



Chester-le-Street
District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



*People
& Place*



Review into the Marketing of Sports Activities for Young People

Final Report

February 2009

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Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review into the Marketing of Sports Activities for Young People

Foreword of the Task and Finish Group Lead

In April 2009 Chester-le-Street will no longer exist as a District Council. A new unitary council called Durham County Council will be created and will deliver services for young people.

We are passionate about the provision of sport and leisure in the District. We know how this can improve the wellbeing of our residents of all ages. We want to ensure that sports activities for young people and their take up are improved through the transition to the new organisation. Parents have been telling us that we do not do a lot for young people when in fact we do. It was clear to us that there were reasons for this mis-perception and we felt that the answer lay in how we marketed the activities and services we provide. In view of this we have undertaken a scrutiny review in order to produce recommendations which we hope can be addressed by the new unitary council.

We have visited a number of different service providers both within the county and beyond to understand what they provide and how they go about marketing it. This review produces recommendations on the issues that we feel that will make a difference and provide much improved services for young people.

We thank those service providers for the time they have given up in helping us with our evidence collection. We urge the new unitary council to consider our findings and views.

Cllr Tracie Smith

Lead Member, Task and Finish Group
Members Champion

The review was carried out between June 2008 and December 2008.
The Lead Officer was Simon High, Acting Head of Leisure Services

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review into the Marketing of Activities for Young People

Membership of the Task and Finish Group

Marketing Activities for Young People Task and Finish Group
Cllr. G Armstrong (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
Cllr. J. Barrett
Cllr. J. Shiell
Cllr. T. Smith (Lead Member)
Cllr. Wilkinson
Cllr. J Proud

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Review into the Marketing of Sports Activities for Young People

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In April 2009 Chester-le-Street District Council will no longer exist. It will be replaced by a new unitary council, Durham County Council, who will deliver local authority services across the county of Durham. The responsibility for delivering facilities for young people will therefore shift to the new unitary in April.
- 1.2 In order to guide the delivery of Chester-le-Street District Council's services in its final year the council developed what it called its 'Transition Plan' The council's Transition Plan, in effect, replaces the council's previous planning document, the Corporate Plan 2007/2010. The Transition Plan includes a schedule of proposals from the previous seven priorities which ought to be and can be achieved in the remaining life of the council. The council's choice to move towards a single priority (its focus for the final year) of what it calls '**People and Place**' was considered as part of the budget setting process and forms a firm part of the Transition Plan.
- 1.3 At their meeting on 30th June 2008 and in response to the council's single priority of '**People and Place**', the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake three scrutiny reviews all linked to the corporate priority. This specific scrutiny topic has a direct impact on the following area of the **People and Place** priority:
- Strengthening Partnerships.
 - Neighbourhoods
- 1.4 This specific review has been undertaken because of specific perceptions of parents that not enough sports activities are available for young people when in fact the council actually delivers a significant range of services and activities for them.

2 Purpose of the Review

- 2.1 The purpose of the review was to look at ways in which the council could better market some of the sports activities it provides for young people particularly in the leisure service.

- 2.2 The work of the Task and Finish group will support a key project of the **People and Place** priority delivery plan in respect of the engagement of young people. Scrutiny recommendations will be incorporated into the 'Handing over the Baton' Report to be presented to the new unitary council in March 2009. In effect the review seeks to implement what improvements can be made prior to vesting day but largely influence improved service delivery within the new organisation.

3 Scrutiny Review Process

- 3.1 Scrutiny reviews are in-depth studies into issues which have been identified by scrutiny members as important to the community and Council of Chester-le-Street.
- 3.2 Scrutiny reviews investigate issues by a process of gathering evidence through speaking to individuals and groups that are involved or affected. The review panel then formulates realistic evidence based recommendations which are presented to the Council's Executive.
- 3.3 Scrutiny reviews will carry out a number of stages in undertaking and completing a review. The stages broadly are:

Stage 1 Scope	The initial stage of the review identifies the background, issues, potential outcomes and timetable for the review.
Stage 2 Investigate	The panel gathers evidence using a variety of tools and techniques and arranges site visits where appropriate.
Stage 3 Analyse	The key trends and issues are highlighted from the evidence gathered by the panel.
Stage 4 Clarify	The panel discusses and identifies the principal messages of the review from the work undertaken.
Stage 5 Recommend	The panel formulates and agrees realistic recommendations.
Stage 6 Report	Draft and final reports are prepared based on the evidence, findings and recommendations.
Stage 7 Monitor	The panel undertakes to monitor agreed recommendations on a regularly agreed basis. This will be a responsibility of the new Unitary Authority.

4 Background

- 4.1 The council and its partners provide a significant range of sports activities and initiatives within the District, including those centred around the key Leisure facilities at the Leisure Centre and the Riverside Complex.
- 4.2 The review is based on direct feedback to District Councillors that there is a lack of awareness amongst young people and parents about what sports activities are actually available within the District. The review could have significant outcomes in better engagement of young people in activities and improved viability of Leisure services provided by the council. The outcomes could include improved enjoyment of leisure time, improved health resulting from increased engagement in sport, reduced crime and improved cohesion and social capital.

5 Terms of Reference

- 5.1 The objective of the review was to:
- Consider the feasibility of Improvements to current marketing of activities provided to young people to secure improved awareness, take up of activities and engagement in sport resulting in improved use of leisure services provided by the council and its partners.
- 5.2 To achieve this review set out to consider the following key issues and questions:
- How aware are young people of the facilities the council has and the activities it provides?
 - How aware are parents of the facilities the council has and the activities the council provides?
 - Who markets leisure activities for young people well and how do they do it?
 - How do private sector facilities market their services?
 - How does the council market its activities for young people including how services are promoted at first point of contact?
 - How well does this compare with market leaders?
 - What are the opportunities for building best practice into the councils marketing arrangements?
 - What is the scope for developing communication channels for young people including potential for young peoples web site with young peoples engagement in its design or the development of SMS texting?
 - What are the capacity issues for change and how can they be addressed including process change, training and development?

- How can parents engage better with leisure services to help young people take up access to sport, including opportunities for related ‘cafes’
 - What decisions do this and the new unitary authority need to consider making in the light of the research findings?
- 5.3 Due to capacity issues during the lifetime of the review it was not possible to address all these questions. The review did focus on its purpose and objectives. In particular had it been possible to properly resource this review the Task and Finish Group would have based its approach on full engagement of young people and their parents. Without the resources to so it based its findings on what other public service delivers do.
- 5.4 The council are aware that the County Council are undertaking a more general Scrutiny Review into the provision of leisure facilities for disaffected youths. It was always proposed that the District Council’s review will feed into this County Council review. At the end of the review the Audit commission published their report ‘Tired of hanging around’ This report found that sport and leisure projects involving music, film making and football, when designed in consultation with young people can help them from drifting into anti-social behaviour. The report also found that because of the way services provision is funded youth workers spend more time on bureaucratic processes to secure funding rather than spending time with young people. The District Council’s Review was about how we market activities rather than how they are designed and provided. However, it accepted that the Audit Commission publication is an important report which the new Unitary Council ought to take account of.

6 Methodology

- 6.1 The task and finish group was working to a clearly agreed timetable. The timetable was a useful tool by which progress could be monitored and also provided a basis for progress reports to the main task and finish and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.
- 6.2 The council agreed its methodology as part of the scoping report approved by the Overview and Scrutiny committee on 30th July 2008. The methodology is set out in the following paragraphs.
- 6.3 Interviews were conducted with the Council’s Acting Head of Leisure Services

Visits

6.4 It was decided at an early stage to visit a range of providers within the region to gain an understanding of how they are tackling the issue of engaging young people in and leisure activities. These visits were planned to include large and small public sector providers and a leisure trust. The following visits were made:

- Thursday 20th November 2008:

Met officers from Wear Valley District Council at Bishop Auckland Leisure Centre.

- Wednesday 3rd December 2008:

Met officers from Sunderland City Council at Sunderland Aquatic Centre

- Thursday 18th December 2008:

Met officers from North Country leisure (A leisure trust covering the Districts of Tynedale, Alnwick and Copeland) at their head offices in Hexham.

Evidence Gathering

6.5 Due to the current pressures being faced by both officers and members in the LGR process no additional or other evidence gathering measures were undertaken.

Report Findings

6.6 The Task and Finish Group prepared a draft report of their findings which was presented to the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consultation purpose on 14th January 2009.

7 Legislative & Strategic Context

7.1 The provision and marketing of activities for young people is not a legislative duty. The council has continued to provide activities in view of their importance to young people, parents and the general well being of the district.

At present the provision is twofold;

1) activities delivered from the various venues/facilities that the council manages and operates, which are;

- Chester le Street Leisure Centre
- Riverside Complex
- Roseberry Grange Golf Complex

2) activities delivered at a neighbourhood level, using community centre's, schools etc by /community development teams and usually dependant on external grant funding due to the limited level of mainstream funding available within existing council budgets. Examples include

- Positive Futures programme
- Game on League
- Community coaches scheme
- Fisch and Mend projects

7.2

Due to capacity issues and resource constraints the marketing of the various activities is undertaken using traditional methods, these include;

- Annual programmes for each facility detailing activities, times, charges etc. These are available from all Council venues, local libraries and other outlets on the general distribution list.
- The development team have a distribution list for all the young people who have already been on courses and they post out internally created flyers with details of new courses during holiday periods.
- For specific projects i.e. positive futures or the game on league the team undertakes some targeted marketing via existing forums/groups ie youth engagement service.
- Information is placed by the team on the leisure part of the Council website and the County Durham Sport Website

7.3

In a strategic context the various activities provided help the Council in its efforts to;

- Support the achievement of LAA targets within County Durham with specific reference to
 - 1) LAA No 3: Self reported measure of overall people's health & well being
 - 2) LAA No 5: Obesity among primary school age children in year 6
 - 3) LAA No 12; Dealing with local concerns about anti social behaviour by police and the local council
 - 4) LAA No 23: Participation in regular volunteering
 - 5) LAA No 24: Young people's participation in positive activities

8 Findings of the Review

8.1 The main learning points from the visit to **Wear Valley District Council** were;

- A small number of traditional type facilities within a large rural area cannot effectively provide sport/leisure opportunities for young people due to travel distances/costs involved
- The Council made a strategic decision to redirect resources from the fixed facilities into a community based physical activity strategy for children and young people.
- A lack of suitable local venues to deliver activities from was a major problem, this was partly solved by a partnership approach with the education authority to build two new NOF halls that would be available to support community as well as school use.
- Local clubs are crucial in providing local opportunities however they are struggling to cope with the increasing demands place on their volunteers for coaching, administration, officiating, fundraising etc. The council, initially through a Sport England funded post, employed a 'club development officer' to support and help develop local clubs which has proved immensely successful. This post has now been mainstreamed.
- Due to the rural nature of much of the District the Council, again supported by Sport England funding, implemented the 'wellness on wheel's' project. This in essence was a mobile gym with top of the range fitness equipment and dedicated staff. Its role was to be located within a community for a 10 week period and encourage local residents to take up exercise and sign post them to existing gyms at the end of the period. The project also extended to creating small community gym's as a legacy project, these are based in small community venues and staffed by trained up members of the community. A number, i.e. Coundon, have been very successful and provide localised opportunities at a very cost effective charge.

8.2 The main learning points from the visit to **Sunderland City Council** were;

1) The present offer for young people can be summarised as follows;

- Young people have affordable access to mainstream facilities i.e. the aquatic centre via the life card scheme.
- Over 300 weekly sessions of neighbourhood youth work takes place across the city, this includes partnerships with the voluntary sector, delivered from 50 access points in a variety of settings i.e. MUGA's, playgrounds, youth centre's, community centre's etc.

- There is a strong and active youth parliament, youth forums and engagement by young people in shaping services.
- There is a high quality youth information service

The key basis of the approach taken by the city council has been to ensure it is young people centred, it promotes a menu of activities that are not just sport and it gives young people some ownership of activities.

2) Some of the key initiatives are;

- A unlimited programme which supports the governments 5 hr physical activity offer, is based in mainstream facilities as well as schools and gives young people 10 week taster sessions at facilities where they are accompanied by a youth worker to give them support and encouragement.
- Removing barriers for young people to enter and use mainstream facilities. This includes a new affordable pricing framework with re-aligned age policies and membership packages and changing attitudes and tolerance levels of both staff and other users in facilities towards access and use by young people.
- Introducing the 'lets go card' for young people 14 to 16 who are in receipt of free school meals or are looked after children. This provides them with £33.00 credit per month to spend on activities with all council leisure centres included in the scheme.

3) In terms of marketing the main marketing channels used are;

- Websites
- Leaflets/flyers/posters. These are very high quality and adhere to strict corporate brand guidelines
- Press advertising including local radio
- Council publications
- Distribution strategies including all council buildings, schools and local businesses.

8.3 The main learning points from the visit to **North Country Leisure** at Hexham were;

- The enthusiasm/attitude of staff is absolutely crucial in successfully engaging with young people. As such the trust invests heavily in staff training, especially with coaches, to ensure they have the right skills and understanding.
- Young people need access to a mixture of activity programmes. At the moment dance is very big with young people, they employ a dance co-ordinator at Copeland to work in schools and after school.

- Due to the location of facilities in Tynedale the trust attempts to deliver activities/programmes locally using village halls and schools. As part of this process it has developed a partnership with four secondary schools.
- Getting into schools to connect with young people is key; the trust has a football team company working in 80 schools and piggybacks other programmes on the back of this.
- Grant funded development schemes should not be parachuted into leisure facilities they should be embedded into a more strategic and long term view that offers benefits all round.
- The community network is a crucial framework for bringing various partners together i.e. the school partnership and national parks have got together for a 'fat camp'.
- When promoting new activities free vouchers/discount vouchers work better than flyers.
- It's difficult to quantify level of marketing resources, in reality most is spent on training and developing staff as they do the most important part of marketing.
- Successfully connecting with young people can't be done with traditional brochures/programmes they won't read them, at Copeland they use text messaging.

8.4 In summary the key lessons learned from these three visits were;

- Community based delivery of activities/programmes is crucial and this is only realistic in partnership with local venues ie community centre's, village halls, schools.
- Adequate mainstream resources must be made available to support community based delivery, at present this is too dependant on external grant funding.
- Young people must be welcomed and supported in using the main facilities; this requires appropriate access and pricing policies, attitude and training of staff and activity programmes that are fun and challenging.
- The community/voluntary sector is absolutely crucial in creating and sustaining opportunities for young people, particularly through clubs. Support must be provided to help sustain and grow these clubs.
- Engaging with young people is not easy, access through schools is by far the best way of reaching most young people and so partnerships with schools to deliver programmes both in and out of school time should be fostered.
- The role of front line staff in successfully engaging/working with young people is by far the most important one; as such significant resources should be invested in their training and development.

- A partnership approach is fundamental, both with other services in the local authority and external partners.

9 Conclusions

9.1 The conclusions of the Task and Finish Group are:

- In order to properly address service design, service improvement and marketing of activities for young people ought to be fully engaged and consulted.
- The service would be improved if the coaches, those who delivered the service, and the receptionists, those who were the first point of contact, worked together proactively to market the service. The coaches could give the receptionists a better understanding of the activities available and the receptionists could then pro- actively market activities by advising young people of the activities available rather than simply reacting to their transaction request. This could be supported by better use and display of activity information at receptions (e.g. a what's on this week display).
- Services could be improved by providing a post activity questionnaire to young people to get an understanding of their enjoyment of the event, their understanding of what is available and what they would also like to see.
- Take up could be improved by coaches and other community leisure staff making regular school visits, particularly in the run up to key school holidays, offering some tasters (e.g.) the golf coach at Roseberry Golf Course has a practice tee). The council regularly has staff from other professions visiting schools that could do some additional promotion as well.
- The principle of community/locality based delivery should be acknowledged as a key element in engaging children and young people in positive activities.
- A review of funding supporting community based delivery should be carried out with the aim of ensuring that mainstream funding is increased.
- A comprehensive training and development package should be planned and implemented for all staff who have direct contact with children and young people to ensure they are able to successfully engage and motivate them.
- A comprehensive review of leisure facility access, pricing and membership policies in respect of young people should be carried out as part of a wider strategic effort to increase their use of mainstream facilities and activities.

- Leisure services should embed partnership working, with a range of internal and external partners, as a key mechanism in improving levels of engagement and involvement with children and young people.
- Support should be provided to local clubs using the template provided by the club development officer role at Wear Valley Council.
- Marketing and promoting activities and young people to children and young people is properly resourced and new technologies are fully explored and where possible used i.e. SMS messaging.
- The County Council should take into account the Audit Commissions Report 'Tired of Hanging Around' when undertaking their wider Scrutiny Review of facilities for Young people as well as in the design of those services.

9.2 These conclusions should form the basis of future improvement to service delivery by the unitary authority.

10 Recommendations

10.1 The review recommends that:

1. That the conclusions reached in Paragraph 9.1 of this report should form the basis of future improvement to service delivery by the unitary authority.
2. The findings of the review and the proposals for the future are submitted for the consideration of the new Unitary Council as part of the Handing Over the Baton Report with a recommendation that they consider the adoption of detailed recommendation above when considering improvements to the activities provided for young people.

10.2 It is recommended that this report is agreed and reported to the District Council's Executive on 2nd March 2009

