

Youth Review Workshop

Report of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee

September 2019



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1. Introduction

A 3-month review of Wirral's youth offer commenced in June 2019. The review looked at gathering opinion on the current activities and support services available to young people in the Wirral. Officers wanted to understand from young people themselves what activities they currently use, and what they would like to see available in the future as well as the support and advice they want going forward.

The consultation has been shaped through engagement with young people at events and activities through the summer, including meeting with School Councils and the National Citizen Service. This has been supported by an online questionnaire for young people.

A series of consultations with Council staff asked how they felt the service could be changed. Officers are also engaging with groups and services such as Forum Housing, as well as organizing a general Public Event to be held on 20th August 2019.

2. The review so far

The Youth Offer Review wants to gather opinions about the current activities and support services available to young people in Wirral. Officers want to understand from young people aged 8 to 25 which activities they currently use and would like to see available in the future, as well as the support and advice they would like to see. It is essential to put young people at the heart of these services; their voice and opinions should shape the service going forward.

Officers have consulted with young people at libraries, youth service, parks, leisure and sports facilities and have also spoken with colleagues and health services to look at what is currently effective and what could be improved.

The review is straddling the summer holidays to ensure as much participation from young people as possible. They have consulted at cinemas, coffee shops, leisure centers and the floral pavilion. This has been steered by Youth Voice Groups to ensure young people are leading the consultation. In term time, the review has visited various School Councils for their opinion.

3. Workshop Objectives

A workshop was organised in July 2019 for Members to feed into the review and consider what they felt were the strengths and weaknesses of the youth offer in their wards and in Wirral as a whole.

The objectives of the workshop:

- To update Elected Members on the purpose of the Review and the progress so far
- To listen to Elected Members opinions on the current offer including both activities and support services

- To look to the future and help shape the future offer
- To outline the timeframe of the consultation and next steps

4. Workshop

Previous engagement sessions with young people included activities whereby the young people were asked to write their feeling and opinions on living in Wirral on large paper sheets. These were placed around the walls for Members to view.

It was notable that the same comments and issues were repeated: accessibility to safe spaces, sporting activities and public transport. The young people also had concerns about education, mental health and access to training and life skills. Their remarks were well considered and gave valuable insight into the very real concerns and aspirations of Wirral's young people.

There were several comments which were especially difficult and focused on reducing criminal activity, drug use and sexual or criminal exploitation. One young person remarked that living in Wirral gives young people low expectations in life, from poor quality housing and buildings, and cited the fact that there were not the resources available to make changes.

Members also commented that a significant amount of the comments made by young people regarded environmental concerns such as parks, littering and pollution.

Members were then asked to consider what is working well with the current youth offer in Wirral, in its entirety. It was noted that this is much wider than just youth clubs and outreach teams.

Officers pointed out that the survey has gone out to young people – but the offer needs to go beyond current service and organizational boundaries.

5. Member and officer discussion

- Councillors from Wirral South advised that they have paid for Mental Health outreach services, which has been well received by young people, it was also noted that there is a Mental Health Counsellor working out of the Wallasey Youth Hub.
- Community Police Services have also been a success, with drop in sessions in locality areas. It was agreed that services such as mental health and police outreach have been effective in making young people feel safer in themselves and their communities. Members confirmed they would like to see more services such this going forward.
- Members commented that the council website can be tricky to navigate, so using this to promote youth services may be difficult as a lot of activities go unnoticed. The same opinion was given regarding the Council's Twitter feed. It was agreed the social media could be utilised more effectively

- Members commented that Eastham Country Park used to have a Ranger to take kids round the park, but this offer has gone now. There used to be a Park Ranger's shed with tennis rackets and balls for children to use, which members felt was a good way for young people to use the park facilities and it reduced the potential for antisocial behaviour
- It was noted that Insurances and CRB checks can be prohibitive to community groups – however we are fortunate to have a huge amount of community groups, with free and inclusive events in Wirral, which should be promoted more amongst younger people.
- Inclusion was mentioned by members, as some sports facilities are limited in promoting this. In Wirral south there were no changing rooms for girls in the rugby club, but this will change.
- Members agreed that the National Citizen Service (NCS) is a great offer, as it includes outdoor experience, business studies, and public speaking events. Members commented that the change in young people who have participated in NCS is amazing, as well as the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. It was noted that the lengthy amount of time away from adult supervision promoted responsibility, self-sufficiency and increased confidence.
- Members commented that the Hive is an excellent facility, but accessibility is an issue. The public transport link is difficult, with feedback from parents and children advising that it's not safe after dark.
- The Hive originally put buses on to get children there, but this provision is no longer available. Some members don't feel like it is being used to its full capacity and this is mainly due to issues which have been reported at night. Charing Cross in Birkenhead is not seen as a safe area by young people and parents, and this has hindered participation.
- Officers confirmed that they are aiming to get a realistic look at The Hive user groups. With members keen to see the figures on initial membership vs. true retention. Members would be interested in engaging more with officers regarding this.
- Members queried budgets and how officers planned on implementing a new Youth Strategy. Officers confirmed that this is the first time it has been looked at collectively and will be looking to utilise the existing resources.
- We have a resource available with community groups in parks, but we need to look at bridging the gap in the services. If there are 50 people providing football and just one

person doing tennis, do we ask the community groups to extend their expertise? It was agreed that we need to bring out services that exist.

- It was agreed that finances are limited as an authority. Officers are aiming to put together a map of the current services on offer and once this is completed it will be evaluated to see where the gaps are.
- Officers confirmed that the survey sent to young people does not just ask closed questions, it has drop down answers, and offers space to write down priorities. The survey also asks for the postcodes, gender and ages, to provide officers with further data.
- It was noted that there is a gap in sport facilities for girls age 12 to 18. There can be a perception that a lot of sporting provision is geared towards boys. Not only is there a lack of accessibility for girls who are interested in traditional male sports, but also those traditionally aimed at girls such as the availability of netball, hockey pitches at weekends. Members felt this coincided with the upkeep of parks and tennis courts.
- Hub service in West Kirby have closed and there is very little in the current offer for people with disabilities. It was also noted that the activities at West Kirby marine lake are at the top of the Invigor8 price range and West Kirby concourse is not utilised by young people as well as it might. Officers noted these suggestions and advised that the Short Break review is capturing children's ideas on disabled provision.
- Members discussed the provision of after school activities and are concerned that there is a major tendency for activities to drop off in secondary school. Members commented that lunch breaks are short, and lessons are increasingly focused around core subjects, which does not always encourage a more holistic education, or the development of personal interests such as art, music or sports.
- Concerns were voiced that school does not always improve aspirations, and that there is now less emphasis on excellence in non-core subjects such as humanities, history and the arts, which can help give children a wider world view. One member felt strongly that aspirations are going as a result of this. It was noted that the youth offer should link in with this and look at provision that includes activities that are also non sport focussed.
- It was also noted that one young person had asked for teachers to receive more training in mental health support, indicating that this was becoming a significant issue in schools.
- Transport was raised as an issue and members were keen to explore how to get all services involved to getting signed up to the same priorities. It was noted that consultation over problems is not the same as asking for solutions and the review

should also focus on that. We are not consulting with them on decisions that are made for them – previously we haven't taken on issues that are raised in Youth Council, which could cause disillusion amongst young people who are involved in politics.

- Members liked the idea of generations working together, as they agreed this helped build confidence and development, as well as making young people feel involved with the community. A project in Denmark was cited whereby young people live with an elderly person and providing support in return for smaller rents.
- Members were interested to know how officers are targeting isolated children. Officers confirmed they are targeting areas, youth offending teams, 'contactabus', outreach teams. There is also a Contextual Safeguarding Survey being undertaken by WSCB as well as the and short brakes review.

6. Summary and suggested recommendations.

- ***What is apparent is the lack of information out there and members agreed that pivotal to success will be the delivery of the project. It needs to all be one page.***
- ***Bus routes, passes, transport all cited as problems, including parents own perception of public transport. However, Members did suggest using the youth officer as an opportunity to lobby and suggested the possibility of bus companies and Merseyrail sponsoring youth services.***
- ***It was also agreed that both local and national companies could invest in young people and local projects as they are future employees.***
- ***Members were asked how measure the success and failure of the outcomes of the review? They agreed that the check for this is young people themselves. There should be robust analysis on the product to include social impact reports and KPI's pivotal to this should be less silo working and more partnership working.***
- ***Members commented that once a new service is provided, the measure of success will be how much people get involved. Additionally, bad feedback should not be a measure of failure.***

7. Attendance

Councillors

Cllr Wendy Clements

Cllr Jean Robinson

Cllr Paul Stuart

Cllr Tom Usher

Cllr David Mitchell

Cllr Chris Carubia

Cllr Jenny Johnson

Cllr Helen Cameron

Officers

Elizabeth Hartley (Assistant Director – Early Help)

Sarah Towey (Senior Business Designer)

Lindsay Davidson (Senior Manager – Targeted Services)

Anna Perrett (Scrutiny Officer).

