

Implementing the Community-led model for youth activities

In May 2014 Wiltshire Council agreed to implement a community-led model for the provision of positive activities for young people. This came into effect on 1st October 2014. During the Devizes Area Board event on 29th September 2014, this new model was officially launched in the community. Following the event there were comments and questions left for the Devizes Area Board via the Community Youth Officer, to provide responses too. These are detailed below.

Questions:

Will there be clear guidance on how to apply for grants?

Yes, this material will be available on www.wiltshirecouncil.gov.uk and the Devizes Community Matters website, as well as www.sparksite.co.uk. Most importantly, the Community Area Board has a resource from the Community Youth Officer-Sally Willox, who can explain and support the process. Hard copies can be made available too.

How long will it take for the new model to be in place? When will things happen; how quickly?

The model was officially launched on 1st October 2014 in all community areas across Wiltshire and will be embedded and implemented from then onwards. Clearly it will take some time to fully implement it within the community but it will develop and take shape over the coming months. There is a process to follow and put into place which involves a lot of planning and coordination but already a lot of ground work is happening, groups and organisations are being met with, fundamentally young people; adults and young people are being spoke to and becoming involved in the new model if they want too, support and advice is being provided through the Community Youth Officer and area board, posters and flyers are being issued to promote the Local Youth Network, which will develop a plan, identify what young people want, where the gaps in provision are and start shaping new positive activities/supporting the community to apply for funding to implement these.

How will the Community Youth Officer get to meet youth groups?

Through making contact directly, introducing their role and engaging young people and adults in the new way of working. For Devizes, Sally Willox will visit groups and organisations and talk to members, as well as engage with young people through local secondary schools-Devizes School, Laverton School, Rowdeford and Downlands School. There has been lots of positive interaction during the last 3 weeks and consultation material, data and feedback collected, which will form the basis of a young person's needs analysis of the Devizes community area.

LINKED SUGGESTIONS-*It was suggested that the same briefing takes place at schools through assemblies and lunch times*, this is starting to happen. The Community Youth Officer is engaging with secondary schools and talking to

young people and enabling them to engage in the new model. Part of their role is to ensure young people especially know about this new model, participate and are central to shaping the new 'offer' for young people.

'Would like to have seen more young people present this evening', again this will be met through the intentions set out above. The model was launched at the Area Board and the Community Youth Officer was only just in post, it takes time to develop positive relationships with young people and communities, which is why there wasn't many young people present on the night. However, a huge amount of young people have been engaged and consulted with since through Sally Willox and will continue over the next few months. There are plans in place for a young person's only event to develop the Local Youth Network involvement for young people to ensure they fully understand this process and become central to it.

Will youth clubs providing activities for 8-12 year olds be able to access funding? Will these clubs for younger children be able to access support and services?

The groups and organisations eligible to apply for the new positive activities for young people funding must be, in the main, aged between 13-19 years old. This is the age range that this new Community-led model is intended for. If the core of users of provision are aged 13-19, then yes the clubs can apply for funding but this will need to be talked through with the Community Youth Officer. If the clubs seeking support only offer provision for 8-12 year olds then they will not meet the criteria under this new model. If there is a main high proportion of 13-19 year olds, then younger children can benefit from accessing support and services, this will be talked through with the Community Youth Officer. Wiltshire Council's new model for youth activities is for young people aged 13-19 and up to 25 with additional needs.

Looking at the post it board, where is the safe place for young people to meet?

Young people have been beginning to identify what they feel is missing in the community area and identifying gaps. The post it notes on display at the Area Board event were comments written by young people at Devizes School. If young people are saying there is no safe place to meet, then this will become a local priority that is fed into the Local Youth Network where positive activities will be shaped, delivered and implemented through a process that will include making recommendations to the Area Board for how the allocated funding should be spent. Young people will be fully involved at each stage.

Why was the session not held before the youth centre shut, so we knew what was available? When will this enable the youth centre to open?

The new Community-led model for youth activities was not in place until 1st October 2014 because Wiltshire Council's old youth service offer was still being utilised, up until 30th September 2014. The council's open access youth work offer was in operation until the end of September and school summer holidays were a busy time for youth activities with planned provision in place.

The service users were being engaged with in relation to the new community-led model and prepared for the change in ways of working.

The youth centre itself may fit into a plan for provision for young people, if it is brought to the Local Youth Network. If a group or organisation, which can be young people (with a supporting organisation) wish to plan for a new activity for young people, that has evidence supporting it from youth, then they can approach the management of the youth centre and discuss the proposal. The key principle for any new suggestion of positive activity is that it must have supporting needs-analysis showing it is what young people want. The Local Youth Network, Community Youth Officer and Area Board can provide support to developing plans and projects. The Community Youth Officer is the community's resource and the 'go to' person.

Why was Devizes not recognised before?

The Devizes Community Area is being highly recognised as already providing a diverse range of positive activities for young people and this new model; through the Community Youth Officer, will ensure existing provision are promoted to young people and the community.

Where are the volunteers coming from?

Part of the Community Youth Officers role is to build community capacity by enabling the voluntary and community sector to become involved in provision and to enhance what there is on offer, as well as to encourage volunteering, making the most of local resources. Already those individuals interested in volunteering have spoke with the Community Youth Officer and members of the Area Board. There has been a lot of interest in getting involved. A database of these volunteers is being collected and maintained and when positive activities are being coordinated, they will be utilised accordingly. The Community Youth Officer and Area Board are promoting the new model wherever they go and encouraging volunteers. These individuals are coming from diverse areas of the community and it is truly inspiring.

How far will it have come 1 year on?

The Community Youth Officer, Community Area Manager and Devizes Area Board are very keen and motivated to ensuring the success of this new model and working very hard to implement it positively, professionally and successfully throughout the Devizes community area. Its success is determined by the building of strong relationships and partnerships with existing groups and organisations, including schools, young people and the community as a whole. The model will rely on community working and development, where the coming together of young people and partners will tailor a unique offer of positive activities for youth. This has started very positively indeed and over the coming months will be reflected upon, with new and developed activities being available and engaged with. It is a challenge and will be hard work but there are determined professional individuals striving to drive it forward.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- Give us a youth centre and youth workers/assistant youth workers.
- Events where children will turn up (not just adults), e.g. school lunch times, the Green for example.
- Work with other groups in the community and help one another.
- Leisure centre could be used a lot more than it is at present.
- Check with churches what youth groups they have.
- Encourage Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Encourage groups to publicise their activities. It will be great to have more facilities in Devizes but there needs to be support for the villages or cheap transport into Devizes.
- Listen directly to young people. Give them more of a say. Engage wider cross-section.
- Monitor and review services.
- Treat young people as adults not as children and engage with them.
- Link young people with organisations so more aware of what is on offer.
- Get young people involved in embracing new model.
- Involve greater numbers of young people.
- Find sufficient volunteers to lead activities.
- To build and strengthen bonds in the community.
- Enable better communication amongst the community.
- Getting positive engagement for a positive future.
- Making the budget go round and finding enough volunteers.
- Increase awareness of available facilities and how providers can engage with youth.
- Transport to and from activities.

There were many valuable and interesting comments and suggestions, as detailed above and these will be reflected upon and fed into the implementation of the new community-led model for youth activities. These have been responded to through some of the answers above in relation to direct questions.

Key to this model is that there must be coordination and support to enable young people to have a voice and influence on services and activities, this will happen and has commenced positively. Young people want to be involved and are engaging.

There will be greater publication and promotion of existing provision for young people through this new model. This will happen by social media, internet sites, publications, direct engagement and other forms of media. These means will be highlighted throughout the community.

The Community Youth Officer will be instrumental in facilitating local youth provision, chiefly through the implementation of the Local Youth Network and will be the 'go to' person for support and advice on youth issues, they are a key resource. Monitoring and reviewing of provision will take place frequently to ensure compliance with council guidance, including safeguarding which is paramount and critical.

If anybody would like to find out more about the Community-led model for youth activities or the Local Youth Network and or become involved, please contact the Community Youth Officer Sally Willox, Community Area Manager Richard Rogers or the Devizes Area Board.

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There is information available on www.sparksite.co.uk and www.wiltshirecouncil.gov.uk, as well as Devizes Our Community Matters.

**Sally Willox-Community Youth Officer for the Devizes Community Area.
October 2014, with thanks.**