Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

Youth Transport Task and Finish Group
'Transport to Go!'
The Outcomes

Who are we?

A group of volunteers, officers and youth workers offered to work on this project when the task group was formed at the area board meeting in June 2010.

Why are we doing this?

The 'Dreams and Wishes' survey, commissioned by the Marlborough and Villages Community Area Partnership, reported that most young people wished to access affordable transport into Marlborough and Swindon. Alongside this, Wiltshire Council co-hosted a conference in Devizes in February 2010 entitled 'Move It' to bring together young people and transport providers to consider the issues young people face when trying to use public transport. As a result of this conference, Wiltshire Council gave approximately £5,000 to each area board to explore ways in which these issues could be addressed. Marlborough Area Board received £4,547.

What did we do?

Given the extremely short time scales (the pilot was to last 4 months), the task group decided to select specific events to which transport could be offered. This included films and events at St John's School, Bluz n Zuz discos in Marlborough, events arranged through the Youth Development Centre (ice-skating and bowling in Swindon) and the Slum Survivor project in Marlborough.

The transport was advertised in the following places:

Parish council notice boards
St John's School – reception and by tutor group
Marlborough Leisure Centre
Marlborough Library
Marlborough Town Hall
Facebook
Marlborough Downs Movies promotional advertising
Wiltshire Police Bluz n Zuz promotional advertising – flyers and Facebook
Village websites

Ideally, the task group would have liked to have nominated one person per village to co-ordinate the transport, but this wasn't possible given the short time scales and the unpredictability of the pilot scheme. Ellie Vesey-Thompson (UK Youth Parliament) agreed to be the contact name on the advertising.

How successful was the project?

In terms of numbers using the transport, very few people signed up for buses to the non-Youth Development Centre events. Sometimes the events we chose (especially the Bluz n Zuz discos) were not well advertised therefore young people were not attracted to the event. In one case, co-ordination was problematic. Knowing what time to be in certain places for bus pick-up, given that many young people don't decide whether to attend an event until the day before, meant planning routes with community buses was very last minute. However, these various factors taught us about the difficulties in offering transport, arranging buses and persuading people to use it. As such, it is hoped that the work of this group, alongside the mapping and gapping report, provides useful material for any community thinking about pursuing the idea of youth transport.

What did we learn?

Transport needs to be arranged by people we trust. Some parents commented that they would rather drive their child to an event to be sure that they were safe and arrived at the destination. Parents need to be familiar with the organisers and drivers of transport.

The way transport schemes are advertised is an important key to trust – recognised community buses serving their local area, driven by local people have a far greater chance of success. Transport under these arrangements becomes 'normalized' within the village/neighbourhood. This explains why the transport arranged to youth club events organised through the youth development service was more successful. While several of the young people attending the trips to Swindon had not been participants of the youth club previously, they had friends who routinely attended the youth development centre, and their parents trusted/recognised the youth service even though they hadn't used it before.

Transport schemes take time to build. A pilot may need to run for at least a year in order for the facility to become recognised and gain legitimacy within an area. Co-ordinating the numbers of young people coming from different villages can be a lengthy process. Keeping the service local makes it easier to run and gives it a better chance of success.

As with all community schemes there can be useful by-products of the project. During this pilot scheme, the group recognised low-income families that could be helped in other ways through the extended schools' service and the youth development service. This particular scheme also connected with those experiencing rural isolation.

The transport group's work also identified the fact that different types of schemes may be required in different areas depending on the size of the village and the number of young people resident of different ages. Some schemes may simply wish to transport young people into a neighbouring village to make use of a sports facility; another village may wish to offer a regular monthly service to Bluz in Zuz or annually to the Mop. Larger villages with their own community bus and managing committee may offer a range of services and encourage a parish council youth committee to help organise the transport. Some villages may wish to work together to offer a reciprocal arrangement: young people from Aldbourne may wish to use the Multi-Use Games Area in Ramsbury while young people in Ramsbury may wish to use the Aldbourne CAN (Internet Café).

The youth service is now looking at ways of offering youth development services in the villages, and ways of connecting young people in rural areas to events in Marlborough and Swindon. Young people will always look to larger towns for some of their entertainment.

<u>The youth transport task group made the following observations:</u>

Don't expect young people to think like adults.

Should you define success by a full bus? A few travellers may mean that an event clashed with another, or that it was such a success for the few that used it that it was worth running the bus anyway.

Transport schemes need to look at the long-term outcomes to measure their viability.

Fares need to be affordable and take into account the other costs a young person may have to afford other than the travel, such as disco admission charges and refreshments.

What do we recommend?

The task group recommends that:

1. Parish councils encourage the formation of their own youth committees, in conjunction with local youth clubs, to organise their own transport to events.

2. Village/parish councils consider the wide variety of youth transport opportunities.

3. Village/parish councils consider the needs of low-income / single parent / no-vehicle families.

4. The remaining youth transport budget (£3331) to be ring-fenced for any future youth transport schemes within the community area, including those considered by the Marlborough Community Area Transport Group.

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