. It was anticipated that this had had a positive impact on community relations with the police as well as on youth perceptions of the police in the local area. Similarly, a supportive working relationship with the Head Teacher of a local Middle School had enabled EPIC to establish a successful youth venue in Catshill.

EPIC operates as a social enterprise body. Social enterprises follow a business model for managing facilities, whereby costs need to be covered and the organisation aims to generate a profit which be in turn be used to improve service delivery. In Charford, complicated funding arrangements were in place at the launch of THE TRUNK. This included the provision of the units where the facility was based rent free in the initial months of operation and provision of resources from partners represented on the Bromsgrove Partnership under a Section 10 agreement which enabled partner organisations to pool resources. (Bromsgrove District Council, 2009).

Additional sources of funding have subsequently been secured to ensure that the costs of the facility can be covered and activities remain sustainable. This has included hiring the venue and ICT equipment out to external parties. A community café has also been introduced on the site. This café will need to become self-sustaining as the facility had to be established as a separate social enterprise when it did not proved possible to secure grant funding for the project.

The Lounge - Alvechurch

The Lounge community internet café was established in the village of Alvechurch, in Bromsgrove district, in 2010. The Lounge is managed by Alvechurch Communities Together (ACT), a non-profit organisation which is run by a team of volunteers from the local community. Representatives of ACT were interviewed by the group in December 2011.

The Lounge was introduced in Alvechurch following a period when limited youth work support had

Evidence Gathering

The Lounge, Alvechurch

been available in the village and there had been few opportunities for young people to participate in positive youth activities. Concerns about youth anti-social behaviour had also been consistently raised at Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings in the build up to the opening of the venue. A pilot group had initially been established to provide young people with an opportunity to engage in positive activities. Based on the success of this pilot scheme it had been agreed that a permanent venue should be established.

The Lounge provided youth sessions to young people in different age ranges three evenings in the week. The provision of separate sessions for different age groups had been introduced relatively early in the process because older teenagers had been reluctant to participate in activities alongside their younger peers. The facility was also available to the whole community to use as an internet café during the week.

Trained professional youth workers were employed to facilitate youth work sessions at The Lounge. The contribution of these professionals was considered to be invaluable to the success of youth work at the venue. The trained youth workers were also increasingly undertaking detached youth work to reach out to young people who had traditionally been hard to reach and who had not made use of The Lounge.

The number of young people visiting The Lounge had increased since the venue was opened. Initially staff had attempted to organise structured activities to attract young people. However, increasingly it had become apparent that the main attraction of The Lounge was that it provided a safe and warm environment in which young people could gather. Many older teenagers had also used the opportunity to gain voluntary work experience working with younger teenagers.

The introduction of The Lounge in Alvechurch had had a positive impact on the local community. Relations between residents of different generations had improved and the number of reports of

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The Lounge, Alvechurch

youth related anti-social behaviour at PACT meetings had declined significantly. It is difficult to prove a direct link between the work of The Lounge and declining rates of substance abuse in the village. However, in the year following the introduction of the venue the village newspaper reported that by contrast to previous years Alvechurch was no longer considered to have a drugs problem.

Crucial to the success of the facility had been the selection of an appropriate venue to ensure it became an integral and valued facility in the community. The Lounge had originally been established in a working men's club in the centre of the village. However, this had not been a suitable location for a youth venue. A number of potential bases had been rejected due to close proximity to residential areas as there were concerns that neighbours might be opposed to the level of noise occurring at a youth facility or about youths congregating close to the venue. Eventually a former hairdresser's unit had been leased for The Lounge and considerable investment had had to be made in refurbishing the unit to ensure that it became suitable for use as a youth community internet café.

To remain sustainable the group was advised that youth facilities needed to be prepared to obtain financial support from a variety of sources. Bromsgrove District Council had provided initial funding for the first two years, though grants had also been obtained from other organisations. Additional sources of funding had been obtained through trade at the café as well as by hiring facilities at the unit out to external parties. Local businesses had also provided financial assistance as well as donations, such as equipment. In this context, the work of the community volunteers managing ACT had been essential as they had managed the venue's funds whilst identifying a strategic direction for the facility.

Evidence Gathering

Redditch - Community Safety

The Task Group agreed that to effectively improve young people's skills and target youth work at reducing anti-social behaviour and those not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in the new commissioning framework elected Members would need to be familiar with these subjects. Members recognised that there was widespread familiarity with the subject of NEETs and youth skills development amongst Councillors at both Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council as a result of two recent scrutiny reviews of these subjects: *Work Experience Opportunities Task and Finish Group Final Report* (RBC, 2011) ; and *Youth Employment Scrutiny Review* (WCC, 2011). However, apart from the small number of elected Members involved in crime and disorder scrutiny and the relevant Portfolio Holder the group was concerned that there was limited familiarity with youth related anti-social behaviour (ASB).

To address this situation evidence was requested from the Redditch Community Safety Partnership. A number of agencies are represented on the Redditch Community Safety Partnership, which is the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in the Borough, and there is a lot of expertise amongst members of the partnership in relation to crime and ASB, including youth related activities.

The partnership also has experience in delivering projects that help to tackle elements of youth related ASB and crime. For example, for the past two years the partnership has been involved in Operation Stay Safe. This project is designed to assist young people found intoxicated, who are taken off the streets by the Police to a Safe Centre. The parents of any young people brought to the centre are contacted to collect them. On arrival, support and advice from Youth Offending Team (YOT) workers is provided to the young people and their parents and where necessary further contact is scheduled to ensure that the ongoing behaviour of the young person can be monitored.

The partnership also closely monitors trends in crime and anti-social behaviour. Due to the

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Redditch Community Safety

sensitivity of the subject area the evidence provided to the group on the subject of youth crime and anti-social behaviour was primarily confidential. However, members of the group were keen to note that the information provided on the subject, particularly in relation to the key “hotspots” where youth related ASB tends to occur in the Borough and the causes of this behaviour, challenged Members’ preconceptions. The group concluded that the subject of ASB and crime committed by young people was much more complicated than they had initially assumed.

Sponsorship Arrangements

One of the key objectives of the review was for Members to assess the potential for positive activities to receive financial support through sponsorship. To assess this situation an interview was held with the lead Officer with experience managing local authority sponsorship arrangements, the Council’s Head of Leisure and Cultural services.

In recent years public sector organisations have been working with businesses on relatively high profile sponsorship arrangements. Local authorities need to take account of procurement rules when engaging private sector companies in sponsorship deals and this can require financial investment. However, the process has been successful when companies can sponsor interesting and high profile initiatives. In particular, many local authorities, including Bromsgrove District Council, have successfully arranged for businesses to sponsor roundabouts located in the district.

Unfortunately, Members were advised that it was unlikely that companies would be willing to sponsor youth activities. The majority of youth activities are not visible and do not have a high profile and therefore would not be considered attractive sponsorship opportunities. However, there is the potential that events and festivities, which tend to appeal to young people, would be suitable for sponsorship. In particular, local businesses might be interested in sponsoring Morton Stanley Festival.

Whilst sponsorship of youth activities is not considered to be feasible there is the possibility that

Evidence Gathering

Sponsorship Arrangements

local businesses will be keen to provide other forms of support to youth activities as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility. In particular, businesses are often prepared to provide donations in kind to VCS organisations. Therefore, whilst Members concluded that sponsorship did not represent a realistic option for financing positive youth activities there remains the possibility that local businesses could provide useful support to positive activities in the Borough.

External Scrutiny – Youth Service Reviews

A number of local authorities have reviewed youth services as part of an Overview and Scrutiny exercise. The Youth Services Provision Task Group was keen to assess other local authorities' findings in order to identify both similarities in experience and examples of good practice that could be introduced in Redditch. To ensure that evidence obtained from these reviews remained relevant the group decided to concentrate on reviews that had been completed in the previous two years.

Three reports were selected for review: Gloucestershire County Council's *Improving Outcomes Through Positive Activities for Young People Task Group (2010)*; St Helen's Council's *Scrutiny Review of Activities for Young People (2010)*; and Westminster City Council's *The Young People's Scrutiny Panel Final Report (2011)*. There were some differences between the reports. Westminster City Council's report focused on the work of young people who had participated in a youth-led scrutiny exercise whilst the reviews at Gloucestershire County Council and St Helen's Council had been led by elected Members and had focused on youth services. However, there were also a number of similarities in the findings detailed in each report.

The following key points were consistently raised in the scrutiny reviews:

Positive Activities: Young people do not require expensive forms of entertainment. Frequently, young people simply want a safe and warm location where they can gather. Volunteering opportunities are also popular with young people as these opportunities can provide useful work experience. At the same time volunteers can make a positive contribution to local communities.

Evidence Gathering

External Scrutiny – Youth Service Reviews

Encouraging Participation: Provision of “taster sessions”, whereby young people do not need to commit to participating in an activity in the long-term, can introduce young people to positive activities. Accreditation, awards and prizes for positive activities act as incentives for youth participation in those activities and can also make a valuable contribution to a young person’s curriculum vitae.

Promotion: Promoting positive activities by word of mouth to parents and young people is pivotal to encouraging participation in positive youth activities. Local schools also have a key role to play in promoting positive activities to young people. Promotional tools utilised to advertise positive activities need to be regularly reviewed and updated in order to effectively target a youth audience.

Youth Engagement: Young people need to be engaged in local decision making about both youth services and other public services in order to develop an understanding of service delivery as well as organisations’ awareness of the needs of young people. Based on their knowledge of modern technology and youth culture, young people can also help to design communications materials that will effectively promote positive activities to their peers. Young people need to be informed about how their contribution to local decision making has been taken into account and what impact this has had on service delivery. Failure to communicate this information to young people can lead to disillusionment with consultation exercises and mistrust of service providers.

Community Cohesion: Unfortunately residents do not always welcome provision of youth facilities in a local neighbourhood, often due to negative perceptions of young people and youth behaviour. However, successful youth work can have a positive impact on local communities. Effective promotion of the positive outcomes of youth activities is needed to break down barriers between different generations.

Each of the reviews also identified barriers to youth participation in positive activities. Recognition

External Scrutiny – Barriers to Youth Participation in Positive Activities

Evidence Gathering

External Scrutiny – Barriers to Youth Participation in Positive Activities

of the barriers to youth participation by service providers and commissioners is essential. As the elected Members from Gloucestershire County Council noted “it is important that these barriers are understood and steps are taken to remove them where possible to ensure that the Council achieves its aim of ensuring that every child thrives and reaches his or her potential. All children and young people should be given every opportunity to learn, enjoy and achieve”. (GCC, 2010, p 25).

The following barriers were consistently identified in the three scrutiny reports:

Communication: Poorly targeted, badly designed or limited promotion of a positive activity will restrict youth awareness of the service.

Confidence and Self Consciousness: Many young people are reluctant to participate in an activity if they will not be accompanied by a friend or group of friends.

Location: Young people want to feel safe at any location where an activity is delivered. In cases where service providers want to attract young people from different social groups and diverse backgrounds an activity needs to be held in a neutral location.

Travel: Young people are often reluctant to travel a lengthy distance to participate in an activity. This can be influenced by the reluctance of parents to permit their children to travel distances, particularly during the evenings, though limited public transport provision can also deter participation.

Expense: Young people, particularly teenagers aged under 16 years and young people from socially deprived backgrounds, do not necessarily have access to disposable incomes. The fees charged for participation in a positive activity can therefore deter some young people from participating in positive activities.

Evidence Gathering

External Scrutiny - Conclusions

The similarities in the findings of each of these scrutiny reviews demonstrate that, despite geographical and socio-economic differences, there are common factors that impact on youth participation in positive activities across the country. Indeed, many of the findings detailed in these reports corresponded with evidence provided by young people consulted during this review (Refer to pp 31 - 34). The challenge in this context is to work with this knowledge and to identify solutions that will address any barriers and meet the needs of young people at the local level.

Youth Consultation

Background The group attempted to consult with young people based in Redditch in a variety of different ways. By the end of the review the group had consulted approximately 65 young people resident in the Borough.

Co-opted Member In order to secure a permanent youth voice on the subject the group co-opted a school pupil from Trinity High School, Mr Harry Bishop, onto the review. Mr Bishop was able to clarify local youth perceptions of positive activities, promotional techniques and barriers to participation and also provided a youth perspective in relation to proposals from elected Members regarding youth services in the Borough.

Interviews Interviews were held with local young people in July and September. This included an interview, undertaken by the Chair of the group, with a school pupil on work experience at Redditch Borough Council and an interview with a group of seven local students from different high schools based in the Borough which was organised by the group's co-opted member.

Redditch Student Council Redditch Student Council was consulted by the group on two occasions. On the first occasion the group consulted the Student Council in September 2011 about current youth service provision, barriers to participation and the Student Councillors' preferences for future service delivery. On the second occasion the Student Council was consulted in January 2012 to obtain their views about the group's proposals.

Local Democracy Day On 20th October 2011 Local Democracy Day was celebrated at Redditch Town Hall. The event was attended by approximately 60 students from four local schools as well as by representatives of the Redditch Student Council. During the course of this event elected Members consulted with young people about preferred youth activities, barriers to participation in Redditch and effective communication methods. Responses were received from 45 students.

Youth Consultation

Consultation Feedback

The feedback provided by young people through all these methods of consultation was largely consistent. The following points were regularly raised by young people during consultation with the Task Group:

- Current Preferred Activities: Current preferred activities for young people included participating in sports, observing and participating in music events, such as Morton Stanley Festival, and having a safe and warm place to socialise with friends.
- Suggested Additional Activities: Young people suggested that a community café, where non-alcoholic drinks could be served, teenagers could gather safely, music performances could take place and young people could participate in activities such as karaoke, would be appreciated. Many young people were also keen to increase opportunities for young people to participate in energetic activities such as ice skating. Volunteering opportunities were also considered to be important as a way to contribute to the local community and gain valuable work experience.
- Redditch Youth House and the Youth Centres: Few of the young people consulted by the group utilised either the Youth House or the two youth centres. Generally, young people living close to the centres were most likely to make use of the facilities. During Local Democracy Day only 13 of the 45 students consulted commented that they regularly visited the Youth House or either of the youth centres. The majority of students, 32, reported that they had never visited any of these facilities and had no intention of doing so.
- Public Transport: The main barrier to participation in positive activities in the Borough was access to public transport. Bus routes and the availability of evening services often impacted on a young person's ability to travel to events and activities. Bus timetables were considered to be complicated and difficult to use which could deter young people from travelling on routes that they were not familiar with. Few young people could afford to pay for a taxi.

Youth Consultation

Consultation Feedback

- Awareness of activities: Young people were often not aware of activities provided by either VCS organisations or local Councils. Few of the young people had been aware that the Morton Stanley Festival would be taking place and many young people were not familiar with the Reddicard.
- Existing Promotional Techniques: Few young people utilised Council websites or Twitter feeds to find out about positive activities. Many young people were unwilling to refer to any communications that used Council branding or professional jargon as these forms of communication were not considered to be appealing. None of the young people consulted by the group read *Redditch Matters* and very few young people referred to local newspapers. However, a number of young people conceded that information provided in these sources might eventually be communicated to them by their parents or grandparents.
- Plug and Play: Significantly a couple of Student Councillors reported that they were aware of the *Plug and Play* website in September 2011. By January 2012 none of the Student Councillors were aware of the website, indicating that familiarity with a communication tool can decline rapidly amongst young people. Generally, though, the young people consulted by the group reported that they had never heard of the *Plug and Play* website and did not use the site to find out about local events and activities.
- Preferred Communication Methods: The majority of young people reported that they would prefer to receive information about positive activities through social media. Facebook and Twitter were regularly used by young people as well as Apps as communication tools. Many students used the Frog intranet system installed at all the local high schools to find out about local news and activities. The group was advised that traditional approaches to informing young people about activities, through posters or word of mouth, also remained important. Many young people admitted that they would learn about events through these communication sources during school assemblies.

Youth Consultation

Consultation Feedback

- Adult Support: Many young people were keen to organise events and activities, including for charitable purposes. In cases where support from a responsible adult had been available, such as the Youth Workers' support for the Student Council, young people had managed to deliver events and activities. However, young people often did not feel that they received enough support with this process and bureaucratic and legal requirements for adult supervision often prevented young people from delivering events.
- Community Relations: Frequently older generations were hostile in their attitudes towards young people, even when young people were engaged in innocent activities. These poor relationships sometimes deterred young people from participating in or establishing positive activities as they were not confident that they would be supported in this process.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 We recommend that youth activities in Redditch should be promoted using the following communication tools:

- a) a new dedicated Redditch youth website;
- b) Worcestershire *Plug and Play* website;
- c) local high schools' Frog Intranet systems; and
- d) social networking platforms.

Throughout the review the need for positive activities to be promoted effectively to young people was consistently noted. Unfortunately, current approaches to promoting positive activities by all service providers was considered to be failing to reach young people. At present, therefore, communication was considered to be a barrier to youth participation in positive activities.

To address this situation members of the group believe that organisations which deliver positive activities should use a variety of communication tools to promote activities to young people. A new dedicated youth website for Redditch would provide young people with immediate access to information about youth activities available in the Borough. A separate website would need to be available for the use of all service providers, including public, private and VCS organisations, to ensure that young people could access the information in one central location. This type of website would also provide service providers with an opportunity to assess existing provision in the town and to ensure that any new activities did not duplicate existing provision.

Members of the group believe that the bespoke Redditch Youth Website should have a simple name identifying the fact that the site could provide information about activities for young people in Redditch. Indeed, many of the young people consulted by the group suggested that to obtain information about local events and activities they would undertake a search for "youth activities in Redditch" using an internet search engine. Consequently a simple title relating to the subject

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 matter would be more likely to appear in the search engine results and would be more easily accessible to young people.

Members of the group are aware that organisations often have a policy to utilise corporate branding on official communication tools. This can help to encourage positive perceptions of public services. However, Members believe that in order to appeal to young people the bespoke youth website would need to limit use of corporate branding, as this was consistently identified by young people as an unappealing feature of official communication tools.

The website would need to be hosted by a lead organisation. Due to the fact that Worcestershire County Council has statutory responsibility for provision of positive activities to young people the group are contesting that the County Council should be the host authority. Members of the group believe it would be relatively easy to produce this new website. At Redditch Borough Council bespoke websites have been produced for Forge Mill Needle Museum and the Palace Theatre, which are subsidiary website of the Council's official website. Worcestershire County Council currently hosts the corporate website structure for all local authority websites in Worcestershire and therefore should have the expertise to develop an additional site. This could involve the creation of a bespoke Redditch Youth Website as a subsidiary site of *Plug and Play*.

Members of the group believe that the *Plug and Play* website is not currently operating as an effective communications tool. The limited levels of youth familiarity with the website identified during the review demonstrated that the website was failing to promote positive youth activities to the majority of young people living in Redditch. In addition, the group was disappointed to learn that few VCS organisations in Redditch were using the facility to promote the activities they delivered to young people. Indeed, during two searches of the website in January and March 2012 respectively no evidence could be identified that the activities delivered by the VCS groups consulted by the group were being promoted on *Plug and Play*.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

However, members of the group are aware that resources are limited and that existing communications tools should be used wherever possible. In addition, Members were supportive of the basic principles of the *Plug and Play* website. In the event that improvements could be made to promotion of the website Members felt that it could become a useful communication tool. For this reason the group welcomed news that the *Plug and Play* website will be reviewed, as constructive changes would ensure that the website would become an integral feature of effective youth service delivery in future years.

Prior to consultation with young people from Redditch the group was not familiar with the Frog intranet system. This intranet system is currently installed at all the local high schools in the town. Pupils consulted by the group reported that the majority of high school students actively utilised Frog to learn about both their academic studies and local news. Frog can also be used by students to communicate and share information, including outside school hours. For these reasons members of the group believe that through promoting information on the Frog intranet system service providers would be able to target a relatively large audience.

Promotion of positive activities on the Frog intranet system would require effective partnership working between local schools and service providers. Service providers would need to share information with the schools and ensure that details complied with existing security arrangements and was appropriate for a youth audience. Service providers would also potentially need to consider suitable timeframes for promoting information on the Frog system as in order to maximise the youth audience it is likely that service providers would need to organise promotional activities around the academic year.

Many organisations that deliver positive activities to young people in Redditch already utilise social networking devices to promote these activities to young people. For example, Facebook has been

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 utilised in previous years by Redditch Borough Council to promote Morton Stanley Festival. However, currently many organisations, particularly small VCS organisations, may have limited capacity to communicate with young people using social media. The group is therefore suggesting that wherever possible service providers should seek to provide, or be assisted in providing, information about positive activities on appropriate social networking platforms.

Members of the group are aware that some organisations which currently deliver positive activities to young people might lack the resources to commit to providing information on each of these four platforms in addition to any existing communication methods. In particular, contributions to a new Redditch Youth Website would need to be made alongside contributions to existing organisational websites. Use of multiple communications tools to advertise events and activities to young people would also entail an element of duplication. However, young people are not an homogenous group. Whilst one individual might utilise one form of social media to learn about events and activities a young person from a different social group might utilise a different source of information. In this context members of the group believe that this duplication and the additional work required would be justified.

Members of the group do not believe that use of these communications tools by service providers would be particularly time-consuming or resource intensive. The information provided using these tools, though it would need to be marketed in an appealing manner, would not need to be lengthy as young people reported that lengthy summaries were unappealing. Concise passages relating to activities, similar to the format used already on the Plug and Play website, could instead be provided. Suitable training of staff involved in service provision at different organisations would help to ensure that responsibility for disseminating this information is shared.

There would be some financial implications to this proposal for service providers. In particular, a limited amount of financial expenditure would be required to establish the Redditch youth website.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 All websites require regular maintenance in order for content to remain relevant and attractive. To meet these costs consideration might need to be given to permitting sponsorship of the website to address these maintenance costs, though advertisements would need to be appropriate for a youth audience.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2

We recommend that there should be a youth work co-ordinator for Redditch financed by funding held by Worcestershire County Council to help maximise the number of youth activities in the town.

Effective promotion of positive activities alongside successful delivery of services requires time and resources. Unfortunately, evidence gathered during the review indicated that some service providers, particularly smaller VCS organisations, did not have access to sufficient skills and resources. In particular, limited budgets, small staff numbers and a focus on service delivery rather than staff development often impacted on smaller VCS organisations' success in attracting funding and sustaining service delivery. Members of the group believe that a Youth Work Co-ordinator for Redditch could help VCS organisations to address these problems to the benefit of young people living in Redditch.

A Youth Work Co-ordinator would have a much wider remit than a traditional Youth Worker. The full extent of the co-ordinator's responsibilities would need to be established in a job description and the requirements of a prospective member of staff in a fully formulated job specification. However, Members are proposing that the Co-ordinator could assume the following responsibilities:

- Distributing information about the commissioning process in Redditch to VCS organisations and other potential service providers.
- Assisting VCS organisations in developing bid writing skills. This would require an element of detached support work as many smaller VCS organisations lack the time or resources to participate in training sessions convened at external locations.
- Providing guidance to VCS organisations in relation to legal, financial and business operation matters as and when required.
- Helping VCS organisations to develop marketing skills, particularly with regard to promoting positive activities on social media platform and websites.
- Maintaining awareness of existing positive activities delivered in the Borough and enabling providers to avoid duplicating service provision.

Recommendations

- Recommendation 2**
- Monitoring the quality of positive activities delivered by organisations that successfully bid for funding from the Redditch Commissioning Group.
 - Acting as a lead adult contact in Redditch with whom young people could organise events and activities. In this capacity the Co-ordinator could help to book premises, organise insurance cover (where required) and fulfil other roles required from adults in accordance with bureaucratic and legal processes.
 - Supporting Redditch Student Council, and any other youth groups consulted by the Redditch Commissioning Group, to enable young people to make a constructive contribution to the commissioning process in Redditch.

Members believe that as Worcestershire County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that young people have access to positive leisure time activities the County Council should be responsible for employing the Redditch Youth Work Co-ordinator.

There would be financial implications to the introduction of this post. It is difficult to assess the exact costs involved in employing an Officer to the post or to determine which grade this post would be allocated without first reviewing a final job description and job specification. However, estimated costs, based on Redditch Borough Council grading structures, have been provided to assess the probable costs involved.

Redditch Borough Council's Human Resources Department has suggested that, based on the role description provided by the group, this post could be introduced at an equivalent level to a Borough Council Grade Six post. An Officer employed at a Grade Six in Redditch can expect to receive a starting salary of £22,958 per annum. In addition, at any authority on costs need to be calculated when assessing the financial costs involved in employing a member of staff. In Redditch on costs constitute 22 per cent of the salary. As such, based on Borough Council estimates this post would cost an employer approximately £28,000 per annum.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2 At a time of fiscal austerity it might be difficult for Worcestershire County Council to provide resources to fund this new post. However, there are two sources of funds which could be utilised for this purpose. Firstly, a portion of the £100,000 provided by the County Council to support VCS organisations could be allocated to the post, as the Co-ordinator would be providing dedicated support to local VCS organisations. Secondly, in the first three years of the process a portion of the £150,000 allocated to addressing unforeseen circumstances could be utilised to fund the post. For the latter process a review of the Co-ordinator's impact on the transition to the new commissioning framework could be undertaken at the end of the three year period.

Members are aware that the introduction of this post would be taking place at a time when Worcestershire County Council would be ending direct delivery of youth services and would be ceasing to employ a team of youth workers. Furthermore, the group is also aware that a small number of Youth Participation Officers have been employed to administrate the commissioning process and to facilitate consultation across the county. However, Members believe that the introduction of the Youth Work Co-ordinator post would be justified as the post holder would have a much wider remit than either a traditional youth worker or the Youth Participation Officers. The post holder's focus on Redditch would correspond with the emphasis in the commissioning framework on local delivery. Furthermore, the proposal to introduce this post has been consistently welcomed by the young people consulted during the course of the review.

The post could provide an opportunity to shape and monitor the quality of youth work being carried out across the town for the foreseeable future and ensure that the ultimate aims and objective of the Commissioning Group are being met. Recruitment and management of the post will be crucial to the success of the post holder. However, without this post Members are concerned that regardless of the quality of proposed services smaller VCS organisations will struggle to compete with larger organisations to attract funding. This could have a detrimental impact on service delivery and ultimately on young people's experiences of positive activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 We recommend that the Redditch Commissioning Group should ensure that there is a seamless transition from the old system for delivering youth services to the new commissioning framework to make sure that gaps in service provision to young people in Redditch do not occur.

Members recognise that periods of change need to be thoroughly planned and managed in a sensitive manner. In cases where changes, involving the replacement of one system for another, are not managed effectively gaps can emerge in service delivery. In the context of this review, gaps in provision of positive youth activities would inevitably impact on young people.

The group's concerns about the potential for gaps in service provision are based on the evidence provided by expert witnesses about the negative impact that this can have on service users. The removal of positive activities, or inconsistent delivery of activities, can impact on youth engagement within the local community, particularly with figures of authority. Young people may lose interest in positive activities and conclude that public agencies are not interested in engaging with them. As a consequence of this situation EPIC staff had to allocate more time and resources to promoting a new youth facility for young people in Catshill than would have been required if the organisation had assumed responsibility for an existing youth group. As such Members are concerned that if gaps in service provision emerge additional action and resources will need to be allocated in order to re-engage young people in positive activities. In a context where resources are limited this situation would not be ideal.

Members believe that Worcestershire County Council has recognised the need to minimise the emergence of gaps in service provision. Indeed, the group welcomes the fact that the County Council has committed to retaining a youth service until 2014 and has allocated a budget of £150,000 per year over the next three years to addressing any unforeseen consequences of the transition to the commissioning framework.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3 However, Members believe that the Redditch Commissioning Group also needs to be aware of the implications of gaps in service delivery for young people. Based on awareness of these implications the Commissioning Group should be in a strong position to take steps to secure a smooth transition from the previous service delivery model to the new commissioning framework. Ultimately this should have a beneficial impact on service delivery in Redditch and will help to ensure that the youth of Redditch continue to actively engage in positive activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 We recommend that the Redditch Commissioning Group should seriously consider the following types of bids for funding:

- a) bids for youth work to be delivered using a social enterprise model; and
- b) bids requesting that the funding cover the costs of employing a trained youth worker as part of delivering a positive activity to young people.

In the new commissioning framework it is likely that the Redditch Commissioning Group will receive bids to fund a wide variety of youth activities from public, private and VCS organisations. The specific requirements of each project, the suitability of each project to the needs and priorities of young people and the ability of each project to address the commissioning targets will need to be assessed on a case by case basis. As part of this process there are a couple of models which Members believe the Commissioning Group should consider particularly seriously.

During the course of the review Members were particularly impressed with the evidence that was provided about the social enterprise model of service delivery. Members believe that the basic premise of social enterprise bodies, which is to cover the costs involved in delivering services and to generate a profit that can be reallocated to improving service delivery, is suitable in a commissioning context.

It is unlikely that the Commissioning Group will be able to commit to allocating funding to the same organisations or youth projects year after year. Social enterprises, which are organised to be self-sufficient, would be in a strong position to continue to deliver positive activities despite any withdrawal of funding. Indeed, existing social enterprise bodies engaged by the group demonstrated that organisations operating this model would identify alternative sources of funding. In this context Members believe that delivery of positive activities by social enterprises is more likely to be sustainable and the potential for service disruption and the impact that this can have on youth engagement is likely to be minimised. (Please also refer to recommendation 3, pp 43-44).

Recommendations

Recommendation 4 The important role of trained and professional youth workers in the successful delivery of positive activities was consistently identified during the review. Indeed, the majority of expert witnesses reported that the support provided by youth workers was essential to: maintaining service delivery, to actively engaging young people in activities; developing positive community relations between generations; and adapting services to meet the changing needs and priorities of young people. In particular, smaller VCS organisations with limited resources often relied on a small number of dedicated youth workers to deliver positive activities.

At present Worcestershire County Council can provide some staffing assistance to VCS organisations through the youth work team employed by the Council. However, the County Council's decision to cease to directly provide a youth service by 2014 means that this resource will not be available in the long-term. In this context the ability of service providers to fund staffing costs will become an urgent priority.

Members are aware that in many grant processes staffing costs are not considered by funding providers when assessing funding applications. For the commissioning process Members are contending that applicants should be permitted to apply for funds to cover staffing costs as part of the project delivery process. The inclusion of staffing costs in approved bids could restrict the level of funding available from the £183,085 budget for Redditch to distribute to different applicants. However, if staffing costs cannot be addressed Members are concerned that it will not be possible for many organisations to deliver positive activities effectively within the Borough. Furthermore, Members are concerned that a process which does not allow organisations to bid for funds to cover staffing costs would be potentially discriminatory as smaller VCS organisations might not then be able to compete with larger organisations, which are more likely to have independent access to these resources.

Recommendations

- Recommendation 5** The Redditch Commissioning Group has been tasked with consulting with young people. We recommend that the following groups should be consulted as part of this process:
- a) Redditch Student Council; and
 - b) A focus group of young offenders and young people at risk of offending.

One of the key duties of the Redditch Commissioning Group in the new commissioning framework will be to consult with young people. Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet has not provided a specification for how this consultation should be undertaken. Instead, there will be local discretion in organising consultation processes. Members are aware that the Commissioning Group and Redditch Local Children's Partnership may already have identified some actions that could be taken to consult with young people in the Borough but are suggesting that two further options should be considered as part of this process.

Redditch Student Council is an established body comprising representation from four of the local high schools based in the Borough. The Student Councillors regularly discuss services and issues of concern to the local community at formal meetings. In addition, the Student Councillors have suggested to the Task Group that they would be keen to be consulted as part of the commissioning process in Redditch. Indeed, the Student Councillors noted in January 2012 that because the Student Council had experience considering applications for grant funding from VCS organisations Student Councillors would have the experience needed to make a constructive contribution to the commissioning process.

Members of the group recognise that the operating model of the Redditch Student Council may be adapted in future years. However, Members believe that this student body should be consulted regardless of the body's future operating model. Indeed, this would provide the new body with a constructive focus.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5 The Redditch Student Council would require support in order to provide a useful contribution to the commissioning process. Understanding of the commissioning process and existing service provision would need to be developed and creative solutions identified to enable Student Councillors to participate effectively. Additional support would also be required to record and communicate the body's findings. Subject to approval of recommendation 2, Members believe that the Youth Co-ordinator would be in a position to fulfil this role.

Members believe that attempts will need to be made to consult with young people from traditionally hard to reach groups in the new commissioning framework. In particular, obtaining the views of young people at risk of becoming those not in education employment or training (NEETs) as well as young people who have already committed or are at risk of committing anti-social behaviour (ASB) will be important in order to achieve current commissioning targets. Unfortunately, Members are not confident that consultation with young people through existing bodies and formal consultation processes will enable the Commissioning Group to engage with these hard to reach groups. In this context a more creative approach to consultation will be necessary.

Consultation with a focus group of young offenders and young people at risk of offending would help to address this problem. Members of the group have been advised that it would be possible to organise this type of focus group activity. Assistance could be requested from the Redditch Community Safety Partnership and the local Youth Offending Team to organise this activity. To avoid deterring participation and in order to obtain honest feedback it is likely that a focus group of young offenders and young people at risk of offending would need to be organised remotely and in an informal manner, with findings reported to the Commissioning Group by a relevant lead authority. Whilst this would limit the direct involvement of the Commissioning Group in the process members of the group feel that the benefits accrued from engaging with this hard to reach group would justify the separation.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5 There would be some risks involved in organising a focus group of young offenders and young people at risk of offending which would need to be appropriately managed. Care would need to be taken to ensure that young offenders and young people at risk of offending were not coerced into participating in a focus group activity. Furthermore, in accordance with data protection requirements, the identities of participants would need to remain confidential. Despite these risks Members believe that this focus group activity should form part of the commissioning framework as it will help to ensure that the young people consulted in Redditch are representative of all local youths.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6 We recommend that the Redditch Community Safety Partnership / North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership should be invited to present information to the Redditch Commissioning Group about youth related crime and anti-social behaviour in Redditch as part of the new commissioning framework.

Members of the Task Group were impressed with the information that was provided by the Redditch Community Safety Partnership on the subject of crime and ASB committed by young people. This information challenged a number of Members' pre-conceived ideas and revealed that the subject was relatively complex.

To ensure that informed decisions can be made when commissioning positive activities in Redditch Members believe that the Redditch Commissioning Group should similarly consult with the Redditch Community Safety Partnership. Representatives appointed to the partnership are trained professionals who are in an ideal position to provide accurate and relevant information on the subject. Evidence provided by the partnership could enable the Commissioning Group to select suitable projects for funding that would help to meet the commissioning target objective to reduce ASB.

The Redditch Community Safety Partnership is scheduled for merger with the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership and Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership in June 2012. The merged body, the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership, will be responsible for addressing community safety issues in the Borough. To ensure that the Commissioning Group retains access to accurate and timely information about crime and ASB committed by or impacting on young people Members are contending that this new partnership should be consulted as part of the commissioning framework in future years.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7 We recommend that Redditch Borough Council should submit bids for positive activities funding in the new commissioning framework in partnership with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations that have experience delivering youth activities and should offer to host these activities at Council owned *community centres* where appropriate.

The commissioning process will make funding available to a variety of service providers including public, private and VCS organisations. As part of this process Redditch Borough Council would be eligible to bid for funding to deliver positive activities for young people. Members have been advised that staff at Redditch Borough Council are aware of this opportunity and are intending to participate in the commissioning process. The group is urging senior elected Members and Officers to support Redditch Borough Council's participation in the process and is suggesting that a number of issues should be considered whenever the opportunity arises.

Redditch Borough Council, though not responsible for delivering positive activities, already provides a number of services, especially leisure services, that appeal to young people. The availability of additional funding provides Redditch Borough Council with an opportunity to innovate and to be creative in delivering services that might appeal to young people. However, Members do not believe that Redditch Borough Council should compete for funding in isolation. There is a risk that this would place the Council in competition with local VCS organisations which will similarly be bidding for funding. Members feel that Redditch Borough Council should instead work in partnership with a number of VCS organisations to submit bids and deliver positive activities.

A partnership approach to bidding for funding and delivering positive activities would be mutually beneficial for both Redditch Borough Council and local VCS organisations. VCS organisations have more experience directly delivering services and activities to young people and this experience would help to ensure that any activities provided in partnership would have more chance of effectively engaging with young people. A partnership arrangement would also provide

Recommendations

Recommendation 7 staff at Redditch Borough Council with an opportunity to learn from experienced service providers and to develop new skills which could be applied to other services provided by the Council.

In return, Redditch Borough Council has greater capacity than many small VCS organisations to work on funding bids and other bureaucratic process. Indeed, the Council is an experienced provider of discretionary funding to third sector organisations. Council staff could share their knowledge of funding processes with partner organisations and enable smaller VCS bodies to develop more effective bid writing skills. A partnership arrangement would therefore help to empower local VCS organisations.

Redditch Borough Council also has physical assets, including Council owned community centres, which could be utilised by partner organisations from the VCS when delivering positive activities. A number of VCS organisations already utilise the community centres for this purpose. However, following the closure of Redditch Youth House, and the leasing of Arrow Vale and Kingsley Youth Centres to local schools for community use rather than solely for youth work, the significance of the community centres as bases for delivering of positive activities will increase.

There is currently capacity at the community centres for an increase to be made in use of the community centres, particularly during weekends and evenings when young people are likely to have spare leisure time. However, the condition of many of the community centres might need to be reviewed and updated. In particular, storage space and kitchen facilities are considered to be important in the delivery of positive activities to young people. The Council would need to make some investment in the infrastructure of the centres to address these problems and planning applications might need to be submitted to extend storage facilities on site at some of the centres. However, Members believe that this investment could be met using any additional funding generated in the short-term through an increase in use of the community centres.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7 Members are aware that there were some concerns within the VCS that delivery of positive activities in local neighbourhoods could encourage tribalism within the Borough and a deterioration in relations between youths living in different parts of the town. However, Members believe that this tribalism, where recognised by service providers, could be managed and could even be used to help achieve positive outcomes. In particular, Members believe that competitions, including sport, board game and computer game competitions, could be organised between different service providers based in different neighbourhoods. This would provide young people with an opportunity to participate in a competitive environment and would enable their peers to gain familiarity with young people living in other parts of the Borough.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8 Access to public transport has been consistently identified as a barrier to youth participation in positive activities. We recommend that to address this problem the following actions should be considered:

- a) the remit of the WRVS Redditch Community Rides scheme should be extended to helping transport young people to different activities in the Borough and this pilot scheme should be extended beyond the current deadline of April 2012; and
- b) Dial A Ride vehicles should be provided to transport young people to local events and festivities.

Access to affordable and reliable public transport, particularly during evening hours and at weekends, was consistently raised as an obstacle to youth participation in positive activities in Redditch. This problem is not confined to Redditch as similar problems were raised by young people consulted during scrutiny reviews undertaken by Gloucestershire County Council, St Helen's Council and Westminster City Council. However, there are a couple of local solutions that Members feel could help to address this problem in Redditch.

In the first place Members are suggesting that young people should be able to utilise the WRVS Community Transport Scheme for Redditch to access positive activities during evenings and weekends. The WRVS Community Transport Scheme was established in November 2011, using funding from Worcestershire Community Transport Partnership, for a six month trial period. Currently volunteer drivers are tasked with transporting door to door residents with limited mobility or who live in areas that are not currently served by public transport. The service must be booked 72 hours in advance. (WCC, press release, 2011).

At present the service is not extended specifically to young people, unless they have limited mobility or live in an area where there is no access to public transport. However, in a statement released at the launch of the service by the County Cabinet Member with Responsibility for

Recommendations

Recommendation 8 Highways and Transport, Councillor John Smith, it was noted that "...transport is one of the critical components of our ability to maintain people in their own homes for as long as possible, maximise their independence and allow them to play an active part in their community" (WCC, Press Release, 2011). Whilst young people may not always struggle to live in their own homes, they do similarly need support gaining independence and playing a full and active part in their communities. For this reason Members believe that eligibility for use of the scheme should be extended to encompass young people, particularly young people under 17 years of age who are not yet legally permitted to drive.

Members are aware that the sustainability of the WRVS Community Transport Scheme in Redditch is subject to the level of demand for the service and there is the possibility that the pilot scheme will end in April 2012 if the service has not been actively utilised. However, Members believe that if promoted effectively to young people the service would be utilised by young people living in Redditch. This would help to justify the continuing provision of the service.

The service is delivered by volunteer drivers. These drivers would potentially need to be consulted over any changes to customer eligibility. Furthermore, drivers might require training regarding arrangements for interacting with young people. Every driver would also need to pass a criminal records (CRB) check in order to work with young people.

The WRVS Community Transport Scheme was designed to complement the existing Dial A Ride service that is provided by Redditch Borough Council. Currently Dial A Ride primarily serves elderly customers as well as customers with disabilities. However, there are also times when there is limited demand for Dial A Ride services, particularly at weekends and during evening hours. At these points the Dial A Ride vehicles are available for use.

Members believe that Dial A Ride Services should be available for young people to utilise, through

Recommendations

Recommendation 8 prior appointment, at weekends and in the evenings. Provision of the Dial A Ride vehicles for use could also be extended to partner VCS organisations to use for the purpose of organising trips for young people. This arrangement would be largely ad hoc and would need to be effectively promoted to young people and VCS organisations. However, young people consulted by the group have welcomed this proposal as they have suggested that access to Dial A Ride vehicles would provide younger residents with an opportunity to engage more actively in community events such as the Morton Stanley Festival.

Redditch Borough Council would need to secure public liability insurance and vehicle cover in order to use the Dial A Ride vehicles for this purpose. Every driver employed by the Dial A Ride service already needs to achieve D1 entitlement, a form of driving license for minibus drivers, and must also undergo Minibus Driver Assessment Scheme (MiDAS) training to meet approved driving standards. CRB checks would also need to be obtained for drivers delivering services for young people.

Charges would need to be levied for use of the Dial A Ride vehicles for this purpose, though Members do not necessarily believe that these charges should be the same as the fee levied to existing customers of the Dial A Ride service. There are a number of community transport services across the country that already provide similar services and have developed charging structure accordingly, including the Hackney Group Transport Service in London (Hackney Community Transport, 2011).

Members do not believe that it is the role of this review group to propose a charging structure for this process. Instead, the group is suggesting that if this recommendation is approved senior elected Members should work with relevant Officers representing the Dial A Ride service and Financial Services at the Council to identify a suitable charging structure.

Recommendations

Recommendation 9 We recommend that links should be provided directly from the Frog intranet system used by local high schools to bus companies' websites to provide young people with access to up to date information about bus timetables and routes in Redditch.

A further issue that was consistently cited by young people as a barrier to youth participation in positive activities in Redditch was limited access to clear and accurate information about bus services in the town. Members believe that the simple solution to this problem would be to use the Frog intranet system to provide young people with access to this information.

It cannot be presumed that all young people are familiar with all of the bus operators that deliver services in Redditch. Frequently young people reported to the group that they were only familiar with the route they used to access school and many young people were uncertain about where they could access accurate information about alternative routes. Furthermore, a number of young people consulted by the group commented that they were uncertain about how to read bus timetables and where they needed to change services to reach a destination.

The provision of links to bus operators' websites on the Frog intranet system would provide high school pupils with access to accurate and up-to-date information about bus services. It is likely that if bus timetables were provided directly on the Frog intranet system time and resources would need to be allocated by local schools to monitoring and updating the content. By contrast, a link requires limited investment of resources and therefore would be relatively easy to implement. A brief synopsis, outlining routes located in the Borough and providing guidance about to how to read bus timetables, could also be provided beside the links for the benefit of students.

The group has been advised that First Group Plc, one of the leading bus operators in the Borough, has developed an App which can be utilised by customers. Members welcome this development as an App is a communication tool that is likely to appeal to young people. However, Members are

Recommendations

Recommendation 9 aware that most apps could not be accessed by young people who do not own an Android mobile phone or an iPhone. By contrast, the Frog intranet system can be access by every high school pupil in Redditch. Furthermore, as links could be provided from Frog to the websites of every bus operator that delivers services in Redditch the intranet system would act as a central point for obtaining information about the entire bus network in the Borough.

Local high schools would need to be approached in order to secure permission to provide this information on the Frog intranet system. In addition, staff would need to invest some time initially in developing an area on the Intranet where the links and supporting information could be provided. However, the financial implications of this process would be negligible and by providing guidance on the Frog system schools would be enabling young people to develop a useful life skill.

Recommendations

Recommendation 10 We recommend that the Youth Services Provision Task Group's findings and the content of the group's final report should be considered by the Redditch Commissioning Group prior to commissioning youth activities for the Borough.

The members of the Youth Services Provision Task Group have completed a detailed and comprehensive review. Based on evidence gathered from a wide range of sources the recommendations proposed in the report, if implemented, should help to ensure that youth activities in Redditch address the needs and priorities of local young people.

Whilst some of these recommendations will require action from Redditch Borough Council, the majority are more likely to be of interest to the Redditch Commissioning Group and the Redditch Local Children's Partnership. The group was fortunate to interview representatives of Worcestershire County Council and the Local Children's Partnership during the review. At the time the possibility of presenting the group's findings was discussed and members of the group believe that this should now be implemented.

The publication of the report is timely because it coincides with the first year of the new commissioning framework. The report provides a useful synopsis of both current circumstances as well as aspirations for the future and this information should help with the formation of an effective commissioning process in Redditch. Indeed, the report is designed to provide a constructive guide to youth activities in the Borough. Consequently members of the group urge the Commissioning Group to consider the contents of their report.

Conclusion

The Youth Services Provision Task Group review has entailed a comprehensive study of positive activities for young people in Redditch. Evidence has been obtained from a variety of sources including service providers, external scrutiny reports, and young people. All of the evidence gathered during the review has been valuable and helped to shape the final ten recommendations detailed in this report.

It is unusual for a Redditch Borough Council Scrutiny Group to propose recommendations that will largely impact on an external body. However, Members have consistently focused on the needs of local young people and on making constructive proposals that will help to ensure that the new commissioning framework for positive youth activities is fit for purpose in Redditch. Indeed, the principle aim of the group throughout the review has been to bring forward proposals that will improve service delivery and ensure that activities meet the needs and priorities of young people living in the Borough.

The Commissioning process will be launched as this review draws to a conclusion. To ensure that all the evidence detailed in this report about good practice informs the process in Redditch Members are urging both the Executive Committee, members of the Redditch Commissioning Group and the Redditch Local Children's Partnership to approve their recommendations.

Appendix A

Worcestershire County Council's Decisions – November 2011

Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet made a number of decisions on the subject of future delivery of positive activities for young people on 24th November 2011. The following is an extract from the minutes of that meeting detailing the Cabinet's resolutions:

"RESOLVED that

- 1) the County Council ceases to directly provide positive activities by April 2014;
- 2) positive activities are commissioned by positive activities local commissioning groups ... with the exception of the Worcester City are...;
- 3) £1 million funding is allocated to local areas based on need/population formula of 70%:30%, with need being defined by Acorn data;
- 4) an additional transitional support of £150,000 per annum over 3 years from April 2012 is retained to be commissioned centrally to address any unforeseen needs which arise at a local level;
- 5) commissioned positive activities are targeted in particular on reducing anti-social behaviour and tackling those not in education, employment and training;
- 6) £100,000 investment is made in the voluntary and community sector to develop and sustain positive activities in a safe manner for all young people and that this forms part of the Council's overall approach to infrastructure support to the sector; and
- 7) The Director of Children's Services be authorised to finalise the details of the arrangements set out above and implement them from April 2012."

(Extract from Worcestershire County Council Cabinet's minutes, 24th November 2011, p 8, minute 1306).

Expert Witnesses

The group would like to thank all the young people who provided assistance during the course of the review.

Student Council

Members of the Youth Services Provision Task Group attended two meetings of the Redditch Student Council in September 2011 and January 2012. The feedback provided by the Student Council was valued by the group and helped to inform Members' final recommendations.

Local Students - Interviews

The Chair of the group would like to thank a local student who participated in an interview during a period of work experience at Redditch Borough Council. In addition, in September 2011 the Youth Services Provision Task Group interviewed seven local pupils aged 14-16 years who were studying at a variety of schools in Redditch. The group really appreciated the fact these young people gave up their leisure time to meet with the group after school.

Local Democracy Day

The group consulted with approximately 45 students from local schools who attended the Local Democracy Day event at Redditch Town Hall in October 2011. The Councillors would like to thank every young person who submitted evidence during this session.

Co-opted Member

Members would like to express particular thanks to Mr Harry Bishop, a student from Trinity High School, who acted as a co-opted member of the group. The support provided by Mr Bishop at a number of meetings was invaluable as it ensured that a younger person's perspective was able to contribute throughout the review.

Expert Witnesses

External Witnesses

Ms Vicky Parker, Batchley Support Group
PC Richard Waterhouse, The Ditch Youth Group and West Mercia Police
Mr David Shoemith and all the staff who manage The Lounge in Alvechurch.
Ms Debbie Roberts and all the staff who work for EPIC at THE TRUNK in Bromsgrove.
Ms Maureen Hayden, What's Your Point?
County Councillor Jane Potter, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Chair of the
Redditch Local Children's Partnership, Worcestershire County Council.
Mr Peter Sugg, Worcestershire County Council.
Mr Simon Marshall, Your Ideas.

Redditch Borough Council Staff

Helen Broughton (Redditch Partnership Manager)
Peter Brown (Waste Awareness Officer)
Ray Cooke (Leisure Services Manager)
James Cooper (Senior Community Safety Project Officer)
Michael Craggs (Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer)
Anne-Marie Darroch (Communications Manager)
Rebecca Dunne (Policy Manager)
John Godwin (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
Ruth Griffin (Dial A Ride and Shopmobility Manager)
Bev Houghton (Community Safety Manager)
Steve Skinner (Democratic Services Manager)
Jan Smyth (Democratic Services Officer)
Mark Stanley (Acting Shared Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager).
Laney Walsh (Community Centres Development Manager)
Dave Wheeler (Leisure Services Manager).

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Glossary

- AiR Partnership** The AiR Partnership represents the arts in Redditch.
- Alvechurch Communities Together (ACT)** Alvechurch Communities Together (ACT) is a not-for-profit organisation that runs The Lounge in Alvechurch, Bromsgrove district.
- Android Phones** Android phones are a brand of mobile phone that can be purchased in the UK. Apps, suitable for Android phones, can be accessed using this equipment.
- Apps** Apps are software applications that can be accessed using mobile technology. Apps can provide information about an issue, though may also be used for entertainment or other purposes. Apps may be free to use, though charges are levied for the use of some Apps.
- Barcode Youth Cafe** The Barcode Youth Café was established in 2005 in Weston-Super-Mare. It is managed by Weston-Super-Mare Town Council.
- Batchley Support Group** Batchely Support Group is a community based neighbourhood association and registered charity which delivers community activities, primarily in Batchley, Redditch.
- Big Local App** The Big Local App is a mobile application that was developed by AppHouse UK for Redditch and Bromsgrove. It is a directory which is free to use and which provides information about local businesses, news, events and other useful information.
- Bromsgrove Partnership** The Bromsgrove Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership in Bromsgrove district. (See Local Strategic Partnership p -).

Glossary

Cabinet

At Worcestershire County Council decisions are made by a Cabinet of elected Councillors. The Cabinet is the County Council's equivalent of Redditch Borough Council's Executive Committee.

Commissioning Groups

Commissioning Groups, representing the local districts in Worcestershire, will determine which positive youth activities will be commissioned in the county from April 2012. In Redditch the eight County Councillors who represent the Borough will be appointed to the district's Commissioning Group.

D1 Entitlement

D1 entitlement licenses must be obtained by drivers who operate minibuses in England.

Detached Youth Work

Detached youth work involves youth workers and other professionals who work with young people engaging with young people at locations and times convenient for the young people rather than at organisational headquarters.

The Ditch

The Ditch is a youth club which meets on a weekly basis in Oakenshaw, Redditch. The club is organised by the local Neighbourhood Police Officer, though support is also provided by professional youth workers.

EPIC

EPIC, which stands for Empowering People in Communities, is a social enterprise organisation. EPIC manages THE TRUNK in Charford, Bromsgrove as well as other youth clubs in the district.

Executive Committee

At Redditch Borough Council decisions are made by elected Councillors appointed to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is the Borough Council's equivalent of Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet.

Frog

Frog is a secure intranet system that has been installed on the computer systems of the local high schools located in Redditch.

Glossary

iPhones

iPhones are a form of mobile phone technology which can be purchased in the UK. Apps designed for the system can be accessed on an iPhone.

Local Children's Partnerships

Local children's Partnerships in each district in Worcestershire will be required to advise and assist local Commissioning Groups in the new commissioning framework. In Redditch the Local Children's Partnership is a sub-group of the Redditch Partnership.

Local Democracy Day

Local Democracy Week takes place on an annual basis across the country and is designed to introduce young people to democratic processes. In Redditch students from local schools are invited each year to participate in events held at Redditch Town Hall on Local Democracy Day.

Local Strategic Partnerships

A Local Strategic Partnership is a single body that brings together different parts of the public, private, business, community and voluntary sector to work together in one locality to improve the quality of life for people living in that area.

The Lounge

The Lounge is a community venue that was established in Alvechurch, in Bromsgrove district, in 2011. The venue is used as a base for delivering positive youth activities in the village, though The Lounge is also available for the rest of the community to use during the week.

MiDAS

Minibus Driver Assessment Scheme (MiDAS) training is undertaken by Dial A Ride staff in Redditch to ensure that drivers meet required standards.

Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny is a standard feature of local democratic processes. Elected Members involved in Overview and Scrutiny do not have any decision making powers. However, Scrutiny Members can undertake policy reviews and recommend that action be taken to improve service delivery.

Glossary

Plug and Play

The *Plug and Play* website was launched by Worcestershire County Council in 2007 and is designed to promote positive youth activities to young people.

PACT

PACT stands for Partners and Communities Together. PACT is designed to enable partner organisations to work together to address issues of concern to local people. There are a range of PACT processes in Worcestershire, including PACT meetings, street briefings and outdoor surgeries.

Positive Activities

Positive activities are activities that young people participate in which may have a positive impact on their health, family, school or college life as well as on the local community.

Reddicard

The Reddicard is a discount card that can be used by car holders in all of Redditch Borough Council's sports and leisure sites as well as cultural heritage sites. Different types of Reddicard can be purchased by a Redditch resident, depending on their individual needs. To obtain a Reddicard an applicant needs to complete an application form which can be obtained from Council owned leisure centres or can be downloaded from the Council's website.

Redditch Community Safety Partnership

The Redditch community Safety Partnership is the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) in the Borough. A number of organisations are members of the partnership, which works to address problems and improve community safety in Redditch.

Redditch Partnership

Redditch Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership in Redditch. (Refer to p – for further information about Local Strategic Partnerships).

Redditch Student Council

The Redditch Student Council is a youth body comprising Student representation from four local high schools based in the Borough.

Glossary

Section 10 Agreements

Under Section 10 of the Children's Act 2004 organisations working in partnership can pool resources for a common purpose. One of these arrangements was utilised by the Bromsgrove Partnership to provide financial support to THE TRUNK in 2009.

Social Enterprise

Social enterprises operate a model of business that aims to tackle social or environmental problems and to improve communities. Social enterprise businesses are designed to generate a profit which can be reallocated to the business or to the local community.

Social Networking

Social networking involves communities of people working online to communicate and share interests or experiences. There are a number of social media sources, or online communication tools, that can be used for networking purposes. Many organisations that deliver public services engage with customers using group profiles on social networking sites.

What's Your Point?

What's Your Point? is a not-for-profit community organisation that works primarily with young people and families based in Woodrow, Redditch.

Worcestershire Youth Cabinet

The Worcestershire Youth Cabinet comprises a group of young people, aged 11 – 18, who provide a voice for young people in the county. There are four Redditch representatives appointed to the Youth Cabinet each year.

Your Ideas

Your Ideas is a youth and community project based in Matchborough, Redditch. The organisation delivers a number of youth and community activities in the town.

Youth Parliament UK

Young people from across the country, aged 11 – 18, sit on the UK Youth Parliament. The Youth Parliament is managed by young people and provides young people with an opportunity to represent the views of their peers and to bring about social change.

Overview and Scrutiny Contacts

For additional copies of this report, or to find out more about Overview & Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council please contact:

Jess Bayley, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer

Jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk 01527 64252 (3268)

or

Michael Craggs, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer

Michael.craggs@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk 01527 64252 (3267)

Overview and Scrutiny
Democratic Services
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
B98 8AH