

**BOLSOVER DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**SAFE AND INCLUSIVE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**YOUTH FACILITIES,
OPPORTUNITIES AND
PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG
PEOPLE
SCRUTINY REVIEW**

5th January 2012

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Foreword of Councillor Mary Dooley Chair of the Safe and Inclusive Scrutiny Committee

I would sincerely like to thank all our partners and stakeholders for giving up their time to attend our meetings. The committee have learnt so much more from these discussions. It soon became clear how dedicated and passionate these people are and they need to be congratulated for the amount of work they put in to provide facilities and opportunities within Bolsover District for our young people.

It has been a genuine pleasure to have been able to visit local groups and people across the District, listening to their views and collating the evidence for our review.

My thanks go to all the members of this committee and our Cabinet Member, Councillor Brian Murray-Carr who has been involved and supported the committee from the start.

I would like to say a special thank you to Claire Millington, Scrutiny Officer and Kay Rodda, Democratic Services Officer for their support throughout the review.

1. Introduction

Young Voice, Bolsover District Council's Youth Council is made up of 36 youth councillors, six elected pupils from each secondary school within the district (Tibshelf, Shirebrook, Bolsover, Fredrick Gent, Heritage and Stubbin Wood). The Young Voice meets formally four times a year

Young Voice was started as a pilot project and has since gone from strength to strength. The Executive has also endorsed the continuation of the Youth Council and a budget is awarded the Youth Council to spend on projects it identifies each year.

The aims of the Youth Council are to:

- Build on existing consultation with young people to inform improvements to service delivery;
- Engage young people in Bolsover in local democratic processes and institutions;
- Provide schools with a learning tool to enhance the teaching of citizenship;
- Develop a positive image of young people across the district.

The Youth Councillors were concerned at how perceptions impacted on the lives of young people living in Bolsover District and put forward the suggestion of reviewing what facilities and opportunities were available, together with the perceptions of young people.

The committee agreed that these issues should be addressed together as the provision of facilities may have an effect on the negative perception of young people and nuisance in a particular area.

At the time of commencing this review, the media was full of stories of the 'August riots' which formed the basis of many of our conversations with people on their perceptions of young people.

When considering examples of the work undertaken by other authorities and organisations, it was clear that many reports focussed on either perception of young people or facilities and activities available. The task in hand for the committee was to consider all of these issues whilst concluding the report in a timely manner. The work put into this review by members of the Safe and Inclusive Scrutiny Committee should not be underestimated, with as much time being spent out and about in the community as has been spent around the committee room table.

It is hoped that the recommendations made in this report will help to ensure that young people are involved and kept informed about what is available to them as well as starting to address some of the issues around perception of young people. Whilst these recommendations are aimed at Bolsover District Council, partners and stakeholders may also find some of the suggestions useful.

2. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Young people should be at the heart of decisions made about new facilities and activities on offer in the areas where they live. Leisure Services should ensure that young people are consulted on any proposals to ensure that these activities are being targeted and provided in the right areas. Young Voice could be one way of consulting with young people across the District.

From the work the Committee carried out it is clear that a lot of the activities young people would like to do can be provided with existing resources and the Authority needs to ensure that young people are being asked what it is they would like to do.

(Please refer to paragraph 6.7 for background information).

Recommendation 2

That alternative communication methods be explored to attract young people to specific organised activities.

(Please refer to paragraph 6.8 for background information).

Recommendation 3

That Leisure Services work with Derbyshire County Council Youth Service to ensure that young people requiring additional support are referred to the

Youth Service as soon as possible. Young people would be identified for early intervention through the 5/60 project which currently takes place in schools throughout the District. Bolsover District Council Officers would be trained in the Youth Service's referral process to make a referral to Derbyshire County Council Youth Service in order to point young people towards positive activities provided by the Youth Service.

(Please refer to paragraph 6.9 for background information).

Recommendation 4

Whenever an opportunity arises, the Authority should build upon the inter-generational work which has been led by Young Voice and the Older People's Forum to help improve community cohesion and promote a positive image of young people.

(Please refer to paragraph 6.10 for background information).

Recommendation 5

That Elected Members at all levels be encouraged to support the Police Community Safety Officers by getting involved in walks around their local wards to understand the issues faced by young people.

(Please refer to paragraph 6.11 for background information).

Recommendation 6

That further work takes place to ensure that Academies and Specialist Schools who receive government funding for a specialist area are carrying out their responsibilities in providing facilities to the community.

(Please refer to 6.12 for background information).

Recommendation 7

That the Authority and its partners be encouraged to utilise funding and opportunities for partnership working in order to ensure that the District benefits from as many facilities and opportunities for young people as possible.

(Please refer to 6.13 for background information)

3. Scope of Review

The aims and objectives of the review were to consider what facilities and opportunities were available for young people across the District and how young people were perceived by adults. With this in mind Members agreed that the current practices and work of partners should be considered with a view to identifying best practice, any alternative ways of working and a more coordinated approach to services for young people.

The list below were questions to be asked to help the committee commence the review.

- What facilities are currently on offer?
- Are these facilities accessible to young people?
- Are they being used by young people?
- How are partners contributing?
- How are young people perceived by older people?
- How can we change people's perceptions?

The Committee comprised the following Members,

Cllr Mary Dooley (Chair)

Cllr Terry Connerton (Vice Chair)

Cllr Brian Hendry

Cllr Andrew Anderson

Cllr Paul Cooper

Cllr Eric Hall

Cllr Duncan Kerr

Cllr Sandra Peake

Cllr John Phelan

Cllr Ken Walker

Support to the Committee was provided by the Scrutiny Officer and the Democratic Services Officer.

4. Method of Review

4.1 The Committee met on 3 occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and the people they wished to interview. Further work through visits was carried out in order to ensure that the right groups of people were involved in the review.

4.2 The Committee sought written evidence by way of a questionnaire and interviewed a number of officers and partners in order to identify what was provided for young people living in Bolsover District.

Young people were involved in the review through work with the Young Voice, Bolsover District Council's Youth Council, who had originally suggested this issue as the subject of a Scrutiny Review.

Older people were consulted on perceptions of young people through visits to clubs and groups across the District.

Attached at **Appendix 1** is a list of stakeholders interviewed.

4.3 Equality and Diversity

Within the process of the review the panel have taken into account the impact of equalities and have not identified any negative impact.

The Equality Panel of Bolsover District Council was involved as a consultee in the review.

5. Evidence

5.1 The following documents were considered as part of the review:

- Young people, crime and public perceptions: a review of the literature – Local Government Association – May 2008
- Tired of Hanging Around – Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people – a guide for Councils' Overview and Scrutiny Function – Audit Commission – January 2009 and DVD of Case studies.
- Image and Perceptions of Young People Report – Manchester City Council – March 2010
- Scrutiny Review of Facilities for Young People – Pendle Borough Council – March 2010
- Image of Young People Scrutiny Review – Cheshire West and Chester Council – March 2011
- Youth Council (BDC)– Age Perception Report – 22 August 2011
- Place Survey 2009 – relevant results
- Information supplied by the Head of Leisure – the story so far.....
- Review of local media for positive and negative stories of young people aged 11 – 19
- Derbyshire County Council – Youth Services web pages

6. Key Findings

Strengths

6.1 The co-ordination of the many and varied activities and facilities provided by Bolsover District Council and partners is seen as very important, especially in the face of diminishing financial resources. There are far too many examples of good practice taking place right across the District to list them all in this report.

Leisure Services are involved in a number of collaborative projects with the Primary Care Trust, Community Safety Partnership, and Derbyshire County Council, including Children and Young Adults to name a few.

It was commented that the Be Safe project was probably one of the best examples of partnership working for young people in the county.

The B-Safe project is aimed at encouraging young people who use alcohol on Friday and Saturday evenings to stay safe. The project worked throughout Derbyshire and provided;

- Street work with young people
- Positive diversionary activities
- A safe centre for young people to go
- Assessment for alcohol problems and referral for further support or treatment.

The project is based on multi-agency teams involving young people's services, the Police, health and County and District Councils.

- 6.2 Leisure Services have developed a Business Improvement Plan to help tackle issues around decreasing budgets. Partners with whom they work, and who often commission services have cut back, and so leisure spend on individuals has reduced as their disposable income has reduced. It has been increasingly important that Leisure Services challenges itself to become more efficient, and ensure that they offer the best possible value for money. In total, £668,851.00 has been achieved/identified as a result of the Leisure Business Improvement Plan, whilst maintaining resources and providing facilities and activities for young people.

Despite decreasing budgets and resources, between Leisure Services and its partners, there was a large and varied amount of activities and provisions on offer. The Extreme Wheels mobile unit was extremely popular with young people across the District, which came as no surprise to the Committee as a skate park is high on young people's 'wish list' right across the District.

- 6.3 Members of the Committee heard on a number of occasions that Derbyshire has a fantastic Youth Service, run by the County Council which is valued by partners and the young people who use the service across the District.

Opportunities available to young people include the Bridge Programme which is provided by the Youth Service and targets young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are not in work, education or training to gain qualifications, skills and confidence. This programme is based in Shirebrook and Chesterfield. Learners follow personalised programmes that lead to accredited qualifications in subjects such as,

- English, Maths and ICT
- Employability and personal development
- Health and Safety, first aid and food safety

- 6.4 Providing young people with activities is making a difference and the project to provide a skate park at Shirebrook through collaborative working of the authority and its partners was seen as an example of best practice. It had demonstrated how providing young people with a

facility that they wanted had diverted them away from the Market Square, where they had been perceived to be causing a nuisance.

Police Community Safety Officers commented that criminal damage in Shirebrook had more or less gone now. The provision of facilities at Kissingate Leisure Centre had also resulted in more interaction between older and younger people which was a key driver in the issues surrounding perception of young people.

- 6.5 A lot of the communications from stakeholders to young people is carried out by word of mouth, however young people continue to turn up for organised activities which means that the communication methods in place are effective. Parish Councils advised that their communication is done through Parish meetings, newsletters and notice boards. Schools often make announcement in assemblies and in newsletters. These may be avenues that the authority wishes to take more advantage of in the future.

The Police Community Safety Officers have been in place for 5-6 years now and have worked to break down barriers which is resulting in increased interaction. They feel that they have built a rapport with the young people they see on a regular basis. They also spend a lot of time attending school assemblies to give talks. The PCSO's will often tag onto Youth Service publicity for events if required. This is another example of how effective communication is working within communities.

Areas for Improvement

- 6.6 The Committee received a large amount of information on what activities and facilities were available in the different wards and areas across the District. An exercise that was carried out with Young Voice asked young people firstly, 'what is on offer where you live?'

Young Voice were also asked, 'what activities would you like to do in your spare time?' On considering the responses, there is some disparity between the answers given in response to this question and the information the Committee had received from partners and stakeholders. For example, young people in Tibshelf stated that they would like the facilities for BMX and a Skate Park. Whilst the Committee are aware of the need to manage the expectations of young people, information received from Leisure Services has already advised that resources for use across the District include 2 mobile skate parks, a stock of BMX racing equipment and a mobile extreme sports unit including KMX carts, mountain bikes and power kites.

Other activities requested from young people included arts projects, e.g. graffiti and photography. The Youth Service has a Creative Arts Team which delivered youth arts activities and opportunities to young people across the county using the creative arts bus. Projects included film, graffiti, mural, dance, music and young band development.

The exercise led Members to question whether the Authority and its partners knew what facilities young people would like, and whether in fact, they had been consulted previously. It was considered that if young people were asked what they would like, they would receive the activities that they wanted to get involved in.

Derbyshire County Council's website was considered as part of the research around this issue. Again, the website advertises Mobile Outdoor Activities and young people are encouraged to have a look what the Youth Service can offer and then talk to the local Youth Worker. Relevant activities include BMX and skateboard team building.

Work should continue to consult and engage with young people, on what they would like, particularly as the Committee found out throughout its evidence gathering that the majority of activities young people require are already available.

Distance and cost were the two main barriers young people faced, the mobile activities provided by the Authority and the Youth Service were usually provided free of charge or at a small fee, e.g. attendance at the Youth Club in Shirebrook run by Derbyshire County Council Youth Service cost 50p and if young people did not have any money, they would not be turned away.

- 6.8 When interviewing the Police Community Safety Officers, they advised that a popular method of communicating with young people was through bluetooth messaging. This targeted young people within a certain radius of an activity that was taking place.

Partners and Stakeholders all had their own preferred methods of communication and knew what worked and what didn't.

When asking young people how they found out about activities or facilities where they lived, one of the most popular answers was through school newsletters and assemblies, posters and the internet/facebook.

When asking if there were any better ways of informing young people, their answers included, e-mail, text, using parish notice boards and making posters luminous so that they stand out and are noticed by all.

It was commented that it is important that young people know their services happen consistently on the same days and the same times each week.

- 6.9 The focus group held with stakeholders resulted in the potential to develop a closer working link between Leisure Services and the Youth Service with regard to signposting and referrals. This is to be welcomed and encouraged.

The appropriate Head of Service or Director would need to attend an extended Multi-Agency Team (MAT) meeting and leisure staff would be required to undertake training on the MAT referral process. The training

would provide the staff with the skills to recognise and refer young people they encountered through their work in schools on the 5/60 programme towards positive activities.

- 6.10 Whilst improved services may have some impact on a reduction in youth anti-social behaviour, issues around dispelling perception are equally important. Successful intergenerational work should be developed and built upon.

The Committee learnt that Young Voice were developing a project with the Older People's Forum whereby young people could provide some workshops to help older people use personal computers and mobile telephones. In exchange, young people could learn about modern history which would help with the school curriculum and also form part of their life skills, e.g. budgeting, cookery, etc.

The Bolsover Older People's Forum represents the ideas, views and concerns of people aged 50 plus living in Bosover District. It is made up of 170 members. The Older People's Forum often meets other Derbyshire wide forum members to exchange ideas and feed information on a wide range of subjects.

When visiting older people's groups and clubs, Members of the Committee found that older people would welcome more interaction with young people in order to alleviate some fears and change perceptions.

Comments received from older people suggested that those who didn't interact with young people on a regular basis (e.g. grandchildren, family, etc) took their perception of young people from the media. As part of the evidence gathering, a review of local newspaper articles concerning young people aged 11 – 19 was undertaken from July to October 2011 to record the number of positive and negative stories. This review of local media proved that these perceptions were unfounded as each week the number of positive articles far outweighed the negative articles.

It is clear that work on issues of perceptions does have a positive impact as the Place Survey 2009 results showed that 59% of respondents felt that teenagers hanging around on streets was a problem – down from 71% two years earlier. Clearly there is further work to be done on this area.

Work in South Normanton through the SNaP Development Project showed that if adults were to get more involved in their own community, they would probably see young people in a different light.

- 6.11 Police Community Safety Officers felt that further Councillor involvement was needed. Councillors at District and Town/Parish level should be encouraged to walk around and address any issues within their wards by raising these issues through Parish meetings.

- 6.12 It was felt that some of the schools within the District who received additional government funding had a duty to provide facilities for the community in line with their specialist areas (e.g. Fredrick Gents School is a specialist ICT and Mathematics school). Having been awarded 'specialist' status and using additional funding that it has received, the school is under an obligation to provide a service to the community. In this example, an ICT Technician is employed to work with children from local primary schools to develop skills. The school is not monitored to ensure that funding is being used appropriately, which in this example is overseen by the Assistant Head for the specialist status area.

Members felt that further monitoring of these requirements should take place to ensure that the communities concerned are benefiting from this funding. It is appreciated that education is a function for Derbyshire County Council and the County Council should be approached for the information requested. This could be an issue raised by scrutiny through the Safe and Inclusive Scrutiny Committee under the remit of social inclusion.

- 6.13 The Committee heard from stakeholders and partners that as budgets and funding were decreasing, every opportunity needs to be taken in order to continue to provide activities and facilities for young people. The authority, and in particular, Leisure Services should continue to utilise its partnerships to make the most of any funding opportunities that arise.

As part of the initial questionnaire sent out to a variety of stakeholders the Committee asked the question, 'how can we make better use of existing budgets?'

Responses included;

"Pooling of resources, including officer time, buildings, outreach facilities, etc. The Partnership's commissioning approach has ensured that an evidence of need basis for allocation of budgets together with contemplating where other funding sources can be accessed/matched"
– Local Strategic Partnership

and;

"Partnership work

- *Working to the needs of young people – consulting with young people, not making decisions based on what we (the agencies) think*
- *Working where young people will access the services*
- *Working the days/times young people want*
- *Delivering what young people want and being prepared to adapt*
- *Relevant people attending meetings*
- Derbyshire County Council Multi-Agency Team

It was clear from all involved in the review that in order to continue to provide facilities and opportunities to young people, it was increasingly important to work in partnership.

7. Conclusions

Young people are often perceived negatively by adults yet the truth is that most young people are decent law-abiding citizens.

Sport and Leisure activities have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour. Solutions that benefit communities lie in engagement with the appropriate young people, delivery through local joint working and coordination of national and local funding.

It is important to note that young people don't necessarily hang around outside because there is nothing else to do. For many, hanging around with friends is a big part of teenage life and is their activity of choice. Addressing issues of perceptions is extremely important in these cases as reports of young people 'hanging around' are treated as and recorded as an incident of Anti-Social Behaviour, when this is clearly not always the case.

It is equally important, as the Committee found out from carrying out the perceptions exercise that the way young people dress, for example, hooded sweatshirts, etc is just modern culture which unfortunately has become stereotypical of hooligans and thugs creating a nuisance and anti-social behaviour. Negative media coverage of young people has added to these perceptions and the Authority should continue to promote good news stories about young people where possible in order to alleviate fears locally.

Young people in the District face similar problems in terms of youth unemployment, lack of aspirations and low self esteem, however with projects such as the Bridge Programme, young people can be encouraged to go into training or further education at 16. On the whole, the majority of young people are not involved in Anti-social Behaviour or negative behaviour and a decline in negative youth issues has been noted by various partners in areas across the District.

It is important to raise the profile of the good work that young people are involved in and to celebrate the achievements of our young people and next generation so that they feel valued, worthwhile members of society.

Stakeholders

Councillor Ann Syrett	Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion
Councillor Brian Murray-Carr	Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
Stuart Tomlinson	Joint Director of Neighbourhoods
Lee Hickin	Head of Leisure
Pam Brown	Chief Executives and Partnerships Manager
Deborah Whallett	Housing Enforcement Manager
Linda Piper	District Youth Team - Derbyshire County Council, South Normanton and Pinxton Multi Agency Team
Keeley Saxton	Youth Development Worker – Derbyshire County Council, Shirebrook and Tibshelf Multi Agency Team
Brian Marshall	Youth Development Worker – Derbyshire County Council, Shirebrook Multi Agency Team
Jessica Clayton	Funding and Appraisals Officer – Local Strategic Partnership
Jo Selby	Bolsover Community Safety Partnership
Tony Payne	Police Community Safety Officer (Pinxton & South Normanton)
Steve Cathcart	Police Community Safety Officer (Shirebrook)
Mandy Mangold	SNaP Development Project, South Normanton
Mick Layton	Thickley Close Sports Club, Shirebrook
Young Voice – Bolsover District Youth Council	Frederick Gent School – South Normanton Heritage High School – Clowne The Bolsover School Tibshelf School
Equality Panel	Bolsover District Council
Clowne Parish Council	
Elmton with Creswell Parish Council	
Pinxton Parish Council	
Pleasley Parish Council	
South Normanton Parish Council	
Barlborough Luncheon Club	
Blackwell Old People’s Club	
Hodthorpe & Belp Community Association	
Pinxton Old People’s Club	
South Normanton 50 plus Club	
Tibshelf Old People’s Club	