

## Area Board Youth Engagement Strategy

Updated May 2021

### 1. Context

In 2014 Wiltshire Council adopted a community-led model for the provision of positive activities for young people. By delegating responsibility, resources and funding to Community Area Boards for youth activities, the council is committed to supporting young people and their communities to come together to develop a responsive and locally driven positive activities offer for young people. This means the positive activities offer will develop differently in each of the 18 Area Board areas to reflect local needs.

#### Definition of Positive Activities

*A positive activity can be any educational or recreational leisure-time activity that is arts, sports, leisure, informal education and community based which helps young people achieve healthy and safe lifestyle outcomes.*

Positive activities are for young people aged 13-19 (up to 25 years of age for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities) and may include activities and support which:

- Helps young people connect with their communities, enabling them to belong and contribute to society e.g. through volunteering
- Provides opportunities for young people to take part in a range of sports, arts, music and other activities where they can socialise safely with their peers and develop relationships, including with adults they can trust
- Encourage young people's personal and social development
- Improve young people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being
- Help young people to achieve in education, work or training
- Prevent and divert young people away from risky behaviours e.g. teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour

### 2. Legal Framework

#### The Education Act 1996

S507B of the Education Act requires Council's, so far as reasonably practicable, to secure for qualifying young persons (aged 13-19 in the local area<sup>1</sup>) access to sufficient positive leisure-time activities which improve their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities. With an annual budget for positive activities for young people this responsibility has been delegated to Community Area Boards.

#### The Equality Act 2010

Community Area Boards are required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010. Community Area Board members must consider the equality issues and impact of proposals as part of the decision-making process. This requires the council to have regard to the need to:

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<sup>1</sup> Up to 25 years of age for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Duty is in relation to protected characteristic groups and has to be applied in the delivery of Wiltshire Council services and in the employment of its staff. The relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, and nationality, ethnic or national origins), religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

### Wiltshire Council Constitution

Area Boards are required operate in accordance with Wiltshire Council's Constitution. Area Boards must comply with the statutory equality and safeguarding duties as well as the council's rules on contracts and procurement and the Code of Conduct.

### **3. Objectives**

The objectives of the Area Board Youth Engagement strategy are:

- To engage young people and support their voices being heard in order to help shape local decision making.
- To adopt an evidenced and need based approach to the provision of positive activities for young people.
- To make the best use of local resources to secure suitable, safe providers and/ or projects/ programmes of positive activities for young people.
- To ensure partnership working between organisations and groups working with young people, and develop links with other services and organisations for young people.
- To promote the local positive activities offer effectively, in a way which maximises young people's participation and involvement.

### **4. Local Youth Engagement Mechanism**

Local youth arrangements should be aware and connected to other council strategies and groups related to children and young people. Some examples include the Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting Panel, Youth SEND, BAME integration and Youth Employment and Skills.

A versatile approach to engaging with young people is needed in Wiltshire given the size, rurality and complexity of the county. Engagements may be delivered through meetings, events, surveys, consultations, social media or via partners such as youth providers and schools. There are three fundamental aspects that each Area Board must ensure are delivered:

#### **a) Community area youth survey**

Each community area must undertake research to ensure the voice of a wide cross section of young people is heard on a regular basis. It is recommended that a survey or consultation exercise is undertaken at least every two years to ensure information is up to date and appropriate to the young people of that time. This assessment will seek to understand how young people believe their community area can be improved and what they perceive to be the key issues that should be addressed. The assessment must be delivered in a way that reduces barriers to participation, especially to those in under-represented communities who may struggle to take part. Key partners should be engaged to help ensure a thorough representation of young people are involved.

## **b) Working Group**

Each community area must have an active youth working group. It will review local needs, priorities and outcomes for young people and provide intelligence to the Area Board. The working group may be asked to make recommendations to the Area Board on how funding for positive activities for young people should be deployed, however, this is not a requirement. The network should work proactively to ensure the voice of young people is amplified to help inform local decision making.

The full terms of reference for a local youth network is set out in appendix A. It is understood that the exact membership, meeting frequency and relationship between the LYN and the Area Board may vary across areas. Each network will be supported by the local Community Engagement Manager, however, models that are independently run in the communities are also encouraged.

## **c) Direct engagement with young people**

Each area should undertake a direct engagement with young people at least once per year. This approach promotes visibility of the council with young people and improves dialogue. Some examples of such engagements are as follows:

- Meeting with young people for an organised school discussion
- A youth event which encourages youth providers and young people to attend
- An informal visit to a youth or sports club to discuss local issues with young people
- An online conversation with local youth representatives e.g. Youth Consultants on a particular issue

## **5. Safeguarding (Appendix: B)**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

When entering into agreements with voluntary and private sector organisations, Community Area Boards need to be assured that the successful individual/organisation has the following in place:

1. Safer recruitment processes, including DBS checks; induction and supervision
2. Identified designated lead(s) for child protection with appropriate relevant training
3. Single central record of staff and volunteers
4. Safeguarding policy, allegations management processes and policy; code of conduct policy
5. Child protection and Safeguarding training at the level appropriate to posts and roles

For further details please see appendix B.

## **6. Priorities**

- Ensure access to a broad range of safe positive activities is open to all young people regardless of their circumstances or needs;

- Ensure that young people are directly involved in the design, development, delivery and review of local provision. To include representation of local youth organisations;
- Ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people are made a high priority;
- Ensure that the positive activities offer reflects the needs of young people and the wider community, enabling them to pursue and progress in their areas of interest.

## **7. Financial**

A budget for positive activities for young people will be allocated annually to Community Area Boards using the Area Board Funding Formula based on the population of 13-19 year old's. This will ensure that funding is allocated equitably across community areas according to local needs.

The funding is revenue based and must be used for the provision of positive activities for young people, targeted at the 13-19 age range (up to 25 years of age for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities). The funding is ring-fenced for these purposes only.

This funding is not to replace other local funding which is currently used to support services and activities for young people. Community Area Boards are required to use the positive activities for young people funding to complement and enhance other local resources, to secure an offer of positive activities which meets the needs of young people in their area.

Community Area Boards will be accountable for the budget, which will include regular financial reporting of spend and compliance with the council's budget and policy framework.

Budgets are allocated annually for use within one year. Roll-over will not normally be permitted although funding that is committed to local positive activity provision but unspent at year end will be carried forward subject to the normal financial management arrangements.

## **8. Wiltshire Council expectations of Area Boards and Youth Engagement**

Monitoring and evaluation requirements for Area Board funded provision:

- Share best practice with other Area Boards across the county.
- Put into place monitoring and evaluation arrangements with providers of positive activities to ensure good quality services and that young people's needs are being met;
- Monitor and evaluate the impact and outcomes of the overall local positive activities offer on an annual basis e.g. grants impact survey
- Review and assess how funds are spent
- Ensure that young people have participated and been involved in decision making processes to develop the positive activities offer, and that their views have been taken into account.
- Provide evidence that any recommendations of the chosen Local Youth Engagement Mechanism (section 4) have been taken into account.

### Policies and Procedures

Area Boards are required to adhere to Wiltshire Council policies and procedures. It is particularly important that Area Boards ensure they understand and are compliant with the equality of opportunity and safeguarding policies. Safeguarding guidance has been developed for Area Boards in respect of positive activities for young people and this will need to be adhered to at all times.

## **9. Quality and Standards Framework (Appendix: 3)**

A quality assurance framework has been developed to promote and facilitate efficient and effective youth activities provision for young people.

There are six Quality Standards

Achieving outcomes for young people:

- Standard 1: Positive activities reflect young people's needs and interests
- Standard 2: Young people are aware of the positive activities available to them
- Standard 3: Young people are helped to achieve positive outcomes through positive activities  
The design, development, delivery and review of positive activities:
- Standard 4: The positive activities offer is planned, developed, delivered and evaluated collaboratively
- Standard 5: Positive activities are inclusive and promote and provide equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and challenge stereotypes
- Standard 6: Positive activities are safe

Area Boards should promote and embed these standards through all stages of the decision making process, to make available a local positive activities offer that meets young people's needs and improves outcomes. Decisions on how the standards are encouraged, implemented and monitored are to be determined locally.

## **10. Decision-making process**

Community Area Boards will make decisions at public meetings on how funding should be deployed to ensure that decision making is open and transparent.

The decision making process must:

- Take into account recommendations, advice and guidance from the chosen Local Youth Engagement Mechanism;
- Evidence that young people have participated and been directly involved in the decision making process and that their needs and views have been taken into account;
- Take into account and ensure compliance with the statutory duties outlined in Section 2 of this guidance;
- Demonstrate that safeguarding and quality assurance standards have been met;
- Ensure that the JSNA/ Needs Assessment will form a condition of any funding and/or procurement decision so that the effectiveness of positive activities may be monitored.

## **11. Review**

This guidance is subject to change and may be reviewed at any time in conjunction with the Head of Service for Communities and Cabinet Member for Area Boards.