

HEAD OF YOUTH & PLAY SERVICE REPORT

Executive Summary

- 1.0 This report seeks to inform the committee of developments in the Youth & Play Service since the previous meeting. The Committee is asked to note the report..

Staff Movements/Developments

- 2.0 Since the last meeting the following staff have left the Service:
- 2.1 Joan Wilkinson MBE has retired after 27 years service. Joan has been an important member of staff in the Service and to the hundreds of people she has worked with over the years. We wish Joan well in her retirement.
- 2.2 I am also sorry to report on the death of a part time youth worker at Bebington, Dot Owen. Dot worked for the service for 22 years.

Wirral Outreach Team

- 3.0 The Wirral Outreach Team continues to work with young people they meet on the streets and in the parks throughout the borough. As previously reported, some young people are drawn together with their fellow enthusiasts to pursue interests and hobbies. New Brighton, Wallasey, New Ferry and Eastham are some of the locations where skateboarders meet and where the youth workers have been supporting the young people in their quest for improved facilities. A shared interest in Goth culture drew Wirral young people together at the roundabout at Central Station where the Birkenhead Youth Action Project made contact with them and involved the young people in a media project. Out of this has come the suggestion for a youth fringe festival to take place later in the year.
- 3.1 Through outreach work, young people participate in a varied curriculum. Young people enjoy and benefit from creative activities. The interests of the young people provide a starting point and afford an opportunity for the young people to plan and take responsibility for seeing projects through. Noctorum Young People's Project runs craft workshops at Noctorum Library. In New Ferry, the South Wirral Young People's Project is working with young people who are designing a sculpture for the shopping precinct. At St Peter's Church, Rock Ferry, young people have started a photography and art project with the support of Birkenhead Youth Action Project. Young women in Eastham identified that they wanted to participate in a dance project and were supported by South Wirral Young People's Project to achieve this. Wallasey Young People's Project took the lead in organising the highly successful sand sculpture competition.

- 3.2 Noctorum Young People's Project, Deeside Young People's Project and Fender Youth Action Project enable young people to access sports facilities on a regular basis and some are working towards a NVQ certificate.
- 3.3 Health is often a focus for issue-based work. Wallasey Young People's Project ran an effective smoking cessation project with young people who use Quarry and Earlstone Parks. On the Beechwood Estate, Fender Youth Action Project worked in partnership with the voluntary sector to deliver a health and self-confidence course for young women. In Birkenhead, the North End Young People's Project, using the Kontakta Bus, has linked with Brook to run a safe sex project. Alcohol awareness is addressed with many groups.
- 3.4 The Wirral Outreach Team contributes to the community safety agenda on an ongoing basis. In Wallasey Village, which was subject to a section 30 Order, Wallasey Young People's Project has worked with the young people to reflect on unacceptable behaviour and to modify it. Throughout Wirral, young people are encouraged to participate in positive activities as a means of diverting them from engaging in anti social behaviour. Young people who congregate in the vicinity of Borough Rd and the roads off it have been successfully engaged and are now attending Shaftesbury Youth Club on a regular basis. This has come about through the Reducing Risk Taking Behaviour project in which outreach workers from the Wirral Outreach Team, Response and Brook have worked together, firstly in NRF areas of Wallasey and latterly in Tranmere, to provide an enhanced service to young people. Not only has this work involved diversionary activities, risk taking through drug and alcohol misuse and risk taking sexual behaviour have been addressed.
- 3.5 A number of initiatives have been undertaken with the voluntary sector e.g. Tranmere Alliance and support has been given to community groups. A productive working relationship has been developed with the Fire Service and one example of this is the Dig It Project, a community gardening project at Bromborough Fire Station. To break down barriers between uniformed services and different generations, the Police and the Fire Service have played football and been bowling with young people from South Wirral Young People's Project.
- 3.6 In addition to managing their locality based teams, the full time Neighbourhood Youth Workers have given support to the Youth Forums by encouraging young people to make use of the forums to raise issues that are of concern to them. The forums are promoted as an arena to express views and the young people are supported so that they feel confident about playing a participatory role in decision-making processes.
- 3.7 Neighbourhood Youth Workers also undertake work on a weekly basis at the Joseph Paxton School, Rock Ferry High School and the Wallasey School, which enhances the curriculum and enables young people to access information and advice.

Wallasey & Deeside Area Team

- 4.0 There are 9 units in the Wallasey & Deeside Area. 3 of these units have worker-in-charge vacancies and 6 units have part-time staffing vacancies. However, despite this the range and quality of work continues. Below is a sample of some of the projects young people are involved in at the moment.
- 4.1 Two units in the Wallasey area specialise in D of E training, St Mary's and the Open Award Centre. At present these units are in the middle of the expedition season and over 500 young people in the Wallasey area are involved in Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.
- 4.2 Moreton Youth Club has been involved in Health Promoting Youth Settings initiative. This is based on the school Health Promoting system but has been specifically designed for Youth Units. Moreton Youth Club was the first unit to complete their Bronze Award for healthy eating and lifestyles (the first unit in Wirral and nationally to achieve this). This involved the young people assessing their tuck shop and how they could improve activities in the unit to encourage everyone to be healthier. They re branded their coffee bar 'the Balance Bar' and looked at how they could improve the food and activities in the club, while not losing sight of the fun element of the work. All activities are now done with health in mind, e.g national donut day was celebrated but involved some circuit training to get a donut and discussions on moderation and balance between treats and exercise. The unit is now working on their Silver Award.
- 4.3 Allandale Youth Club has been involved in a piece of joint work with The Brook. Many of the Youth club members are 13 and 14 and it has become increasingly apparent that some work around puberty was needed within the club. A four week project for both the boys and girls run as single sex sessions was developed with the Brook outreach workers. The sessions covered puberty, contraception, relationships and feelings. While one group was working on sexual health the other group enjoyed activities out including bowling and laser quest as part of the teen pregnancy strategy in Wallasey. The sessions were very successful and part two will happen later in the year with work on emotional literacy as a mixed group.

Birkenhead & Bebington Area Team

- 5.0 All the Clubs in the Area Team were busy during the spring period. The units continue to work towards realising their individual performance targets but on going difficulties with recruitment sometimes makes this difficult.
- 5.1 Youth workers in Greasby have recently developed a new provision in Coronation Park. Staff and young people have been working in partnership with the police, Department of Parks and Open Spaces and voluntary organisations for some months and have successfully renovated and opened the pavilion in the park for the use of young groups and other organisations. Greasby continues to attract large numbers of young people who enjoy a varied programme of activities including a variety of sports and creative projects.

- 5.2 **Shaftesbury Youth Club** is as always exceptionally busy, averaging between 75 and 100 attendances each night. At Easter they hosted a party of 35 young Irish footballers for a weeks activity over the holidays. This work was developed many years ago to provide respite from the troubles in Belfast but now continues due to the value of the positive outcomes and strong ties of friendship. Twenty young people are currently enjoying a twelve-week course run by the Club in partnership with the Weston Spirit organisation. The course combines the acquisition of football coaching skills with discussions and workshops on pertinent issues relating to personal development. Despite the temptations offered by World Cup broadcasts the numbers of young people attending the course have been maintained.
- 5.3 **Bebington Youth Club** sadly lost a long-standing member of staff with the premature death of Dot Owens. She had worked for the Department for many years and will be missed by both staff and young people. The Club will be running its normal daytime summer holiday programme this year.
- 5.4 **Viking Youth Club** is the venue for PAYP holiday activities run under the auspices of the Youth Federation, About 75% of the group, which caters for Wirral wide referrals, attends Viking Youth Club and so the staff work very closely with the project. Members from the Club are also involved with the Fedzone project that runs from May until September. The aim is to prepare the young people to become peer educators and they are enjoying a broad based curriculum including, health and safety, child protection awareness, arts and crafts, first aid and music.

Response

- 6.0 Many young people present with very complex issues which demand complex solutions some of the young people we see have multiple problems including homelessness, abuse, drug use, domestic violence, poor health, self harm , pregnancy, alcohol misuse etc. Response is very fortunate in that we have a number of key partners who support us in making a difference to the young people who make use of our service.
- 6.1 During this period Response had 467 individual young people presenting with difficulties, including those young people attending for housing and counselling, these young people returned to the agency making a total of 1391 contacts. In addition to these numbers the service delivered a total of 167 workshops on drugs and homelessness in schools approx 2860 young people attended these workshops, feedback from schools and evaluations have been very positive.
- 6.2 All other Drug and Alcohol Team (DAAT) contractual obligations have been met and we are currently on a upward direction of travel.
- 6.3 The child concern model has been used on a number of occasions by staff at Response and we have found this to be a positive experience in dealing with the many complex issues highlighted above. A key to success has been the multi – agency approach that the model embraces, working together makes a difference. The model does however create anxieties for staff in that the amount of time consumed by organising the meetings etc is heavy. The main cause of anxiety is not reaching contractual target's given the extra time needed to implement the model.

- 6.4 I am pleased to inform YSAC that the Wirral DAAT agreed to continue to fund the Drug and Alcohol teams within Response and we have robust service level agreements in place to deliver services to Wirral Young People.
- 6.5 Two nominations for a national award was submitted for the 'Tackling Drugs to Build a better Britain' .The Head of Response was nominated for this national award along with the T2 & T3 service. The recognitions for the nominations were celebrated by the DAAT and attended by Steve Maddox and Kevin Miller.

Housing Advice Service

- 6.6 254 individual young people have accessed the Housing Advice Service at Response since Jan 06. Of these 37 have been accommodated, 60 cases are ongoing, approximately 50 have returned home and approximately 45 have referred directly to another service. The remainder have either required one off information and advice usually about housing options to help them prepare for their future.
- 6.7 We have met with Wirral Partnership homes and they acknowledge that there are insufficient properties available to under 25's. They have agreed to remove some of the age restrictions from some of the age banded properties. This will help some of the 'ready,' young people to move on from temporary accommodation to properties of their own, with support packages from agencies like Response. It will also help free up places in supported temporary accommodation.
- 6.8 Despite the above, 52 young people who have been evicted from, or are unsuited to the mainstream hostel projects, due to complex multiple issues, vulnerability or challenging behaviour still face a lack of accommodation in the Borough. Some of these young people return home, go into unsupported accommodation eg Brooklands (provided they are 17 years and above), appeal to return to supported accommodation, placed out of Borough. Some also sofa surf in friends flats for a period of time so that they can reapply to Hostels once their ban has been lifted.

Homelessness Prevention in Schools

- 6.9 Since January 06 we have delivered preventative workshops to 841 young people across secondary schools in Wirral. Feedback from young people and teachers is very positive :

“... the workshop is definitely needed within the schools PSRE Curriculum. It raises awareness amongst young people about the dangers and risks of becoming homeless, and the options they have. The reality of what can go wrong when homeless is certainly a clear message incorporated into the workshops, and certainly a message that all young people need to hear...”
(School Teacher- Wirral Grammar)

“... I've learnt a lot about homelessness, and I've realised I shouldn't take my own family and home for granted...” (Y.10 Pupil)

Hostel Visits

- 6.10 When staff identify that a young person is trying to leave home, perhaps on a whim or without thinking through the consequences, they will arrange a hostel visit with the young person as part of a 'reality check workshop'. Often the young person decides with support to renegotiate the situation back at home because they didn't realise how comfortable they were at home, compared to entering the hostel system. The external funding for the preventative work expires in Dec 06. We are currently exploring ways of further funding this initiative.

Welfare Rights

- 6.11 Response offers general advice daily but we operate a Citizen's Advice Bureau specialist service one session per week for the very complex cases. This partnership is running well. Our combined efforts have gained in excess of £13,700 per annum for young people and £2,511 in crisis payments and budgeting loans since April.

Counselling

- 6.12 Referrals into the counselling service remain steady. Since January to the present date there have been 154 referrals into the service. Priority is given to those young people who are aged between 13 – 19. Giving priority to this age group has meant that young people are not waiting so long for an appointment. At the moment the waiting time is between one to two weeks which is very good for service users as elsewhere waiting times are usually longer. The counselling service continues to offer a mediation service to young people and their families. This is a very limited service that is available on a Tuesday evening.
- 6.13 The staff team at Response have recently attended a training course that explored the issue of self-injury and young people. The course was presented by staff from the 16 – 19 team within the Child and Family service.

Wirral Youth Theatre/Youth Arts

- 7.0 Wirral Youth Theatre/Youth Arts (WYT) continues to offer an open programme of performing arts to over 200 young people across Wirral, as well as targeted partnership project work with Voluntary and Statutory Youth Organisations. This work has culminated in several performance events – including dance and music showcases - at Pacific Road Arts Centre with audiences of over fifteen hundred people.
- 7.1 In early May, a cast and crew of fifty young people were also involved in creating a large-scale production called 'Living With History' – staged in 'The Bombed Out Church' (St Lukes) in Liverpool. WYT worked in partnership with Urban Strawberry Lunch. The derelict church was transformed into a spectacular performance space for a two-day run of four multi-media performances using real archive stories of the Merseyside Blitz to depict the story of human resilience and community spirit. The show was a huge success and played to full houses of cross generational audiences totalling over one thousand and the feed back was extremely positive.

Other major achievements this year include:

Work with schools.

- 7.2 WYT's work in schools has increased, particularly through 'peer led' dance work. Since January 06 we have worked in fourteen schools providing dance sessions as part of the curriculum, which are co-facilitated by WYT peer educators (16-29 year olds) as part of their development training. WYT's Inclusion Dance Company (ID) also launched its 'Every Child Matters' schools package which looks at young people's rights and responsibilities in relation to the five themes.
- 7.3 Regular drama based workshops have been taking place with older pupils from Meadowside School focussing on building confidence and assertiveness. The workshops culminated in a performance and DVD at the end of term celebration. This work will continue in September and will also involve young people from Foxfield School towards integration into a major WYT production in 2007.
- 7.4 A group of five WYT Peer educators were also supported to run a six-week long project using drama to explore drugs awareness in Wallasey School commissioned by Wallasey Extended Schools Service. The project enabled sixteen Year 10 and 11 pupils were to devise a short performance, which they performed at a Health Education Day involving parents.

Participation and young people's involvement in decision-making.

- 7.5 On a regional level staff are involved in Merseyside Youth Theatre Development Forum (MYTDF) focussing on the professional development and participation of young people. Nationally, young people are involved in setting up a National Youth Theatre Council and regional hubs, which aim to ensure the Arts Council is listening and responding to young people. Members were also involved in presentations towards achieving Wirral's Beacon Status and are currently involved in designing and facilitating the Youth Parliament day.
- 7.6 Groups of WYT members have also be involved in performing relevant pieces at the launch of Wirral's Participation Charter and the North West Regional Training Unit participation event. Peer Educators have also performed at several Health Related Conferences for professionals focussing on improving provision for young people accessing confidential sexual health services.

Accrediting young people's achievements

- 7.7 WYT has delivered its first **BTEC in Peer Education** and thirteen young people have successfully completed the course. The qualification is equivalent to four GCSEs and twelve UCAS points. This course provides an excellent progression route for older WYT young people who are particularly interested in pursuing careers in Youth Work and Participatory Arts. The plan is to run another BTEC course starting in October 2006. In addition to this WYT is now a registered centre for the Arts Councils new **Bronze, Silver and Gold Arts Awards** and the aim is to accredit the work of between twenty to thirty young people this year through this scheme.

Reducing Risk Taking Behaviour commissioned by Brook

- 7.8 An interactive drama and workshop package called 'Girl's Night Out' was devised, performed and facilitated by a group of peer educators which explored risk taking behaviours relating to drugs, alcohol and sexual behaviour. The package was delivered to five separate groups of professionals and young people from a range of agencies and now the scenarios are being made into a training DVD resource.

My Ideal Foster Carer Training DVD

- 7.9 Commissioned by Social Services, WYT is currently working with a group of young people who are 'looked after' to produce a follow up training DVD to the very successful and award winning 'My Ideal Social Worker'. 'My Ideal Foster Carer' will be a tool for training potential Foster Carers from a young person's perspective. The DVD will be launched in September 06.

'Sound Steps' Music Project

- 7.10 WYT received external funding from Youth Music (a National Charity) to help develop participatory music with particularly harder to reach young people. This funding has now expired and we are currently reapplying for a second stage of the project. The project has been very successful and worked with over 200 young people who would not otherwise had the opportunity to access quality participatory music experiences. If successful with funding applications, the next stage of the project will focus on developing new project work, developing a music download website for young Wirral talent, establishing two music trainee music worker posts and developing a purpose built music space for young people.
- 7.11 **Half-term Training Residential** – Fifteen young people took part in four days of arts training activities at a camping barn in Lancashire. The group planned and fundraised for the residential and participants were enabled to explore the themes of Every Child Matters through dance, music and physical theatre.
- 7.12 **Peer Education Theatre Company** – The Company has been commissioned by Wirral Brook to devise and perform a drama piece about the health risks related to drugs and alcohol. The piece is being used as a stimulus in training for professionals and for preventative work with groups of young people. The company of young people aged 16-19 have also delivered a number of presentations at Primary Care Trust conferences.

- 7.13 **Railway Safety Video** - In partnership with the Alcohol Outreach Team, the 13-15 drama group have been working on an interactive DVD package to be used by outreach workers. The DVD is due to be launched in February 2007.
- 7.14 Next year promises to be an extremely exciting time as WYT has applied for a £25,000 grant from Young Roots Heritage Lottery Fund. This grant is to fund a project called 'Living With History' which will be delivered in partnership with Urban Strawberry Lunch and will involve over 50 young people from across Wirral in devising an original production based on real life stories of the Blitz. The multi-media performances will take place over four days in May in the 'Bombed Out' Church in Liverpool. This will be a large scale and high profile project, young people have been integral in preparing the bid and are extremely excited about the forthcoming piece.

Outdoor Education/Duke Of Edinburgh's Award

- 8.0 The Duke of Edinburgh's Award marks its 50th Anniversary in the UK in 2006 Award participants, workers and volunteers in Wirral have been very active in celebrating this event by organising specialist events, expeditions and presentations. Most notable was a Civic event hosted by Wirral's Mayor when Gold Award holders from as far back as the 1960s were invited to Wallasey Town Hall to a Gala Evening.
- 8.1 Plans to increase the number of young people in the Award are progressing well with 5 new units applying this year, to run the Award under Wirral's operating licence. However we are also keen to increase the diversity and reach of the Award. With this in mind the Award Officer for the Borough is attempting to identify specific barriers that prevent young people from participating in Award activities and designing strategies to overcome this.
- 8.2 The summer has seen a successful expedition season with hundreds of young people completing Bronze, Silver and Gold in North Wales, The Yorkshire Dales and The Lake District. Participants will now spend the rest of the year completing other sections of the programme.
- 8.3 Delivery of the Award is complimented by partnership work with other organisations in the area.
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue are able to provide training and service opportunities for participants.
 - The Lady Lever Art Gallery runs a Junior Guide scheme.
 - The Oaklands Centre is able to run Gold residential courses.
 - Wirral Rangers continue to run conservation opportunities.
- 8.4 To further enhance this way of working we are constantly looking for other suitable groups and associations who are happy to be signed up as Duke of Edinburgh's Award Access Organisations.
- 8.5 Looking to the future, Wirral Operating Authority has adopted the Award's corporate approach of:
- "one day anyone aged 14-25 who wishes to participate in the Award will be able to do so"

Special Needs/International Work

- 9.0 We have just finished hosting a multi-national group from The Azores, Czech Republic and Malta. They were here for 10 days staying at Ivy Farm and the theme of the visit was “Life is a Challenge”.

The next stage of the project will be in the Azores next summer.

In August we hosted a group of 23 young people and workers from Hong Kong who stayed with us for 14 days. The theme of this visit was “Participation” and the return visit will be in late September again for 14 days.

In August a group of young people stayed for a week in the Czech Republic as part of a multi-national project with Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia and Italy. The Theme of this project was “Live for the Moment”.

Also in August a group visited Cavan in Ireland on the first leg of a two way exchange.

Ivy Farm

- 9.1 Bookings continue to be healthy and we are just about fully booked, at least as far as weekends are concerned, until the end of September.

Special Needs Summer Programme

- 9.2 Through our Units a full programme of events took place over the summer holidays. Activities included camping, fishing, visits, discos, residentials and workshops on various issues.

Financial and Staffing Implications

- 10.0 There are none.

Equal Opportunities Implications

- 11.0 The Youth & Play Service works to promote equal opportunities.

Human Rights Implications

- 12.0 There are none arising from this report.

Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 13.0 There are none arising from this report.

Community Safety Implications

- 14.0 There are none arising from this report.

Planning Implications

15.0 There are none arising from this report.

Local Member Support Implications

16.0 There are none arising from this report.

Background Papers

17.0 There are no background papers relating to this report.

Recommendation

18.0 The Committee is asked to note the report.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services