



## **myplace** evaluation – final report

Durham University

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Department for  
**Education**

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## Executive summary

### Introduction

**myplace** is a major Government programme which arose from *Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (HM Treasury 2007). The programme looks to establish 'world-class' places for young people which will offer positive activities and access to a range of services.

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) manages the implementation of **myplace** for the Department for Education (previously the Department for Children, Schools and Families).

Grants to projects range from £1 million to £5 million.

Initially, some 70 projects were funded under three different phases of the **myplace** programme.

### The evaluation

The evaluation followed the implementation of the projects until March 2011. Its overall aims were to identify:

- The extent to which leading practice is being adopted by projects and more widely;
- The impact of adopting leading practice; and
- The extent of progress towards the myplace outcomes.

A Baseline Evaluation Report was produced in December 2009. That Report considered progress in the 21 'Fast track' projects, including three case study projects. A further five were then chosen from the range of Fast Track and Standard Track Round 1 projects for more detailed investigation.

An Interim Report (DfE 2010b) set out some of the background to the programme and evaluated progress during the first year up to the end of March 2010 mapped against the aim and outcomes.

This final report is based on continuing work with the eight case study centres, visits to seven additional centres (largely with buildings already open), interviews with lead contacts in two further centres; two annual surveys of centres; and research into the policy and practice context.

The lead researchers on this evaluation were Jean Spence (University of Durham) and Mark K Smith (YMCA George Williams College). The vast bulk of the fieldwork was undertaken by Tracey Hodgson (University of Durham) and Simon Frost (YMCA George Williams College). Gill D Callaghan (University of Durham) undertook much of the preliminary work, including the Baseline Report.

### Context

The evaluation is set within an analysis of the policy framework out of which it developed and in the context of an historical overview of building-based work with young people.

## The specific policy framework

The establishment of the **myplace** programme must be understood in the context of an overarching policy framework relevant to children and young people originating with the previous government. This included *Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (HM Treasury 2007); *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES 2003) supplemented by *Youth Matters* (HM Government 2005); *The Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds* (launched in 2006 under the influence of *Youth Matters*); and *Extended schooling* (DCSF 2008) and the *Building Schools for the Future Programme*. Subsequently, with a change of government, there was a change of emphasis. Priority has recently been placed on the investment driving the on-going reform of local youth provision; leveraging on-going investment; and evidence-based early interventions for the most vulnerable young people (in line with plans for the Early Intervention Grant).

## Historical context

Historical analysis of building-based work with young people draws attention to:

*The development of expertise in building-based youth work in the voluntary sector over 200 years of practice.* The history of buildings developed in the voluntary sector reveals a set of concerns relevant to **myplace**, involving the desire to be ‘world-leading’ in terms of material and design and also to consider design around mission, aims and objectives.

*The experience of purpose-built statutory neighbourhood youth centres and of youth wings in schools established in the wake of the publication of the Albemarle Report in 1960.* These buildings were designed to encourage conviviality as well as physical and cultural activity. Several lessons can be learned from the post-Albemarle history.

- Firstly, leading individuals were significant in establishing particular places as attractive for young people.
- Secondly, especially in the statutory sector, many Albemarle Centres declined for want of investment, particularly for repair and refurbishment.
- Thirdly, problems arose from locking budgets into buildings which sometimes ceased to be sited in relevant locations or offer the type of facilities attractive to changing youth populations.
- Finally, while there were resource advantages in youth wings in schools, and they were widely used by young people, they did not tend to attract the most disadvantaged and those who had difficulties with schooling who preferred to use neighbourhood-based facilities.

*Changing social patterns and experiences.* In recent years, youth leisure has been reconfigured towards the private and the familial as a consequence of demographic change; improved housing; the growing importance of schooling; new technologies and increased access to commercial opportunities. As noted in the interim evaluation report, there appears to have been a lack of proper attention to the changing experience of being young and the related shifts in the location of young people’s leisure time activity. Larger, free-standing centres focused around the perceived needs of young people now have to compete with what is offered in a range of other settings – notably homes, schools, leisure centres and commercial activities.

## Continuing potential

Involvement in youth work and organised out-of-school activities which are voluntary and characterised by structure, adult-supervision and an emphasis on skill-building, benefit significant numbers of young people. In particular, young people have been shown to gain specialist knowledge and skills, self-control and confidence and the opportunity to make a contribution to the well being of others through their participation and engagement. A range of evidence (e.g. Crimmens et al 2004; Spence, and Devanney, 2006; Harland, 2009, Davies, 2011), shows that local work with young people continues to offer sanctuary (a space away from the pressures of the school, family and neighbourhood); accessible and enjoyable activity; personal and social development; settings where friendships and relationships grow; and access to local knowledge and to credible role models.

## Financial crisis

The world banking crisis of 2008, the associated rise in unemployment, continuing issues around growth and reductions in public spending are having a major impact upon UK education and welfare systems. For **myplace** projects three areas are of particular significance. These are the effect on:

- the economic and social wellbeing of local communities;
- the welfare of young people; and
- the provision of services for young people and local communities.

The scale of the reduction in funding is leading to far-reaching changes in the direction, organisation and level of services. It has accelerated the move into targeted work and increasingly left universal provision to schools and civil society organisations (almost totally in the case of some local authorities). We highlight three areas of impact for **myplace** centres:

*Focus.* There will be changes in the work that projects will be called upon to do. The most obvious is around the needs of unemployed people in the 16-24 year age range. Other concerns may well include growing social polarisation and the well-being of young people. There is a case for some targeted intervention here – but there is also a strong case for broader initiatives that can impact on the quality of school and neighbourhood life, community cohesion and social capital.

*Sustainability.* Initial planning for **myplace** projects did not envisage the current circumstances of economic uncertainty and need for fiscal tightening. Maintaining quality and the ideals of **myplace** depend on continuing financial viability – and that is uncertain for a number of projects. With the real income of households declining, people's ability to pay for activities will be squeezed. A number of centres also face a reduction in revenue funding from local authorities.

*Organisational change.* Organisational change will be necessary – especially in the ways different roles and functions are discharged and the number of people employed. In addition, with local authorities rationalising their provision it appears that a number are organising around a smaller number of hubs. In other words, the physical area that a number of **myplace** projects cover (particularly where they have been designed as hubs) will increase.

## Policy change

Four areas of policy development impact on **myplace** projects:

**The move to integrated and targeted services.** In a large number of authorities, more open and developmental work has been left to civil society organisations, schools and commercial providers. Relatively little state funding has followed these activities. The shift toward targeted, preventative and intensive intervention has important implications for the sustainability of **myplace** facilities (which routinely have been designed around a larger user base). It also impacts on the way in which they might work – especially those that have been built around the ‘hub’ model. In addition, it has implications for the Government’s ‘Big Society’ agenda.

**Developments in schooling.** A number of the newly opened **myplace** projects look to attract usage of their facilities by schools both as income generators and as ways of introducing the centres to young people and getting to know them. They seek to offer curriculum enrichment. Some centres have been designed to offer forms of educational experience that are not available within schools. However, with tightening budgets, and changes in what they themselves look to provide e.g. around excluded pupils, schools are less likely to make use of external provision.

**The ‘Big Society’.** The Government’s concern that more civil society organisations take a leading role in youth provision through a shift away from local authority direct delivery has had a direct impact on **myplace** projects. They have the advantage of being embedded in local communities, using local knowledge, and having facilities and programmes locally available. However, they are disadvantaged when compared to national or regional non-governmental organisations and larger private contractors. They do not necessarily have the infrastructure or the workers the language, to compete when preparing funding bids. Indeed, their strengths – a stronger orientation to the long-term and locally-generated analyses of needs – can be problematic within commissioning systems.

The government’s vision of giving communities more power depends to some extent on local representational arrangements – especially in urban areas. For local authority-led **myplace** projects the establishment of parish or town councils could be a key mechanism and could well ease the required ‘handing over’ of the new facilities to local communities.

**National Citizen Service.** There are a number of practical problems to address – for example, finding enough residential opportunity in the summer period. It is quite possible that **myplace** projects will either seek to ‘deliver’ the scheme, or could initiate or join consortia to do so.

The speed and scale of change in policy and strategy could pose a major challenge. To the extent that policy is made ‘on the hoof’ at a local level, **myplace** projects will have to ‘chop and change’, and to reorient provision in ways that are not necessarily in harmony with their original design



## Mapping progress

We have mapped progress against the aim and ambition of the programme and the four outcome areas that were originally envisaged.

### **Aim and ambition:**

***The provision of world-class youth facilities driven by the active participation of young people and their views and needs.***

*Those involved believe that the scheme is worthwhile.* Generally it attracts a high level of goodwill and commitment from workers and young people. The evidence demonstrates a 'step-change' in the quality and breadth of facilities, activities and services available to young people. Those centres which are open have, on the whole, attracted significant use from young people in the vicinity.

*The buildings are considered excellent.* Their planning has offered opportunities for engaging young people in decision-making and their realisation is eagerly anticipated or met with enthusiasm.

*The programme is considered to be good value for money* but available resources and revenue funding are inadequate to meeting ambition and potential. Centres which have opened are not yet working to capacity. A revenue shortfall can leave projects vulnerable to underachieving, to being taken over by commercial provision, and to disillusionment.

*There is a spectrum of priority within the programme* with those centres which focus primarily on leisure facilities and 'positive activities' at one extreme and those which focus on problem and issue-based work at the other. Most fall between extremes, and all attempt to address both aspects of the work within **myplace** to varying degrees. Nevertheless, there is tension between the leisure priority of positive activity and the issue-based priority of Information, Advice and Guidance. This is managed most successfully and creatively within the educational and group work based traditions of youth work.

*All myplace schemes have adopted participatory methods and demonstrate evidence of empowerment of young people involved.* This was particularly apparent in the planning stages and in the design and key features of buildings. Young people were involved in consultation with other young people, in decision-making and negotiation with architects and in promoting the project. There have been difficulties of continuity of participation in relation to the long gestation period between planning and completing buildings. In some projects, young people are involved at every level and their continuous participation is underpinned by a commitment to a role for them in governance. However, youth engagement in design and planning has not always progressed smoothly into the post-opening period and is not always matched by clarity about their role in decision-making which is most commonly focused simply upon decisions about activities offered.

### **Outcome one:**

***More young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities***

*The myplace centres which are open are popular and reasonably well used* by different groups of young people, parents, and local community groups and individuals. They are considered, safe,

comfortable and welcoming. Respondents speak of a ‘change of culture’ in the way in which young people use the centres which are less likely to be dominated by particular groups and gangs than has been the experience of some youth clubs in the past.

*The activities currently on offer are appealing to young people.* The centres are used by them both for the activities and as a place for socialising, relaxing, doing homework or participating in structured programmes and workshops. This appears to have had an impact on the ways in which they use local streets and a reduction in complaints about the behaviour of young people.

*The sense of ownership, respect for the facilities and the maintenance of positive relationships between different user groups is managed and maintained by staff working self-consciously towards those ends.*

*Some questions remain about location* – especially in rural areas where there are difficulties of access because of limited public transport. Efforts to address this problem have not led to any satisfactory long term solution. Questions have been raised about safety in one location, and one project had to close temporarily while some design features relating to open access were modified.

*Lack of capacity means that for many projects the ideal of opening seven days a week is not possible and there are some questions about maximising daytime use.*

*The pressure on resources and the need to maximise use means that in some localities there is a higher level of use by different age groups than originally anticipated.* In some places mixed use has been encouraged to develop intergenerational work. Elsewhere, parents, younger children and members of local communities are encouraged to use the centres informally and this is working well especially where young people have been mobilised as volunteers, for example to help teach activities skills to younger children. However, there is the potential for age imbalance around the hire of facilities and self-contained activities groups. Anticipating difficulties in this area, some projects are entirely focused on youth groups with adult use restricted to volunteering.

#### **Outcome two:**

#### ***More young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development***

*While it is apparent that more young people are participating in positive leisure time activities in the locality of **myplace** centres – even before they are open, it is not clear to what extent these young people could be identified as ‘disadvantaged’.*

*In some circumstances, widening use has meant increased involvement by young people who are structurally advantaged by family circumstances and educational achievement or potential.* Such young people often contribute to the positive culture in centres and are more likely to make a commitment to volunteering. This is particularly evident in their voluntary contribution to enable disabled young people to use the facilities. Workers note that some young people who are not identified as structurally disadvantaged might have personal disadvantages such as shyness or low self-esteem which can be addressed through their participation in **myplace** activities and contact with workers.

*Projects address disadvantage through their particular tradition of work.* Those adopting a more universal approach stress the general conditions of disadvantage in the neighbourhood of the centre. The extent to which this is represented can be monitored among the young people participating.



Highlighted disadvantages can then be addressed through special schemes devised within mainstream open-access work. In the other main tradition, specific disadvantages are the main focus of the work and related issues are tackled through that main problem using positive activities and programmes.

*The most commonly identified disadvantage was disability.* All projects make specific efforts to encourage access and offer opportunities for disabled young people.

*Projects recognise that disadvantage creates barriers to access* and use various approaches to overcome identified barriers. This includes outreach work, collaboration and partnership with other youth focused agencies and services, identity and issue-based group work, subsidised activities and special projects.

*All centres are working with an agenda which considers the needs of young people defined as NEET.* As such, they all contain elements which are concerned with education, training and access to employment opportunities.

*Education and skills development which improve employment prospects for young people and contribute to the quality of the youth workforce are considered integral* to the work undertaken in the projects. Involvement in leisure activities, the development of constructive relationships with workers and access to structured programmes are all believed to contribute to improved outcomes.

*Opportunities for youth participation and volunteering* are associated with improvements in organisational and leadership skills and the development of self-confidence.

*The organisation of specialist programmes and activities enables groups of disadvantaged young people to address common areas of disadvantage* such as literacy, numeracy or language. When undertaken with key partners, this can facilitate opportunities to access employment or employment-related placements. Accreditation makes an important contribution to this process.

*Specialist projects, such as youth theatre, are able to devise educational, skills and work-related programmes based on their specific areas of expertise* thus introducing disadvantaged young people to a wider understanding of the range of work opportunities available than would otherwise be possible. In themselves, **myplace** projects do this in the youth work tradition, enabling young people to access youth work skills through a progression of participation, volunteering and training.

### **Outcome three:**

***More young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable***

*The nature of information, advice and guidance (IAG) offered in myplace projects are related to the tradition within which the particular scheme is operating.* In the universal approach IAG tends to be integrated into the professional relationship between worker and young person. Within informal education, opportunities for IAG emerge through conversation. When issues are presented which are beyond the expertise of the worker, young people are helped to access specialist services. In the targeted approach, youth work methods are used firstly to support young people in solving the presenting problem or dealing with the immediate crisis which has brought them to the centre, and this is then followed up with activities and programmes designed to encourage young people to address problems and to develop greater personal agency in their lives.

*Most projects develop hybrid models which involve a combination of the universal and the targeted devised using a variety of practice methods.*

#### **Outcome four:**

*There should be stronger partnership working between local authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and operate financially sustainable facilities with and for young people.*

*The strategy in all **myplace** projects is to improve youth facilities and provision through a more integrated approach to the needs of young people. This necessarily involves partnership working and the development and maintenance of a network of professional relationships pursued both formally and informally. The process of organising for **myplace** has emphasised the formal. Different legal and structural relationships secure these formal relationships but most projects favour representation within management structures.*

*Partnerships differ according to local circumstances and the dominant project philosophy. A constant process of evolution in partner arrangements is underway even in some projects which are open. Partner or potential partner organisations are identified with reference to work in progress. Levels of partner engagement depend as much on current and changing circumstances as the desirability of formalising arrangements.*

*Partnership working is generally considered to bring positive benefits for all involved. However, there are difficulties associated mainly with partner agencies being over-stretched and with the creation of administrative structures. A lesser and declining difficulty relates to different organisational cultures.*

*All projects pursue some level of partnership with local schools. These vary from the central to the peripheral but in every case a contribution is being made by **myplace** to schooling.*

***myplace** projects have had an impact on local policy formation and strategies. The returns from the Annual Survey suggest that **myplace** funding has impacted on the reform of local youth provision and promoted young people's positive and active role in society. There has been less success around the 'Big Society' agenda, engagement with the private sector, and leveraging additional investment, although the picture here is uneven.*

*There is considerable concern among projects about the current funding situation. While a great deal of attention is directed to accessing new revenue streams and some confidence demonstrated that revenue funding can be found, there is less confidence that this will be adequate to fund the full range of activities originally planned for the centres.*

*Although there are clear plans in place for staffing, monitoring and for early intervention into the lives of disadvantaged young people, skilled management and leadership will continue to be required as the centres open in a climate different from that in which they were originally conceived. The impact of this has been particularly significant in Round One projects whose Business Plans were drawn up before the change of government. Nevertheless there is a shift in focus and priority once centres are opened and in some cases, a culture shock for workers in the change from managing small-scale facilities and planning their replacement to the realities of managing large-scale, complex centres.*

*The main **myplace** leaders are, for the most part, youth workers by profession. Relevant leadership qualities have already been evidenced among them. The multi-faceted nature of their professional role has enabled youth workers to deal well with the complexities of **myplace** at the same time as retaining*

the focus on the needs and interests of young people. In doing this they have been able to develop leadership qualities among young people themselves. Moreover, their experience of working with limited and insecure budgets has inured them to the current financial situation.

*Where appropriate, in response to the changing context, workers and managers have revisited business plans and have given urgent priority to accessing new sources of funding, but there is some concern that the youth work ethos will be diluted and compromised in the new conditions.* This ethos made them successful in the participatory work with young people and in meeting the interests and needs of young people. It is evident that particularly in current circumstances, it is necessary to retain a focus on the original vision for the projects around valuing young people and placing them at the centre of arrangements and planning. This involves ensuring that the purpose and philosophy behind the development of the centres, including youth participation, is embedded within all systems, structures of decision-making and consultation processes.

### Continuing evaluation

The 2011 Annual Survey indicates that all of the open projects are confident in their ability to measure the impact of their work and services on young people. They are reasonably confident overall they have a robust and sound monitoring system that facilitates judgements about young people's usage of the facility and the benefits to them. However, it is less clear whether the data and tools they and other projects have, and the organisational cultures they inhabit, allow them to make the range of judgements necessary for the continuing development of practice, and shaping of provision.

*To make headway in judging outcomes and impact, sustained research is needed to generate the data and frameworks necessary to build some indicators for all those involved to use.* **myplace** practitioners and managers do not necessarily have the expertise or the resources – and this is an area where funders could make a major contribution by supporting the development of frameworks and tools that assist in the identification of locally appropriate indicators around outcome and impact.

*The collection of data on practice, outcome and impact bears a cost. This is amplified by varying data requirements and reporting cycles required by different and increasing numbers of funding organisations.* **myplace** workers sometimes complained about the amount of time they needed to give to this process.

*When funders focus on outcome and impact evaluation at the cost of a focus on practice and process they run the risk of encouraging top-down, compliance-driven organisation.* This, as the Munro Review found in social work, 'stifled creativity and distorted priorities, with more attention given to completing bureaucratic tasks to specified timescales as the measure of success, than the appraisal of the quality of help received by children and their families' (DfE 2011a: 17). Whilst **myplace** workers accept the need to be accountable, even the most experienced struggle with terms of evaluation which do not always fully reflect the range of their work or support the creativity necessary for its success.

## Recommendations

The recommendations we make are addressed to local **myplace** centres, except where indicated.

### Sustainability

In the absence of adequate or secure revenue funding the full potential of the **myplace** programme will not be realised. The gap between the aspirations embodied in new state-of-the art centres with their enthusiastic and committed workers and volunteers, and the realities of the financial climate, is a serious one.

Models of social enterprise are on agendas and CICs seem attractive to **myplace**. Projects are devising schemes for income-generation and expecting some commercial elements of their projects to subsidise other aspects. This demands considerable managerial skill whilst simultaneously maintaining the central commitment to work with young people, and particularly those who are disadvantaged. All plans and strategies for raising adequate revenue funding and enabling the projects to meet their potential have implications for the priorities and resource allocation within the work.

**Recommendation:** *Strategic attention must be given by Centres to the full utilisation of facilities. This might include the development of programmes and timetables that emphasise the participatory ethos of the work as a basis for community-based and youth-led organisations and fundraising efforts. The ideal of local voluntary action needs to be kept at the heart of decision-making in this regard. This might involve, reframing constitutions, developing local networks beyond those associated with related professional services to include smaller local voluntary organisations, and systematising fundraising activity to include these networks and to prioritise youth and community participation and action. There should be regular reassessment of short and long-term ‘ambition’ with regard to the economic and policy climate and the local assessment of need.*

### Participation and empowerment

Much enthusiasm for the **myplace** centres has been generated and maintained through the committed participation of groups of young people. There is evidence that when centres open and workers are confronted with the necessity of focusing on the management of buildings and fund-raising, the role of young people in decision-making diminishes if this has not been structured into governance arrangements from the outset.

**Recommendation:** *All projects must continue to address young people’s role in governance and decision-making and, as part of embedding the overall ethos and philosophy into the infrastructure of centres, must structure youth participation and empowerment into both their work programmes and governance arrangements. Generating and sustaining participation both provides an excellent focus for developmental work with people, and helps to ensure centres continue responding to local need. There are issues with regard to continuity, succession and priorities linked to the time rhythms of young people’s lives and the different interests of succeeding generations. These require constant*

*attention and methods for the replacement of those young people who outgrow or leave the projects should be put in place to ensure the complete integration of youth participation within each project.*

### **Attracting a range of young people – targeted and universal provision**

Overall, **myplace** projects appear to have broadened the range of opportunities available for the participation of young people in positive activities. There is evidence that the improvement of facilities for young people is attracting those who are relatively ‘advantaged’ in terms of family circumstances and educational achievement. However, this can work to the benefit of projects; especially as such young people show willingness to become volunteers. With significant reductions generally in state support for universal provision the situation will change. While state funded work may focus around a targeted approach to disadvantage, financial pressure and the concern among local civil society organisations for a wider offer to young people of positive activity will pull in another direction.

Across the board, Information, Advice and Guidance are considered an important part of the **myplace** approach. However, the extent to which it is prioritised depends largely on the nature of the organisational framework, the content of the work and the philosophy informing the arrangements. Thus formal, structured IAG opportunities are not always appropriate within those new buildings focused upon activity and universal access. Co-location of services is not necessarily the best option here especially where it makes the service needs of disadvantaged or troubled young people particularly visible. In contrast, **myplace** centres developed from targeted provision, necessarily prioritise specific disadvantages and have broadened their work in terms of the range of activities on offer to the target groups.

**Recommendation:** *In the light of the preferences of young people, and decreases in the resource-base of related services, the co-location of IAG services should be treated with care and regularly reviewed. Its role in the strategies of policy-makers and **myplace** managers should be reassessed with reference to the underlying ethos of the centres.*

**Recommendation:** *Questions of disadvantage broadly conceived are best addressed in generic **myplace** projects through workshops, groups, peer-based learning and structured educational approaches which offer positive opportunities for peer support, rather than in problem-based services. Projects should explore the potential for prioritising such approaches in their programmes.*

**Recommendation:** *Building on existing relationships with schools would enable **myplace** projects to include more disadvantaged young people. This could facilitate working with them without separating or individually identifying them. At the same time, providing it can be resourced, it could provide facilities for school refusers, who are more willing to attend provision with a culture of informality. **Myplace** projects should seek to work in collaboration with schools to develop complementary out-of-school leisure activity and supplementary learning opportunities.*

### **Centralisation – the hub model.**

Many of the **myplace** developments use a ‘hub’ model where young people are drawn to a central location or to provision organised around a particular interest, enthusiasm or issue. The hub model has been adopted by many local authorities in order to offer a range of services under one roof; to



promote integrated working; and as a way of limiting costs. Such high-profile provision has the potential to draw in substantial resources to the centre to the disadvantage of neighbourhood services in the peripheral areas. Centralisation is also problematic where there are questions of geographical access to the new centres, which mainly concern the quality of public transport, especially in rural areas.

**Recommendation:** *Attention should be given by local authorities to the impact of **myplace** on other services. Some assessment is required of the extent to which work lost by other services is being taken up by **myplace** and, indeed, whether or not the new centres have the capacity to replace such work successfully and in what terms. This should involve monitoring the process of centralisation involved in **myplace** 'hub' model, assessing the impact upon outlying localities and implementing strategies for improved access, including outreach work. In addition, myplace projects should monitor the use of their centres in terms of where the young people who use the centre live, whether or not they have been or are users of any other facilities and whether young people find it possible to access all the services they need.*

## Community organisation

There is potential for many **myplace** centres to be used as a resource for energising local community groups and providing opportunities for extending the work of local civil society organisations. The strong ethos of volunteering within the open centres offers an organisational culture in which such work might flourish. With their educational characteristics and their focus on local community organisation, some **myplace** projects demonstrate characteristics suggestive of the tradition of the settlement movement and community centre movement which both made an important historic contribution to local dynamism including work with young people and particularly in areas marked by disadvantage.

Some tension might emerge in the use of the **myplace** facilities across age-ranges. Where community groups are willing to pay for the use of facilities or where parents with younger children find the activities appealing and especially with regard to paying activities, it is possible that the youth focus of the centres will be compromised. There is already evidence of this occurring.

**Recommendation:** *Centres should continue to monitor their use by particular groups and the age-ranges of those participating. The aim should be to encourage community participation whilst maintaining the central focus on activities and services for young people.*

**Recommendation:** *Centres which have the potential to develop local community organisation and education might refer to the settlement tradition to inform and extend their approach with particular regard to the possibilities for community-based youth work and inter-generational work. Here the focus would be upon accessibility to the centres by all members of the community in an environment determined primarily by the needs and interests of young people as citizens and members of that community.*

**Recommendation:** *The possibilities of structured inter-generational work should be widely communicated between projects.*



## Evolving youth policies and strategies

There have been major movements in the direction, organisation and ethos of work with young people. A number of these are long-standing, but some are new. Fiscal tightening has accelerated some changes, and the new government has changed the emphasis. As yet, important and developing issues facing young people lack a comprehensive policy focus or response. Meanwhile the speed and scale of change in policy and strategy – especially at a local level – could pose a major challenge for **myplace** projects.

**Recommendation:** *Centres should continue to monitor and respond to policy developments and issues facing young people including: the growing level of youth unemployment – and the quality of the work available; the experience of children and young people living in poor families and disadvantaged localities; and the negative educational experiences of identifiable groups of young people. This would involve prioritising partnership work with specialist agencies, such as those emerging to deal with the new government work programme, and developing programmes of activity and intervention which target particular issues and concerns without necessarily targeting particular young people themselves.*

## Leadership and partnership

The recommendations above indicate that there is pressure on all the **myplace** centres to adapt in the face of the ambition of the programme and the emerging context. In dealing with the range of challenges presented, leadership qualities are essential among those involved. The leadership qualities which have been deployed in most schemes to date are associated with the creative energy, adaptability and optimism of youth work, and these remain important as the projects move into their next stage of opening. However in the process of adaptation there is renewed energy required. The application of such energy is apparent in the efforts towards working with the private sector and discovering new sources of income. Business plans have been revisited, models reworked and increasing attention given to the potential of the **myplace** organisation to offer opportunities to partner organisations.

The original principles of partnership working remain intact but as partner services themselves confront change, so the **myplace** projects are adjusting their field of vision. There is now much greater emphasis on the capacity of the facilities to produce revenue, and the necessity of fully utilising the facilities. Attention is now focused on that problem, particularly in those centres already opened, whilst recognising the need to retain the **myplace** ethos. Increased work with schools reflects the opportunities opening in this direction and it is apparent that there is much of mutual benefit to be gained from developing close partnerships with schools whether or not this involves co-location.

**Recommendation:** *The qualities associated with youth work leadership should be emphasised in the changing circumstances to maintain the **myplace** ethos and to sustain the positive informality needed for working creatively with young people. Particular focus on the relationship with local schools will be complementary to the overall aims of **myplace** especially with the informality of the educational opportunities which can be offered by youth work. Youth workers should try to maintain the central focus of their leadership qualities with reference to young people by developing strategies to build structures of support from a wide range of interested parties from the private, community and voluntary sector whose expertise is diverse and complementary.*

## In conclusion

Based on historical experience – and what we see working now – it would seem that for larger centres to be successful they generally have to have one or more of the following qualities. To:

- offer some unique activity or enthusiasm which attracts core groups of enthusiastic and committed young people who might make a broader contribution to the success of the centres (e.g. Northern Lights Academy Hartlepool, Parkfield Torbay, Pegasus Theatre Oxford);
- be located on or near a school or college campus in order to ensure visibility and to offer access to a wide range of local young people in a way that is complementary to school timetables and content (e.g. The Buzz Halton, Carlisle Youth Zone, Shoeburyness Youth Centre);
- be designed around offering specific services associated with the circumstances of young people such as counselling or housing support as a basis for the development of a wider range of participatory activities and youth education and empowerment (e.g. Access All Areas, New Horizon Youth Centre Youth Centre and the Young Person's Village, Stoke-on-Trent);
- link into some long-established provision and/or tradition of work that is able and has a history of mobilising resources and volunteers, and managing larger buildings in order to improve the network of opportunity available for young people, to draw upon existing local expertise and to offer opportunities for the further development of these complementary organisations. Classic examples here include churches and religious organisations such as the YMCA (e.g. Culture Fusion Bradford, Tab Centre Plus Enfield) and those linked into what was the old boys' club movement (e.g. Blackburn Youth Zone, Hinckley Club for Young People);
- exploit some aspect of the local economy in order to benefit from and contribute to that economy and to emphasise its relationship with local young people's experiences (e.g. Minehead EYE's involvement in providing for tourism).

**Recommendations:** *It would be appropriate for the **myplace** centres to review the extent to which they possess these qualities and the degree to which they might wish to develop significant aspects to maximise their potential for success in the long term. This could include a system for working in communication with, and learning from each other.*

## Introduction

### Background

This Report sets out some of the background to the **myplace** Programme and evaluates progress during the first two years. **myplace** is a major Government programme aimed at developing 'world-class' places for young people. The Big Fund (BIG) manages the implementation of **myplace** for the Department for Education (previously the Department for children, Schools and Families (DCSF)). Grants to projects range from £1 million to £5 million. The **myplace** programme has been implemented in two rounds, the first including a fast-track for well developed projects that were able to respond to the **myplace** aims quickly:

- Fast track round 1 projects: Announced in November 2008, the government committed £62 million of capital investment in 21 projects.
- Standard track round 1 projects: Announced in March 2009, the government committed £178 million to fund 41 projects.
- Standard track round 2 projects: Announced in December 2009, the government committed £32 million to eight projects located in the one-third most deprived areas of England. (DCSF 2008a)

The report considers the development up to the end of March 2011, focusing on case study information collected from a sample of eight projects, supplemented by data from an annual survey of Round 1 projects (see Appendix 1 for full list of funded projects).

### Overall Aim

The core aim of **myplace** is to provide world-class youth facilities driven by the active participation of young people and their views and needs.

### Outcomes

The programme has four outcomes:

1. More young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities;
2. More young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development;
3. More young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable; and

4. There should be stronger partnership working between local authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and operate financially sustainable facilities with and for young people.

## The *myplace* evaluation

The overall aims of the evaluation are to identify:

- The extent to which leading practice is being adopted by projects and more widely;
- The impact of adopting leading practice;
- The extent of progress towards the *myplace* outcomes.

The focus of this report is mainly on progress in eight case studies mapped against the programme outcomes.

## Case Studies

The case study work was designed to assess the progress of *myplace* against its planned aims and outcomes.

The questions which shaped the evaluation of the case studies drew on interim indicators and key performance indicators relevant to the outcomes. These were developed further around leading practice themes identified at an earlier stage of the evaluation (Appendix 2). The questions devised for the cases studies enable identification of appropriate respondents within each case study, including managers, partners, workers, young people and representatives of other interested groups from the locality. The final list of questions on outcomes and leading practice themes are in Appendix 3. The list of interim indicators and key performance indicators provides a reference point for the extent to which each case study has made progress so far.

The case studies were not chosen as a representative sample. Within the constraints of the extent of progress at the point of the interim evaluation, they were selected according to interesting features which illustrate key challenges or aspects of programme design. The case study projects are:

1. Culture Fusion (Bradford YMCA) (Standard track, round 1)
2. Hackney Youth Hubbz, Hackney (London Borough of Hackney) (Standard track, round 1)
3. The Hub, Dartford (YMCA Thames Gateway) (Fast track, round 1)
4. Minehead EYE (Minehead EYE Community Interest Company) (Fast track, round 1)
5. Oldham Youth Zone: MAHDLO (OnSide North-West Limited) (Standard track, round 1)
6. Parkfield, Torbay (Torbay Council) (Standard track, round 1)
7. Shoeburyness Youth Centre (Southend on Sea Borough Council) (Fast track, round 1)
8. Young Person's Village, Stoke-on-Trent (Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire YMCA Foyer) (Fast track, round 1)

The evaluation team visited each case study project and discussed developments with key participants. In addition telephone interviews were conducted to fill gaps emerging from the visits. Desk research identified supplementary and background information.

## Project visits

In addition to the case studies a number visits were made to a number of other projects – mostly those that had buildings that were open. These included:

1. Barnard Castle Hub, Co. Durham
2. Hinckley Club for Young People, Leicestershire
3. ICE Stockton
4. New Horizon Youth Centre, Camden
5. Northern Lights Academy, Hartlepool
6. The Salmon Youth Centre, Bermondsey
7. Sutton Life Centre, Sutton

The visits to the completed **myplace** projects focused on the experience of planning and executing the project – and on what had happened since the building opened. In addition telephone interviews were conducted with lead contacts at Open, Norwich and **myplace**, Chesterfield.

## Annual Survey

We conducted two annual surveys (in January/February of 2010 and 2011). The surveys (which were targeted at all projects) used a written on-line questionnaire. They offer a snapshot overview of progress and highlight developments, issues or concerns. They provide a simple, but useful comparator for the case study information, and offer an extra layer of information. They used a framework of four main headings (partnership, the facility, participation and strategy) devised mainly, but not exclusively, around questions on leading practice, strategy and impact.

The survey link was sent to a central contact with the request that they either complete it themselves or pass it on to the person most suited to completing it. There were 62 responses to the 2011 questionnaire – a response rate of 90%.

## Policy and practice research

With major changes in context and policy, and significant shifts in the shape of practice within the field, a substantial amount of time was devoted to tracking developments and locating relevant research. As well as exploring written material, members of the team have had a number of conversations with policymakers, charitable funders, local managers and practitioners with regard to the emerging shape of practice.

## The changing context

*To appreciate the experience and potential of **myplace** projects it is necessary to examine the changing nature of youth work – and the trajectory that work among young people is taking. A number of challenges and tensions arise which potentially undermine the impact and sustainability of **myplace** projects. Here we examine the:*

- changing shape of work with young people and the potential of youth work;
- development of myplace;
- difficult financial situation currently faced by many projects working with young people;
- impact of the changing policy context.

## Background

### The changing shape of work with young people

What we now know as ‘youth work’ has its roots in the growth of Sunday schools, ragged schooling and district visiting during early nineteenth century, and the development of mutual aid groups like sports teams, and associations like the YMCA (formed in 1844) (Jeffs 1979; Smith 1988). By the end of the nineteenth century such ‘work among youth’ had established its typical forms: the club, the uniformed troupe, the fellowship, and outreach to those not initially attracted to such groups. The vast bulk of leisure-time work with young people still takes place in local churches and faith organisations, on local playing fields, in community and village halls, and in Scout and Guide ‘huts’. It is small-scale, local and located in civil society. According to the Children’s Workforce Development Council (2010) some 173,000 people volunteer to help run Scouts and Guides groups, 523,000 volunteer as youth workers, and 3.4 million volunteer in the fields of sport and recreation. Youth work was born, and remains fundamentally a part, of civil society (Jeffs and Smith 2010a: 3).

State intervention in the field began in the early part of the twentieth century, but it was only with the onset of the Second World War - and the need to sustain morale, strengthen what we now call social capital, and to provide alternative opportunities for leisure - that the state became involved on any significant scale with the emphasis upon supporting and working alongside voluntary organisations, and upon developing provision where none existed (especially in urban areas). After the war state involvement withered, but with growing concerns around the welfare of young people - notably expressed in the Albemarle Report (Ministry of Education 1960) - the government began to invest heavily in building youth centres and in the training and employment of youth workers (Davies 1999). The dominant provider of youth work remained the voluntary sector, and the central forms of provision continued to be the uniformed organisation and the club, centre or project. One of the central mechanisms used to support the work was through the secondment of full- and part-time workers to civil society organisations. Another was via the use of grants.

Some local detached and street work developed and flourished in the 1960s, contributing significantly to an appreciation of both what youth work is, and could be (see, in particular, Goetshius and Tash 1967). There was also a small growth in services for more vulnerable young people especially in the



form of youth counselling services. The most substantial development lay in expansion of school-based work and the appointment of youth tutors (Jeffer 1979).

Rising youth unemployment from 1974 onwards generated the development of schemes to address this, and concerns more generally about the welfare of particular groups of young people. State-sponsored work placed a growing emphasis on targeting provision towards those now labelled as NEET (not in education, employment or training) and on so-called 'issue-based' work. This was accompanied by youth workers being pulled away from their centre in local civil society organisations in favour of local authority area teams working more closely to state-defined, as against local community-defined, objectives.

Given changing leisure patterns, and developments in other areas of state-provision – notably around leisure centres, youth social work and youth offending initiatives, and schooling, it became increasingly clear that unless state youth services could more clearly articulate their particular contribution, they would gradually wither away (Smith 1988; Jeffer and Smith 1989a). The most common response by services was to seek to justify activity in terms of government policy, for example, around the contribution that youth work might make to crime reduction, healthy living and raising achievement. This brought in short-term funding for specific initiatives, but did little to develop a coherent and sustainable base and rationale. Indeed, it increasingly took state-sponsored services away from the settings and concerns that are at the core of youth work namely local long-term relationships; the fostering of civil society; and association and enjoyable activity. There had been a shift in ambition away from universal into targeted provision. Moreover, those targeted were seen as having significant developmental or social problems (as against targeting those, for example, who might be key agents in developing social capital).

Over the same time period there has been a major increase in the scale of resources that religious organisations devoted to work with young people. The most notable growth was in Christian youth work and youth ministry. By 1998, the English Church Attendance Survey found that some 21 per cent of churches had a full-time salaried youth worker. More recent figures indicate there are approximately 5,500 full time equivalent youth workers employed by churches and Christian agencies, more than the statutory youth service at the time (Centre for Youth Ministry 2006). There are also said to be around 100,000 volunteers.

One result of these moves concerned a growing division between the language and concerns of state leisure-time provision for young people and that located in civil society. State-sponsored youth services became cautious, bureaucratised and managerial. This, in turn, further alienated many local voluntary groups. Much of the innovatory work of the 1980s and 1990s was based in the voluntary sector (Jeffer and Smith 2008). Within much youth work located within civil society there has been a long-standing recognition that the bulk of funding for provision has to come from young people and their parents (Jeffer and Smith 1989b; Jeffer and Smith 2010b). This has necessarily led to modesty in the scale of provision, a heavy emphasis on harnessing the impulse to volunteer, and a shaping of the work to ensure that sufficient numbers are attracted and committed to the activities developed. It has also provided environments where more entrepreneurial workers could flourish. For this reason the recent financial crisis initially had only a limited effect on many civil society organisations engaged in youth work. However, those organisations that looked to the state for a significant funding – especially the more local and smaller organisations – are now facing major problems.

A further consequence of the form of targeting adopted – when linked with integrated working – has been a shift in the organisational location of state-sponsored work with young people and in the overarching culture and ideology in which they have to function. It has entailed two major developments:

- A shift away from the associational and educational concerns of youth work towards more individualised, care-oriented case-management approaches within integrated services. This move initially gathered momentum with the establishment of the Connexions Service and has accelerated with its demise.
- The employment of youth workers and informal educators under a variety of titles directly within schooling.

These movements have significant implications for **myplace** projects, but before we look at these it is important to be clear about the nature and potential of youth work.

### The nature of youth work

By the end of the nineteenth century work among young people – youth work - had gained its classic characteristics, qualities which still describe youth work:

- Attention to the needs, experiences and contribution of young people.
- Workers who were able, in the later words of the McNair Report (1944), to be 'a guide, philosopher and friend to young people'. Much was dependent on their character and integrity.
- A focus on relationship and upon encouraging all to join together in friendship to organise and take part in groups and activities. This was often described as fostering fellowship and associational life.
- A concern to create moments for reflection and learning. When combined with the above it could be described as a process of friends educating each other.
- Working on the basis on choice. Young people could accept or reject the invitation to take part. (Smith 2004; see also Jeffs and Smith 2008)

The aim of youth work, according to a recent report by the National Youth Agency, is to 'support the personal and social development of young people through informal education' (2010: 5). Three things need saying about this.

First, the support of young people has largely been through relationships. Relationships have been seen both as the basis from which the work progresses and as a source of learning and happiness (Smith and Smith 2008). The voluntary nature of the relationship has a particular bearing on what is possible. It means, for example, that those organising provision have to make it attractive to young people and their parents. Critically, this usually entails working to make the experience of youth work different to schooling, the street and the home, and working with the interests and enthusiasm of young people. When this is added to the fact that the relationship is chosen it can be seen that it can have a special place in young people's lives. This voluntary participation distinguishes youth work from other disciplines (Jeffs 2001: 156).

Second, a concern with the personal and social development of young people certainly is a part of all of major traditions of youth work – but it is not necessarily the central motivation for working with them.

The purpose of much youth work was summed up by the motto of the Oxford and Bermondsey Club in the early 1900s – *Fratres* (fraternity). It was a theme picked up by the Albemarle Report:

*The Service should seek first to provide places for association in which young people may maintain and develop, in the face of a disparate society, their sense of fellowship, of mutual respect and tolerance. (Ministry of Education 1960: 36-7)*

The concern was, and remains for many, to encourage people to think of, and to commit to, others; and to be actively involved, to join together in practical action. The contemporary, secular interest in the cultivation of social capital and in the development of the whole person can be seen as standing in a direct line with these concerns (Smith 2004).

Third, while the idea of informal education has been a significant and overt feature of youth work since the 1940s (e.g. Brew 1947), it is not well understood. In contrast with formal education it is not based in a curriculum (Jefferies and Smith 2005). Rather it happens in the moment - it is spontaneous; and is driven by conversation and beliefs about what might make for wellbeing and help people to live good lives (Doyle and Smith forthcoming). It shares other qualities with some approaches to formal education such as being highly dependent on the personality and integrity of the educator, being holistic, and using a wide range of settings – often beyond the classroom - for learning (e.g., Palmer 1998). In schooling it might take the form of encounters in the corridor and extra-curricular activities; in a youth project, conversations about friends, families and different experiences. In many respects it is a key aspect of the European tradition of social pedagogy (Lorenz 1994; Dollinger 2006) and which is now finding its way into discussions of social work in the UK (Cameron and Moss 2011).

### The potential of youth work

For many years the worth of locally organised work with young people was regarded as obvious. As a form of education it was a good in itself (Newman 1852). Based in association and membership it could only strengthen civil society. The relatively large numbers of young people attracted to the activities on offer could only be beneficial. After all, they were ‘off the street’; in reasonably safe environments where they could enjoy themselves, form friendships and get help when they needed it. There was an appreciation in policy terms of the educative power and potential of recreation. It:

*... can be as educative to the adolescent as play is to the infant, and as important in promoting the physical, intellectual and moral development necessary to turn the teenager into the responsible adult citizen... Flexibility and tolerance are essential in the approach to young people in clubs and in the spontaneous, self-programming, single activity groups which we hope to see developed. (Ministry of Education 1960: 103)*

With an increasing emphasis on results and upon ‘evidence-based practice’ such common sense and seemingly self-evident conclusions will no longer do for policy makers. The crucial point, though, is that for the people who provide the resources and funding for the vast majority of youth work i.e. young people, parents and religious organisations, such justifications are still experienced directly as being correct in that they continue to be involved. There is research – especially from the United States to confirm their judgement.

Involvement in organised out-of-school activities (by which it is commonly meant pursuits that are generally voluntary and characterised by structure, adult-supervision and an emphasis on skill-

building) benefit significant numbers of young people (see Eccles and Gootman 2002). Settings for this work include school-based extra-curricular groups and clubs, uniformed organisations, sports clubs, YMCAs and leisure centres and churches and religious organisations. As one review put it:

*Across a wide range of indicators, youth who participate in organised activities show more healthy functioning than those who do not (for example, academic achievement, self-esteem, substance use and antisocial behaviours, school belonging, civic involvement, educational/career aspirations, high school completion, and post-secondary educational attainment and job quality). This holds for studies that were cross-sectional or longitudinal and that controlled for demographic factors and/or youth's prior adjustment, whether the research sample was small and regionally based or large scale, the historical timeframe when data were collected, or whether the studies measured organised activity participation in terms of weekly hours or the total number of activities that youth participated in at one time. (Mahoney, Eccles and Harris 2006: 11)*

In other words, organised activities provide a context where young people can 'build competencies and successfully negotiate the salient developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence' (Mahoney et. al. 2005: 10). The benefits that flow from organised activities 'pave the way for long-term educational success and help prepare young persons for the transition to adulthood' (*op. cit.*). While there is some debate about how to assess the various dimensions of involvement (Bohnert 2010), the benefits of involvement appear clear.

There is UK-based research which confirms the learning potential of out-of-school activities. For example Wikeley *et. al.*'s (2007: 18) study revealed a wide range of benefits:

*Specialist knowledge and skills, self-control and confidence were clearly identified in the discourse of this group. And key to this learning appeared to be their engagement in real activities in learning communities involving adults as well as their peers. The young people conceptualised adults in the out-of-school activities and their teachers in school in very different ways. Teachers in classrooms were not seen as role models in the same way as those adults in the out-of-school clubs. Teachers tended to be perceived as part of the system rather than as part of the activity itself. They are not seen as experts in the domain of the lesson. They are teachers who deliver curricula and keep order. The adults in the out-of-school activities were co-learners and an integral part of the activity.*

They comment on two 'striking aspects' of young people's engagement. 'first, the ways in which they were making genuine contributions to the activities through the responsibilities that they undertook, and second, their level of understanding and articulation of what they had learnt' (*op. cit.*: ix).

In addition, a growing range of research suggests that locally organised, community-based provision offers a number of benefits to young people. For example, faith-based and community-based activities were found in one influential US study to be associated by young people with experiences related to initiative, identity exploration and reflection, emotional learning, developing team-work skills, and forming ties with community members. They were contexts for experiences related to identity, pro-social norms, and links to adults (Hansen et. al. 2003). Five particular areas are summarised by Jeffs and Smith (2010a).

First, community-based provision can provide sanctuary. As McLaughlin et al (1994) found in their study of youth projects in US inner city environments, safe space away from the surveillance and pressures of families, schooling and street life is a central feature of successful projects (see; Doyle

and Smith forthcoming). Hirsch's (2005) research reported that many of those involved saw them as a second home. They are often places where workers care and young people are valued, respected and have choice (Spence et. al. 2007: 43).

Second, locally-based work provides *accessible and enjoyable activity*. As Spence et. al. (2007: 134) concluded 'It is the open informality of youth work which encourages the engagement of young people who refuse other institutional participation'. Ahmed et. al. (2007: xi) similarly found that the young people in their study 'especially valued creative and informal approaches, which enabled them to have a say'. That said, a significant number people look for more focused activities and the opportunities for enjoyment and development they offer (Feinstein et. al. 2007; Mahoney et. al. 2005).

Third, such provision offers chances for personal and social development. Evidence to support this conclusion appears in personal accounts of the work that cover an extended period of people's lives e.g. Rose 1998; 127-33; Williamson 2004) and in survey work and interviews (Merton et. al. 2004). Around two thirds of young people who took part in Merton et. al.'s survey of youth work in England claimed that youth work had made a considerable difference to their lives (2004: 46-51). Unfortunately, there has been little long-term cohort or biographical research around this area. However, what we have does appear to confirm that involvement in uniformed groups, and church clubs and groups 'tend to be associated with positive adult outcomes (Feinstein et. al. 2007: 17). These researchers also found that for the cohort in question, attendance at 'youth clubs' [defined as out-of-school-hours clubs for young people, 'typically run by local education authorities' but separate from schools (op. cit.: 6)] tended to have 'worse adult outcomes for many of the measures of adult social exclusion (op. cit.: ii). This echoes findings from other countries, but as Jeffs and Smith (2010a) point out, the results may reflect the social background of those using this form of provision – in that there is some evidence they attract more disadvantaged and/or alienated young. However, as Sorhaindo and Feinstein (2007: 5) comment, 'if they were unable to work with this group to enhance their life outcomes then very important opportunities were being missed'.

Fourth, youth work can offer settings where *friendships and relationships flourish and grow*. Central to this is the relationship between workers and young people: 'the exceptionally large amount of time spent together, the willingness to have fun as well as educate, and the involvement of staff with the youth's family' all contribute (Hirsch 2005: 132).

Last, there is the *local knowledge* of workers. A growing body of research demonstrates that there are advantages when workers are from, or are located in, the local neighbourhood. As McLaughlin et. al. (1994: 5) found in their study of the role of neighbourhood organisations in the lives of 'inner city youth' in the USA, local workers are more likely to appreciate the realities of young people's lives and interests. Too often programmes and initiatives from 'outside' disappointed as they were 'developed by people unfamiliar with the daily rhythms, pressures and ferocity of the inner cities' (op. cit.). Further, as we have seen, the relationship between workers and young people is of fundamental importance – and the involvement of local people as workers adds a particular dimension (see Holman 2000; Merton et. al. 2004). Sharing the experiences of living in the neighbourhood and being seen as part of the area can mean they are seen differently to 'outsiders'. It can be harder to build trust and relationships when workers are seen as outside of the local (Jolly 2010: 9). As Parsons has argued, 'to be a credible role model to whom others can relate it is necessary to share the conditions in which the members of the group have to live' (Parsons 2002: 10). To this must be added the way in which local work fosters other credible role models and relevant knowledge and skills within local networks (Holtom 2006; Holtom 2007; Lloyd-Jones 2010).



## The **myplace** programme and building for work with young people

The **myplace** programme emerged from *Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* (HM Treasury 2007). This report set out a vision for all young people to enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years that prepare them well for adult life and enable them to reach their full potential. *Aiming High* was part of an overall strategy of reform of children's and young people's educational and leisure services. Initiatives emerging from *Aiming High* had to conform to the broader agenda of *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES 2003), supplemented by *Youth Matters* (HM Government 2005). These worked towards five outcomes for children young people: *being healthy, staying safe, enjoyment and achievement, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing*.

The **myplace** programme focused specifically on improving youth facilities in response to evidence of demand from young people, parents and members of local communities. Particular attention was given to the needs and interests of young people identified as disadvantaged.

The priorities of **myplace** were complementary to the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF), both launched in 2006 under the influence of *Youth Matters* and with a continuing commitment until 2011 (made in *Aiming High*). These funds focus on positive activities for young people, youth participation and developing buildings to meet ECM outcomes (DCSF 2010). The *Building Schools for the Future* programme was also part of an approach to developing 'a more integrated and strategic approach to improving places for young people to go' (DCSF 2008b).

At the start HM Government saw **myplace** as making a significant contribution to youth strategy. In its advice to local authorities DCSF highlighted the following features for integrated provision:

- a. a wide range of attractive, structured, positive activities available throughout the whole week at times that suit young people;
- b. co-located multiagency services delivered both from within places that young people want to go to, and on an outreach basis, ensuring that targeted services for vulnerable young people are delivered in the context of an offer that is universal and attractive to all;
- c. opportunities for young people to build relationships with, and learn alongside, others from different socio-economic, cultural and faith backgrounds, as well as adults and older generations from the wider community;
- d. mobile resources to provide a flexible response to young people's needs and reach out to areas without dedicated youth facilities; and
- e. access to these activities, opportunities and services through extended schools (DCSF 2008b).

Initially, some 70 projects were funded under three different phases of the **myplace programme**. Thirteen projects were open at the time of writing; a further 20 were under construction; two had withdrawn and a third gone through a protracted period of redesign.



## Historical precedents

As indicated in the interim evaluation report (DfE 2010b) there are historical precedents for building-based work as a medium for progressing work with young people – and some major questions. There we drew attention to:

- *The development of expertise in building-based youth work in the voluntary sector over 200 years of practice.* Learning from the experience of Sunday Schools and Ragged Schools which developed buildings specifically for their purposes, the YMCA, the large boys' clubs and the girls clubs which developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century began to pay close attention to the detail of building for young peoples' activities, including location, interior and exterior design, functionality and attractiveness. The history of buildings developed in the voluntary sector reveals a set of concerns relevant to **myplace**, involving the desire to be 'world-leading' in terms of material and design and also to consider design around mission, aims and objectives (DfE 2010b: 21-3).
- *The experience of purpose-built statutory neighbourhood youth centres and of youth wings in schools established in the wake of the publication of the Albemarle Report in 1960.* A blueprint for building youth centres was established during the 1960s on the basis of the design of the Withywood Centre in Bristol (Ministry of Education 1963). These buildings were designed to encourage conviviality as well as physical and cultural activity. A number of lessons can be learned from the post-Albemarle history. Firstly, leading individuals were significant in establishing particular places as attractive for young people. Secondly, especially in the statutory sector, many Albemarle Centres declined for want of investment, particularly for repair and refurbishment. Thirdly, problems arose from locking budgets into buildings which sometimes ceased to be sited in relevant locations or offer the type of facilities attractive to changing youth populations. Finally, there were resource advantages in youth wings, and they were widely used by young people, but they did not tend to attract the most disadvantaged and those who had difficulties with schooling who preferred neighbourhood-based facilities (DfE 2010b: 24-5; see, also, Davies 1999).
- *Changing social patterns and experiences.* In recent years, youth leisure has been reconfigured towards the private and the familial as a consequence of demographic change, improved housing, the growing importance of schooling, new technologies and increased access to commercial opportunities. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that small-scale, local and neighbourhood activity remains significant in developing social capital among young people. Both trends have implications for the potential success and the impact of large-scale central building-based provision such as that associated with **myplace**. Some may well find it difficult to attract the number of young users to be sustainable over the long-term, and to generate participation from key target groups. Significant additional work may be required in local neighbourhoods to encourage usage of central provision. (DfE 2010b: 25-6)

## Changing emphasis

With the change of government in April 2010 there was a period of around six months where those projects that had not started building were put on hold while the programme of investment was reviewed. In December 2010 capital funding for projects awarded grants through the **myplace** programme was confirmed. However, there were some variations in emphasis in the programme. In a letter to projects Tim Loughton, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, set out a number of priorities for **myplace** projects:

- Capital investment in the projects was expected ‘to drive the on-going reform of local youth provision and take every opportunity to promote young people’s positive and active role in society’. There was an expectation that civil society organisations would ‘deliver’ more local publicly funded services, and once construction is complete all local authority-led projects are expected to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people.
- In line with plans for the Early Intervention Grant, there was an expectation that projects will focus strongly on evidence based early interventions for the most vulnerable young people.
- There was an expectation that capital investment by the Government would be used to leverage on-going additional investment. The Under Secretary commented, ‘I want to see local authorities and their public partners using the increased flexibility that they have been given through the Spending Review to work together more collaboratively to support and fund outcomes for young people. I also want to see more engagement with the private sector’
- The projects have to review their capital expenditure plans to ensure value for money. While projects were expected to maintain high standards, they should also ‘ensure that all planned expenditure is truly necessary and seek to minimise costs wherever possible’ (Loughton 2010)

Subsequently, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has said that the government vision for the future of youth and youth services is guided by four principles:

*First and foremost is the positive and active role we want for young people....*

*Then, if the first principle is about young people’s responsibility to themselves, the second is about the responsibility of local communities to young people. There are already some great examples of excellent community projects led by volunteers and socially responsible businesses....*

*The third principle is to target funding that prioritises the most vulnerable children and young people and focuses on quality outcomes.*

*And the fourth is about achieving a greater diversity of service providers, to get the best value for money and to support growth in the voluntary sector. (Loughton 2011)*

## Financial crisis

The world banking crisis of 2008, the associated rise in unemployment and continuing issues around growth, and reductions in public spending are having a major impact upon UK education and welfare systems. For **myplace** projects three areas are of particular significance. These are the effect of the continuing financial crisis on:

- the economic and social wellbeing of local communities,
- the welfare of young people, and
- the provision of services for young people and local communities.

We consider how this impacts upon the development and work of **myplace** projects

### The economic and social wellbeing of local communities

In many countries the gap between rich and poor opened up significantly during the last 20 years of the twentieth century. There are some profound costs to this. As Offer (2006) has commented, 'being low down the scale of absolute income is associated with misery – with shorter lives, bad health, discrimination, poor education, incarceration and other detriments'. However, in addition to this headline gap between the richest and the poorest, increasing attention is being given to inequality at the bottom end of the distribution, that is between the median and the bottom. The Prime Minister, for example, has argued that:

*We should focus on closing the gap between the bottom and the middle not because that is the easy thing to do, but because focusing on those who do not have the chance of a good life is the most important thing to do. (Cameron 2009)*

It has also been reflected more recently in the work of the *Commission on Living Standards* whose focus is on the pressures facing people on low-to-middle incomes. This group's share of national earnings has seen a long-term decline in the UK. Other trends, 'from the rising costs of home-ownership to changing working patterns, add to a set of pressures that are fundamentally changing the reality of life on low-to-middle income' (Resolution Foundation 2011). This is having a particular effect on a number of the areas where **myplace** projects are located – and the social polarisation they reflect.

By the end of the 1990s the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 1998) concluded that, in England alone, there were up to 4000 neighbourhoods where the problems of unemployment and crime were acute and 'hopelessly tangled up with poor health, housing and education'. The report continued, 'They are no-go areas for some and no-exit zones for others' (op. cit.: 9). Since then the pattern of poverty and wealth has changed in important ways:

*Over the past 15 years, more households have become poor, but fewer are very poor. Areas already wealthy have tended to become disproportionately wealthier, and we are seeing some evidence of increasing polarisation. In particular there are now areas in some of our cities where over half of all households are breadline poor. (Dorling et. al. 2007: xiv)*

In other words, 'Britain's population became increasingly polarised with respect to the distribution of asset wealthy households' (*op. cit.*: 28) and 'poverty became increasingly geographically concentrated' in particular neighbourhoods (*op. cit.*: 40; see also, Dorling 2010: 171-9; Lupton 2003: 46). Changing distribution of income and employment opportunities have been influenced significantly by 'technological innovation, by the globalisation of markets, by the migration of manufacturing to countries with rising skills and low labour costs, and the increasing premium on high-end abilities and qualifications (so pushing up incomes at the top of the distribution)' (UNICEF 2010: 9).

The most recent research confirms the recession associated with the 2008 banking crisis has disproportionately affected particular groups in the population:

*Those who have fared worst through the recession are the young aged under 25 years, those with lower education levels, single rather than partnered people, lone parents, and those working in the construction, wholesale and retail and hospitality industries.*

*The unemployed, social tenants, those with no qualifications, single persons, and lone parents are most likely to report finding it difficult to manage financially. Despite this, the unemployed are optimistic and expect their financial situation to improve.*

*The unemployed are more likely to have lower levels of mental wellbeing as measured by overall life satisfaction even though this is not the case for the younger unemployed aged less than 25 years. Unemployment has a much larger negative impact on the wellbeing of prime age and older workers approaching pension age. (Taylor 2011: 52)*

However, despite the recession, there was 'relatively even (albeit modest) growth in incomes across the distribution between 2007–08 and 2008–09, leaving income inequality largely unchanged on most measures' (Joyce et. al. 2010). The picture is likely to alter as fiscal changes bite. Fiscal tightening is likely to be a major drag on growth over the next few years. In addition, with increased inflation, most households entered 2011 with their rates of pay failing to keep up with the cost of living (Brewer et. al. 2011). Household consumption may struggle to grow in real terms in 2011 and accelerate only slowly in 2012 and 2013. Unemployment will continue to rise in 2011 with reductions in public service employment and the possibility of continued growth in productivity (*op. cit.*: 77).

Several aspects of these phenomena are significant for **myplace** projects. Here we want to highlight two.

First, they raise questions around the *focus* of the work that the projects might be called on to do. Most obvious is the extent to which they will need to look to the needs of unemployed people in the 16-24 year age range where the unemployment rate is running at just over 20 per cent - although some care must be taken with figures like these as they may overstate the position. A CIPD report argues, for example, that the commonly held perception that one in five 16-24 is unemployed is based on a misreading of the official statistics. They suggest the actual figure is closer to one in eight. (see CIPD 2011). A further concern is the deteriorating quality of the jobs open to 16-18 year olds (see below). Another area of concern may be the growing polarisation of some areas in terms of deprivation.

Second, there are some important issues around the *sustainability* of provision. With the real income of households declining (and in some cases significantly) people's ability to pay for activities in the centres will be squeezed (and this is noteworthy given that many are looking to increase prices in certain areas). Whilst giving to civil society organisations by their members does not appear to have been majorly affected, with increased unemployment and decreasing real incomes some **myplace**

projects based in civil society organisations may well in future experience a decrease in giving for key aspects of their work.

## The welfare of young people

The UK already faced significant problems with the wellbeing of its children and young people when compared to other rich countries. Researchers involved in a major UNICEF (2007) initiative made a comprehensive assessment of the lives of children and young people in 21 nations of the industrialised world. They issued a 'Report Card' to encourage monitoring, to permit comparison, and to stimulate the discussion and development of policies to improve children's lives. The researchers found that children and young people in the United Kingdom were close to the bottom of the league in terms of material wellbeing, educational wellbeing, family and peer relationships, behaviour and risks and subjective wellbeing (see, also Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009). Indeed, they were bottom of the league for the last three. Not only did children and young people report feeling unhappy more than in other countries, their behaviours were riskier (e.g. around drug taking and sexual activity) and there were also strong indicators of a range of problems in families (Layard and Dunn 2009). For example, not living in a household with both biological parents and with higher numbers of other children appears to decrease children's life satisfaction (see Powdthavee and Vignoles 2008).

In 2010 a further report ranked 24 OECD countries around equality in health, education and material wellbeing for their children. It examined a particular aspect of disparity – bottom-end inequality. Italy, the United States, Greece, Belgium and the United Kingdom were identified as allowing their most vulnerable children to fall much further behind than countries like Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Switzerland and the Netherlands (UNICEF 2010). The United Kingdom is ranked at 19<sup>th</sup> (out of 24) for material wellbeing of children; 13<sup>th</sup> in terms of educational wellbeing; and 11<sup>th</sup> for health wellbeing (all based on data from just before the 2008 banking crisis). The report argued that the consequences of 'falling behind' are enormous for children (as well as for the economy and societies).

When young people are asked directly about their 'life satisfaction' a more complex picture emerges. For example, early findings from the first wave of the new UK household longitudinal study (Understanding Society), reveal that overall, 10-15 year-olds in the UK 'appear to be very satisfied with their lives' (Knies 2011: 18). The researchers could find 'no associations between young people's life satisfaction scores and household income or with household or child material deprivation indices' (Knies 2011: 21). They conclude:

*The results suggest that children's life satisfaction is affected indirectly, for example through the kind of food children consume, the range of leisure activities they can undertake, the quality of neighbourhoods and schools they are exposed to, and through the socio-emotional and psychological effect on the relationships between family members. The explanation for young people's life satisfaction is likely to be more complex than can be measured by the material deprivation indices alone even though these remain valuable measures for increasing our understanding of disadvantage and poverty.*

There are a number of possible reasons why self-reporting of this kind may be at odds with some other more 'objective' indicators (such as engagement in risky behaviour) but what this does highlight

is the significance of school, neighbourhood and family life. In addition, there are long-run changes in the job market. As one report notes:

*Despite the rise of service sector jobs, the number of young people going into sales-related employment has fallen since 2000 — from 10 per cent to 6 per cent. Similarly, the percentage of young people in secretarial or clerical work has fallen substantially from 13 per cent to 0.1 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of young people going into labouring and other elementary occupations has risen from 13 per cent to 27 per cent.*

*These shifts in employment patterns for 16–18-year-olds suggest that those who are entering the labour market are doing so in dead-end jobs, which offer no progression and training. Although this provides some minimal protection from future unemployment, it does not offer these young people the chance to progress through the labour market via either training or in-work progression. This leaves many young people entering the labour market at 16–18 exposed to years of low wages and employment instability. (Birdwell et al. 2011: 18)*

Overall, there remain longstanding concerns about the wellbeing of children and young people. While most are content with their family lives and feel reasonably happy – a small but very significant proportion are not. Important issues remain around the experience of schooling (including bullying) and the numbers engaged in risky behaviour (e.g. around alcohol usage). There is a case for some targeted intervention here – but there is also a case for initiatives that are much broader in scope that can impact on the quality of school and neighbourhood life, community cohesion and social capital more broadly (Thomas 2011).

### **The provision of services for young people and local communities**

Government funding for services to young people was disproportionately affected by fiscal tightening in the 2010-11 financial year. A reduction of 24 per cent in the area-based grant from the Department of Education that funded Connexions (and careers advice), for example, was enacted halfway through the financial year. The expectation was for 3.6 per cent efficiency savings across the board in that year; instead cuts ranging from 11 to 45 per cent were announced by local authorities (Hughes 2010). Funding more broadly has also been severely affected in the 2011-12 financial year. The Confederation of Heads of Young People's Services (CHYPS 2011), based on a survey of heads of service, estimated that around £100M will be taken out of local authority youth service budgets in England by March 2012. That survey concluded that:

- local authorities nationwide will lose around 3,000 full-time equivalent youth work staff; and
- open-access youth groups and centres will be hardest hit – either being reduced or axed altogether.

This reflects reduction in budgets on average of 28 per cent in the 2011/12 financial year. A survey undertaken by the Local Government Association confirms that services for young people are the 'most commonly targeted service' for 'proportionately greater savings in 2011/12' (LGA 2011: 2). Another survey, conducted by the union Unite in conjunction with *Children and Young People Now*, showed that more than a quarter of youth services in England faced cuts of between 21 and 30 per cent.



In addition, it appears that the youth justice system in England and Wales will be stretched. The chief executive of the Youth Justice Board, John Drew, has indicated that the Board is preparing to distribute up to 29 per cent less in government funding to youth offending teams (YOTs) compared to 2010/11 (Puffett 2011a). This includes funding for prevention work, effective practice grants, intensive supervision and surveillance and resettlement. It equates to a decrease of £44.6m for community youth justice services. Drew indicated there is likely to a similar reduction in local authority funding for youth offending teams.

The total loss to Children's Services departments is set to be in excess of £500m in the coming financial year. Figures obtained from 87 of the 152 local authorities with responsibility for children's services by Puffett (2011b) revealed a decrease in funding totalling £305m for the next financial year. Extrapolated across all top-tier authorities, the figure would rise to around £533m. (Puffett 2011b)

This reduction in funding is leading to far-reaching changes in the direction, organisation and level of services offered to young people. It has accelerated the move into targeted work (see below) and increasingly left universal provision to schools and civil society organisations (almost totally in the case of some local authorities). A number of local authorities have either eliminated or scaled back their Connexions Services.

## Policy developments

Here we want to focus on policy developments in four areas:

- the move to integrated and targeted services;
- changes in schooling;
- the implications of the 'Big Society' agenda; and
- the establishment of National Citizen Service.

### The move to integrated and targeted services

The developing pattern within local authorities has been to increasingly focus on targeted work, leaving more open, associational and universal work to civil society organisations and, less explicitly, to schools. This movement predated recent reductions in expenditure, but has been accelerated by them. It was a significant outcome of the particular conception of integrated working adopted by local authorities (Jeffs and Smith 2010a). Youth work, the forms of youth support work associated with the Connexions programme and programmes of work concerned with combating youth offending became part of the new children's services whose overriding ethos was shaped by:

- child protection (following high profile cases such as Baby P and Victoria Climbié);
- a concern with early intervention with identified individuals in an effort to prevent them coming to significant harm; and
- remedial work once individuals had been harmed or had done harm to others.

With these came a significant increase in bureaucracy and more procedural ways of working – one feature of which was the Common Assessment Framework – and the perceived need to work in

interdisciplinary teams ‘around the child or family’ (e.g. Rogowski 2010). The requirements made by the inspection regime were bureaucratically heavy. As the Munro Review of Child Protection put it, ‘professionals are, in particular, constrained from keeping a focus on the child by the demands and rigidity created by inspection and regulation’ (Department for Education 2011: 9). In addition:

*The current management style puts too much emphasis on the bureaucratic aspects of the work. Radical reform is needed to give due weight to the importance of the cognitive and emotional requirements of the work, the need for continuing professional development, and for access to research in order to help workers perform at a high level. (Munro 2011: 11)*

Work has increasingly had to ‘make sense’ in case management rather than in community learning and development, or informal and social education terms (Kornbeck 2000). There has been a significant change in the job titles of many workers. This has entailed moving away from terms like ‘youth work’ and ‘youth and community work’ into descriptors such as ‘youth support worker’. The relationship between young person and worker is now less likely to be voluntary (Jeffs and Smith 2010a). Furthermore, the managers of these workers are now less likely to have had experience in youth work – with many being drawn from a social work or youth justice background.

Targeting can work against the Government’s ‘Big Society’ agenda. First, the ‘Big Society’ entails an inclusive and universal orientation – it is about the participation and learning of all on the basis of choice. Narrowing the focus of youth provision narrows the reach. Second, because it does not routinely involve wider groupings of young people, it can move towards the fostering of bonding, rather than bridging and linking social capital (Woolcock 2001) – and this can be problematic and even compound problems. Different combinations of the three types of social capital ‘will produce different outcomes’ (Field 2003: 42).

A further, important, feature of the move to integrated and targeted services has been the transfer of the expectation to provide open and associational work for young people to charities and civil society organisations, but with little or no transfer of resources. There has also been an expectation of further private sector growth in this area in some quarters. This is a fundamental change in direction. Previously, local authorities assisted local organisations through the secondment of workers and through grants. More recently, there was some commissioning of such services through large local organisations and national charities. One result, organisationally, has been a search for alternative or additional models of sustaining provision. At present two models are attracting some attention – community interest companies (CICs) and youth mutuals.

The latter has been promoted by a consultancy firm and the Confederation of Heads of Young People’s Services (CHYPS). It is claimed to provide

*... a way to develop a new relationship between young people, professionals and the state. It enables young people to join and become part owners of their own services. It asks and requires them to play responsible active roles. It creates a vehicle through which their own initiatives, enterprises and ideas can be supported and developed. (FPM 2010: 8)*

The model is limited in that it has been framed within the view that limited public resources will be best focused on working with young people who need support either

- to enable them to take control of their lives and avoid sliding into failure (preventative), or
- to provide emergency and remedial support or to take action in response to criminal activity (intensive intervention). (FPM 2010: 7)

In significant part, these orientations appears to have arisen because its advocates are primarily concerned with ‘delivering’ local authority priorities and are looking to where there is funding. As such it has little relevance to civil society organisations (whose associational structure already provides a number of the benefits of youth mutual). However, it could affect some **myplace** projects as the local authorities where they are located are actively considering the model – e.g., Parkfield, Torbay. One factor limiting the development of youth mutual is that large commercial and non-governmental organisations already exist who have the ability to bid for the services that youth mutuals might offer.

The first model that of community interest companies, has attracted more interest among civil society organisations. Community interest companies are limited companies ‘created for the use of people who want to conduct a business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage’ (CIC Regulator 2003). They have to be approved by Companies House and to satisfy a ‘community interest test’ and ‘asset lock’, which ‘ensure that the CIC is established for community purposes and the assets and profits are dedicated to these purposes’ *op. cit.*). A number of organisations have adopted this model (including at least one of our **myplace** case study projects – Minehead EYE) seeing it as a vehicle to enable local people to shape and organise provision for young people and the wider community. The CIC model has some clear advantages and relevance to local organisations who are concerned with activities and/or facilities that can generate significant revenue.

## Developments in schooling

As noted in the interim evaluation report, there has been a huge increase in the numbers of young people involved in education since the time of the landmark Albemarle Report (HMSO 1960). When it was published around 80 per cent of young people entered work as soon as they legally were able to (then at age 15), the figure is now around five per cent (Jeffs and Smith 2010a). In some respects an understandable focus on those young people labelled NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) has meant that some policymakers and practitioners have not fully recognised the significance of the high proportion of young people who are in education and training – and who attend regularly. According to the Audit Commission (2010) national figures for 2009 show only 9.2 per cent (183,200) of young people aged 16-18 were NEET. At the same time less than 6 per cent of secondary school students are ‘persistently absent’ i.e. missing 20 per cent of their schooling – and a high proportion of this is attributable to ‘illness’ and ‘family holidays’ (DCSF 2009). Given the centrality of education in the vast majority of young people’s lives - and changes in their leisure patterns - an obvious entry point for work with young people is the school or college.

Any agency or group wishing to develop open or ‘universal’ provision needs to attend to the networks of relationships that develop out from schools and colleges (and classically to involve key individuals from those networks so as to generate participation by others); and to becoming known within the school or college itself. One of the key features of the development of church-based youth workers

over the last two decades has been the amount of time they spend in ‘schools work’ (Doyle and Smith forthcoming).

Schools and colleges themselves have become significant employers of youth workers and informal educators – often under a variety of job titles. Often they are employed to work with young people who have difficulties with schooling or issues arising out of their family situation or peer relationships. There has been a concern to develop alternative means of raising educational achievement with such young people. However, there has also been a significant growth in involvement with curricular enrichment, extra-curricular activity and the development of the school community (Doyle and Smith forthcoming). This activity was given an additional impetus through policies around extended schooling (DES 2002b) – and by June 2010 nationally 98 per cent of schools offered access to extended services (DfE 2010c). Informal educators and youth workers in schools have to be able to move between informal and formal learning activities, and the emotional and cognitive, as well as carving out a role within a setting that is not used to multi-disciplinary working.

There are a number of implications for **myplace** projects in this. First, a number of the newly opened **myplace** projects have looked to attract usage by schools of their facilities both as income generators and as ways of introducing the centres to young people and getting to know them. They have sought to offer curriculum enrichment. Some centres, like the Sutton Life Centre, have been specifically designed to offer forms of educational experience that are not available within schools. However, with tightening budgets, schools are less likely to make use of external provision.

Second, there has been discussion among some of the agencies involved in **myplace** of the possibility that they could be used as alternative education centres for part of the day. This interest draws on the Government’s intention to open up this area of activity:

*We will open up the alternative provision market to new providers and diversify existing provision by legislating to allow PRUs to become Academies, encouraging Free Schools that offer alternative provision, and supporting more voluntary sector providers alongside Free Schools. Alternative provision Free Schools in particular will be a route for new voluntary and private sector organisations to offer high quality education for disruptive and excluded children and others without a mainstream school place. (DfE 2010a: 38)*

However, changes in the policies and procedures affecting schools and academies (e.g. around exclusion – DfE 2010: 33), combined with budget constraints, will act to limit the attractiveness of such provision to heads and senior managers – especially those that believe there are cheaper in-school alternatives.

Third, a small number of **myplace** projects are located on school sites or are joint initiatives with schools. As we commented in the interim evaluation report, the historical evidence is that these buildings are more likely to be sustainable – and to attract school usage. Their proximity – combined with the different ethos within them – could prove to be an attractive feature when schools look to developing their teaching and learning strategies, and when developing how they approach exclusion and inclusion in the new policy context.

## The 'Big Society'

While there has been some discussion of what the Government's concern to strengthen the 'Big Society' might entail, some of the key elements are clear (e.g. Coote 2010). A Cabinet Office (2010) paper highlights five themes:

*Giving communities more powers.* This includes reforming the planning system to give neighbourhoods more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live; introducing new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and giving communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services. It also involves employing a small cadre of community organisers.

*Encouraging people to take an active role in their communities.* This includes a range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action; encouraging charitable giving and philanthropy; and introducing a National Citizen Service.

*Transferring power from central to local government.* Elements here include devolving power and giving greater financial autonomy to local government, including a full review of local government finance.

*Supporting co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises.* Here the concern is to stimulate the creation and expansion of mutuals, co-operatives, charities and social enterprises, and support these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services. In addition there is a promise to give public sector workers a new right to form employee-owned co-operatives and bid to take over the services they deliver. The establishment of a Big Society Bank, which will be a 'wholesale' provider of new finance for charities, social enterprises and other non-governmental bodies, is a flagship policy.

*Publishing government data.* This includes a new 'right to data' so that government-held datasets can be requested and used by the public, and then published on a regular basis; and the publishing of detailed local crime data statistics every month (to be found at [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)).

Some of the practical implications are becoming apparent both for **myplace** projects and youth work more generally.

First, some of what has been proposed does not touch or affect much youth work provision. The vast bulk of groups and organisations involved either have little or no wish to engage with government agendas (for fear of losing their character and freedom) or are too small to bid to provide state-funded services (if they wanted to) or to be eligible for the proposed Big Society Bank (HM Government 2011). A great deal of youth work activity is 'below, or under, the radar' of traditional policy, taking place in 'small voluntary organisations, community groups and more informal or semi-formal activities in the third sector' (McCabe 2010: 3). It is difficult to put a precise figure on the number of local groups and organisations that form civil society but it is probably approaching 900,000 in the UK (Community Research Centre 2010). A large proportion of these, representing a wealth of informal community activity, are 'below the radar' (Phillimore and McCabe, 2010).

Second, given the context of the financial crisis and the government's decision to act quickly to deal with public sector finances, local authorities have to make fundamental changes now to publically supported or provided work with young people and decisions around the divestment of plant. They have to take action *before* any significant new powers to help communities save local facilities and

services threatened with closure are enacted. In some areas farsighted practitioners had taken steps to help local people to establish community interest companies or to prepare existing community organisations for the changes that have occurred. In many others, this had not happened. The position for **myplace** projects is somewhat different. They are already either civil society organisations, or, for most of the remaining projects, the Under Secretary of State has informed them that once construction is complete he expects 'all local authority led projects to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people' (Loughton 2010).

Third, there are some significant implications around the Government's concern that more civil society organisations take a leading role in youth provision through a shift away from local authority direct delivery. Here there look to be some notable opportunities for larger, local civil society organisations – such as those associated with **myplace** projects to bid to provide services. They offer significant advantages over other potential providers in that they are already embedded in local communities, are imbued with local knowledge and have facilities and programmes locally available. However, at the moment they are often at a major disadvantage when compared to national or regional non-governmental organisations and larger private contractors. They do not often have the infra-structure, or necessarily the language, to compete in the manufacture of bids. Indeed, their very strength – their embeddedness, local knowledge and commitment to the community – can work against their ability to work within commissioning systems in that their orientation has an eye to the long-term, and to the locally-generated analysis of needs.

Fourth, if the government's vision of giving communities more power is to be realised, attention needs to be given to local representational arrangements. The Localism Bill (at Report stage as we write) contains measures concerning:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government;
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals;
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective; and
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.

In rural areas key aspects of these measures can, be handled in significant part through the existing framework of parish councils. Many small youth groups, for example, already benefit from using the facilities they manage – and they have provided a focus for the development of community interest companies to take forward youth provision and other areas of community endeavour. At present there are around 9,000 town and parish councils in England (and these cover a third of the population), but as Bevan (2003), has pointed out they are rarely found in cities. There is no longer any legal obstruction to their establishment. However the practical work involved (collecting enough signatures to petition to trigger a governance review, for example) is onerous, especially in areas with larger numbers of residents. For local authority-led **myplace** projects the existence of parish or town councils could well ease the required 'handing over' of the new facilities to local communities.



## National Citizen Service

National Citizen Service (NCS) is aimed at 16 year olds and involves a programme of activity designed to:

- bring young people from different backgrounds together, and
- support them to develop the skills and attitudes they need to engage positively with their communities and become active and responsible citizens. (Cabinet Office 2011a)

The aims of NCS are to promote a:

- more cohesive society by mixing people from different backgrounds;
- more responsible society by supporting the transition to adulthood;
- more engaged society by enabling young people to work together to create social action projects in their local community. (op. cit.)

It is anticipated that the programme will last for around seven weeks. Participants start with three weeks of full-time activities. It is expected that those on the scheme will spend a minimum of ten days and nights away from home to give them the opportunity to develop life skills and resilience. Participants then go on to a regular pattern of part time involvement over a further four weeks. This will include 30 hours part-time social action (Cabinet Office undated). The scheme will be piloted in summers of 2011 and 2012. The current proposal is for around 11,000 young people to participate in summer 2011, increasing to 30,000 young people in summer 2012.

Based around character training and personal growth work that was initially developed some time ago by Outward Bound (Freeman 2011) and pursued more recently by the Weston Spirit organisation, and having some similarities to the long established tradition of summer camps in the United States, the scheme is something of an unknown quantity. There are a number of practical problems to be overcome – for example, finding enough residential opportunity in the summer period. It is quite possible that **myplace** projects will either seek to 'deliver' the scheme (Bolton Lads and Girls Club – a key reference point in the establishment of the **myplace** programme – is one of the first pilot projects), or could initiate or join consortia to do so.

## myplace - Key findings and mapping progress

*This section reports findings from:*

- the case study projects, (listed in Appendix 4)
- visits to other myplace projects (including a number that were open);
- the 2011 Annual Survey (Appendix 3) and
- desk research on other projects.

*The material is structured around the aim of the **myplace** programme and the themes and outcomes that run through it. Within each of the broad headings key dimensions identified as significant within the Programme framework documentation are considered (DCSF 2008b; The Big Lottery Fund 2008).*

*We also examine the impact of the current financial situation on projects and the need for continuing evaluation.*

*The objective is to highlight some of the experiences of the Programme; the tensions and challenges faced by projects – and how they are seeking to overcome issues.*

### The **myplace** aim

As outlined earlier the core aim is to provide: ‘World-class youth facilities driven by the active participation of young people and their views and needs’. The following examines the *ambition* of the Programme and the extent to which developments have reflected the active participation of young people.

#### **Ambition:**

*delivering a step change in the quality and breadth of facilities, activities and services on offer to young people within available resources.*

#### **Ambition:**

*Youth empowerment: putting young people in the lead to drive every aspect of project design and delivery [including governance for example putting projects in trust to young people].*

A great deal of time and commitment has been given by lead participants in the development of the **myplace** scheme. For those who have been centrally involved in the process, which included all those who completed the annual survey and the key informants within the case studies, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that they reported their belief that this scheme is worthwhile and indicative of a new approach to facilities for young people.

Beyond this subjective commitment, it is visibly apparent that the new and re-vamped buildings are generally of high quality, incorporating design features which reflect the views and interests of young people, and that in their scale they allow for the accommodation of a wide range of programmes, activities and services relevant to young people in different localities. This is a significant step-change for many participating projects, particularly regarding previous facilities (e.g. in the case of the Barnard

Castle Hub, the project previously worked out of a small local business unit which housed the minibus and other equipment); decaying Albemarle Youth Centres and local community centres, built in the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. in the case of some of the Hackney buildings now being refurbished); and the absence of equivalent facilities (such as in the case of Bradford’s location in neutral territory near the town centre).

Respondents to the 2011 **myplace** Annual Survey (the lead contacts for each project) were strongly positive about the design of their facilities. This may well be the result of the relatively high degree of involvement by young people in consultations around this area – and the expertise (both internally and externally) that projects were able to call upon. It could arise from the general optimism associated with building projects of this sort. Whatever the case, the numbers of respondents strongly agreeing is particularly noteworthy. The design of the building:

• allows for the planned range of activities to be offered.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• includes a comfortable social space that can accommodate 20 or more young people close to the main entrance.	100% agreed or strongly agreed
• reflects careful attention to how safe young people may feel in different areas of the facility for example the toilets.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• allows for easy access for young people with different needs.	100% agreed or strongly agreed
• encourages access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• appears to allow for significant flexibility in use.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• represents excellent value for money	100% agreed or strongly agreed

Where building work is completed or substantially advanced, the efforts of those involved, including the young people who have participated in the process, have been rewarded and there is a corresponding level of enthusiasm and excitement about the possibilities presented by the new facilities. Insofar as the buildings make a positive contribution to the quality of the locality, they signify the potential and reality of the contribution of young people to social life. At the same time, they are symbolic of the social value accorded to young people, and it is hoped that in themselves they speak of high quality and interesting activity and work by, with and for young people:

*Hopefully the building will quickly become quite synonymous with the work that we do because it’s very hard to come into the building and not get a sense of the kind of work that Pegasus do, in the images you see, and the posters you see. And you only need to open a brochure to realise very quickly about the amount of work for young people.  
(Pegasus)*

Even when construction is not well advanced, involved young people are enthusiastic about the potential of the building:

*[I have] a passion now for completion. And just being part of the beginning to see what it can, what it's going to do, that's obviously a positive thing and to be able to say look in this year's time we're going to have this brilliant centre, it's going to benefit a hell of a lot of children and kids and stuff and with this that and the other it's going to be the core place for people to come to and people might say they won't but they will, it is going to be that big! (Young Person- Staffordshire).*

In the developmental stages, some compromises and changes have been inevitable, particularly in building design (e.g. it has not been possible to build 'the tower' as initially conceived in Bradford due to planning restrictions, while some of the major environmental and ecological engineering ambitions of Staffordshire have had to be scaled back because they proved too expensive), and occasionally relating to the quality of the facilities (e.g. the 'world standard' BMX track in Torbay could not be achieved again due to the cost of ecological aspects). However, the focus has remained on providing the highest level and quality of facilities possible remaining as close to the original vision as might be achieved. So for instance in Staffordshire where the biomass boiler has been abandoned:

*...if we'd got the money it would have been fantastic but we haven't got the money. But the actual concept of the **myplace** building and the young persons' village, the youth hall and the zones is all being provided, we're not losing any of that.*

Where possible, projects have used formal standards to judge quality. So for example, in Shoeburyness and Barnard Castle, the kitchens are of a quality suitable for training young people in catering skills, in Barnard Castle, the BMX track is of 'Olympic' quality, in Staffordshire the offer of 'Olympic Standard Archery' remains in the plans, and again in Staffordshire, the world environmental assessment method for judging the quality of buildings, BREEAM is still applied, though there has been a downgrading from outstanding to excellent. This is seen as important in attracting a wide range of young people and members of local communities to the facilities and in making the **myplace** centres places where people want to spend time in structured and constructive activity, as well as in relaxing and in accessing services. This is seen as an important step-change in the culture of youth facilities; as a means of encouraging positive participation for a wide range of young people, and sometimes their families and local community members, while simultaneously discouraging negative and territorial behaviour or the domination of particular groups which characterised previous facilities (Shoeburyness, Hackney).

### Activities and services on offer

The facilities available in the opened centres, and planned in those under construction offer an impressive range of activities and potential for activity-based development which are an absolute addition to what was previously available for young people in that locality. The activities and services offered include those which:

- are immediately reflective of the interests of contemporary young people, (e.g. BMX tracks, skateboarding facilities, dance studios, motorbike maintenance, theatre, sport, fishing);

- respond to the opportunities offered by the locality (e.g. outdoor education, equestrian centre, water sports);
- relate to the educational development of young people (e.g. skills training in catering, music production, creative arts);
- respond to policy priorities of government (e.g. emphasising health and wellbeing, provide opportunities for volunteering and citizenship education);
- relate to the realities and limitations of the local area (e.g. provide transport, crèche facilities, spaces for parents and other community members);
- recognise the specific needs of different groups of young people (e.g. ethnic minority groups, disabled young people, girls and young women);
- address issues associated with youth problems and disadvantage (e.g. youth homelessness, drugs and alcohol services, information, advice and guidance, mentoring schemes).

There is a spectrum of focus on the part of the centres between those whose history highlights activities (e.g. Oldham – the Bolton Lads and Girls’ Club) and those which derive from an established service (e.g. New Horizon Youth Centre - homelessness) or are working directly on an issue (e.g. Sutton Life – citizen education). This impacts upon the design and programming of the facilities and services on offer, and upon the ways in which young people access the facilities. So for example, the desire to engage in leisure activities is the basis for building relationships, discovering needs and signposting young people to services in Oldham, whereas the need to find housing is a priority for young people using New Horizon Youth Centre, and this is used as a lever to engage them in positive activities while in Sutton Life the activities emphasis is structured around the needs of schools and a citizenship curriculum. Within the spectrum, the evidence indicates that in the planning stages, there was some difference of focus between the young people and the workers involved. The primary attention of the young people was upon the leisure activities which **myplace** would offer, while the services in relation to youth issues and disadvantage were always necessarily integral to the professional vision and the conditions for gaining funding for the scheme.

The emphasis on leisure activities remains apparent in the ways in which most young people evaluate the quality of the facilities:

*YP1: There is so much that happens here, free table tennis, and the band thing*

*YP2: Yeah that’s great, state of the art recording studio (Young people, Minehead)*

The visual impact of the centres and the immediately evident provision which they offer is most clearly associated with leisure activity and so in the realisation of the schemes, there is a tendency for the division between activity and services to remain in the physical layout of some of the buildings. In one project this translates into ‘turn left for activities, turn right for advice and services’. In others, activities tend to be timetabled for evenings and weekends, and ‘services’ for daytime use. The following is the evening and Saturday programme for one centre (Hinckley):

**Monday:** Streetdance; Football coaching; Climbing; Skateboard training

**Tuesday:** Fitness training/Gym induction; Basketball coaching; Climbing; Football training

**Wednesday:** Pool and Snooker competitions; The Cube Challenge Circuits; Roller disco

**Thursday:** Junior Club; Bouncy Castles; Sports coaching; Fitness and Gym

**Friday:** Skateboard training; Table tennis; Project night; Music lessons

**Saturday:** Skate and BMX; Chill out.

In this centre, current daytime provision is community-, rather than youth-, focused (e.g. mother and toddler groups) although negotiations are underway to extend use to agencies working with young offenders. The use of specialist and partner agencies to offer specialist services is common to many projects whose central leadership tends to derive from the youth work sector which has traditionally focused on positive activity as a medium for informal educational development and problem-solving. Such an approach is 'universal' in its assumption that all young people have needs and concerns associated with the fact of their youth and that as such the 'specialism' of the facilities on offer should be simply that they are 'youth-orientated'.

Apart from within those projects specialising in a particular issue or interest group, an emphasis upon leisure is the attraction and the preferred state of affairs for the young people attracted to the **myplace** scheme:

*Interviewer: If this is a place for kids to come and hang out – is there anything it could be doing more of to support young people like a sexual health worker or drugs or problems at home?*

*Sixth form college student: You can get that at college.*

The high profile of the activity side of the **myplace** offer is further encouraged by the needs of projects to work within their resource base and the threat to the resources of some services such as Connexions which were initially factored into the overall vision. High quality leisure facilities offer opportunities for offsetting reductions in services and for raising funds not only to cover costs, but to subsidise other less commercial activities. A number of projects (e.g. Norwich, Torbay, Minehead) are pursuing the commercial option through activities, especially at weekends.

The weekend use of facilities is problematic. Originally, it was envisaged that projects would be open-access all day, seven days a week. This is the intention in the *Onside* projects, including Oldham. However, respondents in a number of projects (e.g. Torbay, Minehead, Thames Gateway) claimed that structured activities are in competition with the desire of young people to relax entirely in their own terms at weekends:

*Friday nights and Saturday nights they're not really interested at all. That's their space and that's their time... I think it is very hard to work against the weekend alcohol culture – it is so deep seated. (New Horizon Youth Centre)*

Other projects (e.g. Hinckley, Norwich, and Shoeburyness) recognise this in their timetables. Where facilities are not being offered for commercial use, opportunities for participation are offered which include the option of just 'hanging out':

*The 'I love Saturdays' delivered in partnership with Connexions, Children Services, Future and SNYP since the beginning of June, designed to provide guidance and advice and a safe place to hang out have attracted around 150 young people. (Norwich)*

*And that is one of the things our steering group is saying...it was around young people just wanting to meet their friends and have somewhere to go, and that is what we are offering here especially at weekends, in the week it is more of a structured programmes. (Shoeburyness)*

The ideal of opening seven days a week for structured activities is complicated by a mismatch between the resources available and the demand for use. In the 13 projects so far opened, the



demand for use is greater than the operating capacity. In Norwich *'we're operating a limited service because we're not at a point where we've got enough revenue to employ enough youth workers'*. In Salmon, it is claimed that numbers using the centre could be doubled with more staff and volunteers. In Hinckley the music studio is not being fully used because no-one can be found with the skills to operate the technology. In Shoeburyness, because of 'staff shortages' a family support worker is voluntarily helping out, overseeing a very popular football club otherwise run by the young people themselves and the reorganisation of services means that staff will not be available to support a seven day opening schedule. In New Horizon Youth Centre, there are difficulties in prioritising what can be developed due to budget limitations: *'we want aerobics dance, we want kung fu boxing – all of that. We have the capacity for all those things in that we have the facility available but all of those things cost money so it's balancing that out'*. Meanwhile in Torbay, where the facilities are not yet opened, there are concerns that it will be impossible to deliver activities at the level initially planned because *'income generation is leading rather than young people in terms of strategic thinking'*.

In view of this, although there are significant efforts to diversify income sources and to pursue new opportunities arising from new policy initiatives, it is possible that there is some over-reach in the promise and ambition suggested by the facilities with regard to operational resources. . This leaves projects vulnerable to underachieving, to disillusionment from young people, and to the possibility of being taken over by commercial interests. In one project located primarily in local authority provision, it was suggested that the pressure to raise income through activities would lead to an imbalance whereby all the 'universal' leisure activities would be commissioned out to the major national voluntary organisations, with the loss of the local connection, and that the local **myplace** team would be confined to targeted, problem-based work.

## Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment has been integral to **myplace** from the outset, and as indicated in the Interim Report (DfE 2010) this has worked in various ways and at various levels.

All projects have continued to work with young people according to the original principles of participation and empowerment but the stage and speed of development has impacted upon this process. After the initial consultations with young people and beyond the stage of discussions about planning and the nature of the facilities, young people's interest is quite closely bound up with seeing their ideas come to fruition as the building is constructed. So where there have been delays and uncertainties in the development, as in Staffordshire, Hackney and Stockton, some of the participatory work has stalled. In Staffordshire, a five month delay added to what was already a protracted process was thought to be quite significant in the time perceptions of youth, and the workers deliberately halted meetings with young people:

*Worker 1: When we came to a standstill, I there's actually a void ... So in a way I was quite conscious of not to keep holding meetings when there was nothing happening because everybody was just going to get disillusioned so we kept it off and we've started it off again now.*

*Worker 2: Young people's timescales are very different to mine and that, and you know and it's driven me mad so how a young person would feel about it I don't know.*

*Worker 1: And me.*

*Worker 2: I'd think it was just a waste of time I would if I was 18.*

*Worker 1: Two years, a year ago is no good to most people.*

*Worker 2: You know 3 months and I'll be gone and that's how a lot of them think.*

Now that they are on the verge of making progress, the workers are starting again to build the enthusiasm of young people involved in the project.

In Hackney there was originally a group of ten young people, Hackney Hubbz Group, who were highly involved, receiving training, acting as a 'sounding board' for the professional workers, and undertaking consultation exercises with other young people. A seven month period of uncertainty about the future of the Hackney scheme impacted significantly upon that group:

*It is true to say that the seven month hiatus has not helped to keep that group together for two reasons, I guess. Partly because in that seven months nobody really knew whether it was going to go ahead or not. Some people were less optimistic than others and it was difficult to keep holding meetings and talking to young people about what future strategies one might employ if you were completely uncertain about whether it would actually ever go ahead. So that was one problem. The other problem was the sheer fact that it stopped for six months/seven months means that you're almost into another academic year and a lot of the young people that we had involved were of the upper age range. So some of those, while they were in sixth form then, are now in university and just not available anymore.*

As with Staffordshire, efforts are being made to rebuild participation now that the development is underway once again with a strategy to develop a group of young ambassadors for **myplace**, 'to go out and do the press and the media interviews and maybe doing pieces online for the Young Hackney website'.

For those projects whose progress has been smoother, the trajectory of young peoples' involvement has followed the stage of development but even here it is recognised that the time span from planning stages to opening has implications for maintaining interest and continuity, ('it's about how we keep people engaged, it's almost 2 years since the consultation to say it's going to be built to, publicity is going up now' – Torbay), as well as implying different roles and tasks for young people at different stages.

*And the challenge for young people is involvement for the two years in what is quite a nebulous... in the first instance, the sessions which are involved with the architect and design... once you've got a design and you start building what do you do then, it's 18 months in some cases, which is a long time for a young person so we've got lots of ideas about other challenges, about PR and marketing, visits to schools, interior design and then coming in and making presentations to the main board. (Onside)*

There are also implications for ownership when a new generation of young people inherit facilities, designs and activities in which they have had no originating involvement.

Each project has its own model of participation. Many created a specific youth group to work on the development and to contribute to decision-making – e.g. the 'Bay Six' group in Torbay, a Young People's Development Group in Oldham; a Youth Panel in Norwich, a Members' Committee in

Pegasus. In addition, collaboration with local youth forums, councils and parliaments has been widespread (e.g. Bradford, Hackney and Salmon).

Young people take a variety of roles in decision making and are integral to the possibility of running and developing the activities in the **myplace** buildings. Some organisations (e.g. Barnard Castle) have a fully integrated approach to participation and empowerment with an expectation that young people will be involved and represented in all aspects of the work of the centre including self-directed activities, organising specific events, working as volunteers, participating in training, mentoring other young people, representing the project to outside organisations, fundraising, and contributing to structures of governance. Other projects (e.g. Minehead and Salmon) involve young people mainly at the level of the activities of the centre as ‘members’ but have few young people involved in strategic decision-making:

*We don't have a young person on the board – we ask the question continuously, there are two things, you need the right young person with the right experience. You want someone who is going to enjoy it and really have an input. The young people do talk to Mark all the time about what is going, raising issues. We have a monthly evaluation, where the kids fill in a sheet – with six questions a sort of user evaluation, and they circle a scale one to ten and safety stuff, programmes, youth friendly language, about a 100 filled in a month. (Salmon).*

In Minehead, it is recognised that ‘young people aren’t at the heart at the moment’ and this is explained by the need ‘to have a balance between having what you want and making sure it can work’. It is anticipated that young people’s participation will increase organically over time:

*Worker 1: When you have a project this size you can have a core group who can be influential, the larger you get the more space there is for people not to be involved – is that an accurate reflection.*

*Worker 2: I think that will be a really fluid thing, I think that the core group will grow the more people get involved, getting pulled into the centre, I think that happens already. We just end up talking to all young people but different groups depending on which shift you work.*

In other cases (e.g. Bradford, Dartford, Shoeburyness,) consultation with young people has taken place at all stages of the development but there are as yet no clear structures for young peoples’ participation in decision-making. Bradford has been working particularly through the Young Advisers associated with the scheme nationally. Dartford is particularly targeting vulnerable young people and a shifting population which makes it difficult to maintain participation over a sustained period. In Shoeburyness, there are still questions about what might be the most appropriate structure for youth participation:

*Worker 1: Young people are involved in the planning of the different groups and they are involved in giving tours of the building, giving them a chance to sell the building.*

*Worker 2: it would be nice though to think that this could be a place for young people managed by young people. So maybe a board of young people with some adults as well, how you spend the money, who has the money, hiring and firing.*

*Interviewer: Which you could do in a smaller club, but scale makes it harder to do?*

*Worker 2: It could be done but it would need more work.*

*Interviewer: Have you got plans for that?*

*Worker 1: We are getting a centre council on board evaluating events and suggesting changes. The comments young people are giving we listen to. For example what they think of staff and training needs. The council will be made up of all the clubs that meet here, whether its IAG, sports activities, D of E.*

In Torbay, while the centre is not yet open, it is possible to discern an organic process of development responding to progress and the outlines of a structure are emerging:

*Promoting work is still being undertaken by the Bay Six group who are now splitting into specific groups for different parts of the facility, essentially setting up a number of clubs within the site, for example wheeled sports and outdoor education. There will also be an arts project which is linking up with the Youth Offending Team and targeted youth. The young people have now come to the end of the capital/design projects and are now starting to get involved in management and organisation. Of the small groups operating on the site there will be a young person's representative on the steering group.*

This evolutionary process has taken place in spite of the fact that the Local Authority in Torbay 'wanted Bay Six to be dissolved because it had served its purpose. Some of the original group are now coming back to be part of the other groups. So it has sort of metamorphosed'.

Meanwhile, in Oldham there is a highly structured and clearly delineated role for young people in terms of participation and governance which has operated at all stages of the development of the scheme. The original group was recruited through local youth workers and one of the Onside workers is tasked with maintaining the engagement of the young people involved, working with them in parallel with her work with the centre's management Board with a view to bringing the two groups together at key moments. In line with this, in September 2010, working closer to the time of opening Mahdlo, a 'Meet and Greet' meeting was arranged between the two boards and made the following decisions outlining the powers of the Young People's Development Group:

Young People Development Group to be given minutes of all Board and Steering Group meetings with these being supplied via Positive Steps.

That quarterly meetings will take place between the Board and Young People's Development Group from now onwards.

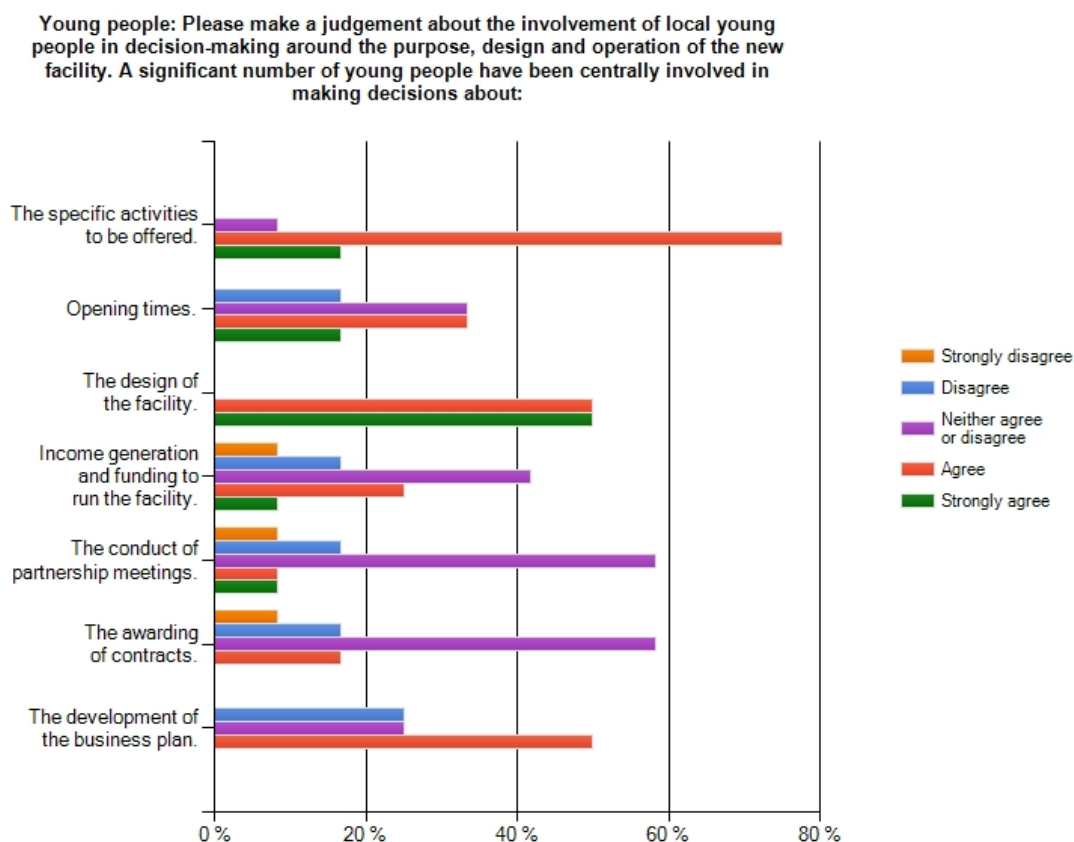
That the Young People's Development Group will be involved with the recruitment and selection process for the Chief Executive and Managers of Mahdlo.

That the Young People's Development Group will be involved with the interior design and specification of the facilities at the club.

That there would be no free memberships or concessions on entry prices for anyone coming to the club but that there would be recognition and 'treats' for club ambassadors who were involved in the early stages of the club's development (Minutes of the Meeting)

The Pegasus Project also has a clear model of empowerment of young people in relation to strategic decision-making. Any young person, from the age of ten and above who has participated in any of the activities of the project can be on a Members' Committee which currently has 33 members and meets monthly. In addition, there are two young trustees, aged 16 and 17 on the management Board. Legally, these young trustees are not allowed to carry financial responsibility, but apart from that, they have full voting rights on the Board.

**Figure 1: Young people’s involvement in decision-making**



Results from the 2011 Annual Survey underlined the level of participation (see above) – and highlighted some areas where young people had been significantly involved, and others where they contributed less to the process. The later included:

- income generation and funding to run the facility.
- the conduct of partnership meetings.
- the awarding of contracts.

While respondents have not necessarily disagreed in these areas there are a significant number of ‘Neither agree or disagree’.

Overall, the evidence suggests that after the initial flush of work and enthusiasm for young people’s participation in decision-making at all levels associated with the development of the buildings, continuity has been patchy, particularly with regard to the different issues confronted in bringing the scheme to fruition and then settling into sustainable management. The time lag between the initial creative input and the process of managing building development and the implementation of ideas in those buildings which have opened resulted in discontinuity in the processes and levels of youth participation. The consequence has included temporary suspension of young people’s decision-



making groups, marginalisation of the question of youth participation as workers focused their attention upon issues associated with building work, finance, and the maintenance of organisational networks, or the relegation of participation to low-level decision-making associated with activities and timetables. Only in a minority of cases is the question of full youth participation in decision-making and management being carried forward into the period of establishment of the centres. As such, there is a danger that unless this question is specifically addressed by workers when centres are opened, then the impetus will be lost in the face of the demands of day-to-day management of large and complex facilities.

### Outcome 1:

**More young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities:**

#### Offer:

**attractive and accessible location, building design, and overall offer so young people feel they have a place they want to go**

#### Community:

**changing parents' and communities' perceptions of young people and improving intergenerational relationships.**

The **myplace** centres that are open are popular and well used as far as resources will allow. Few statistics are available as yet, but Norwich, which has been opened longest, recorded over 9,500 young people attending more than 25 night club events. The 2010 Halloween event alone attracted 1,200 young people and over the 2010 summer holiday period, approximately 450 different young people attended Saturday sessions have involved 150 young people. In Chesterfield, the first monthly monitoring form covering the period May to December 2010, records a low of 243 attendees in the month of opening, May 2010, and a high of 956 in July 2010 with October and November recording 738 and 768 respectively. The figure slumped to 275 in December, but this could be expected given the weather during that month and the annual Christmas celebrations. The Salmon centre claims an attendance of between 500 and 600 per week. Of these numbers, the worker assessed that 49% of usage is by the 13-19 age group across all activities, structured and unstructured. In Hinckley, membership numbers have increased from 300 to 1,000 with the opening of the **myplace** centre and Thursday night attendances have increased from 40 to 250. However, there is a caveat in that the largest user group is in the 8-12 age range - outside the remit of **myplace**.

It is not yet possible to draw firm conclusions or to find statistically significant patterns from attendance figures. However, anecdotal evidence from the case study material suggests that there is enormous enthusiasm on the part of young people, volunteers, workers, parents and representatives of local communities for the projects, high levels of participation in the activities on offer, and a sense of pride in the quality of the designs enhanced by the contribution which young people have made to planning and design. The opened projects seem to be well accessed by young people although in rural areas – particularly Minehead and Torbay there are continuing questions about public transport and accessibility for young people in outlying areas. In Bradford, not yet open, there have been some



concerns raised about safety because of the proximity of the centre to a red light district, but these concerns seem to have been largely allayed with emphasis that the site was chosen by young people themselves.

The opened **myplace** centres appear to have affected a culture-change in their localities in the use of buildings, with a wider constituency of young people using them than had hitherto been the case in the old youth clubs and with evidence of reduced anti-social behaviour (Hackney, Shoeburyness). An incident in Norwich gave rise to ‘some concerns about safety’ associated with the use of open access areas and gangs congregating. This caused the building to be temporarily closed while alterations were made, but in other centres the experience has so far been positive. As the workers in Minehead explained:

*Worker 1: I am pleasantly surprised though, we talked a lot beforehand about what we would do if fights broke out and bullying but touch wood nothing so far, a couple of minor incidents, nothing around drugs, I thought there would be tensions between ages but nothing has transpired.*

*Worker 2: I was waiting for the local older people to come in and complain, but whenever an adult comes in they always say how amazing the place is.*

The experience of Shoeburyness suggests that the focus on ‘positive activity’ has demonstrable outcomes for the culture of a facility:

*Worker 1: We certainly have gained our remit was insular just here, now it is much wider.*

*Worker 2: I know we have lost some of the young boys that were in a lot of trouble with the police, drugs, gangs – they used to come in the old centre and keep a lot of our other young people out – but they don’t come in here.’*

*Worker 1: ...now you meet the young person at the door and ask what do you want, we have a fantastic facility here, what do you want, how can we facilitate that, there is always an output – working towards an aim always, it’s not open ended.*

*Worker 3: From now from when we started young people are starting to get the gist of that, they aren’t just coming in to hang out, they know they are going to come in and do something; climbing wall or mechanics or something.*

*Worker 2: They can [still] just come in here and sit down and chat to their friends.*

This is also evident in Milton Gardens, Hackney:

*[Previously, the organisation] were mainly targeting difficult to reach children and that meant that the evening sessions were rather dominated by that group. So that meant that a lot of other young people didn’t feel that they could go there. I think that has been turned around. That organisation is still delivering some services during the day but the evening session is run very much by the youth service. Two new youth workers, one of whom certainly is, I think, very good with the kids, very proactive, he’s the sort of guy who if kids are hanging round outside will go out and say, “Come on, guys, are you in or are you out?” And will challenge their behaviour.*

*...I don’t think it’s about segregating, I think it’s just about not allowing one group to dominate. I think the group of young people that one now gets in the evening is quite a*

*mixture. Certainly the anecdotal evidence [is] that there has been less incidences reporting antisocial behaviour around that estate... (Consultant)*

The participation of young people within the **myplace** centres appears to have had an impact upon the presence of young people on local streets in some cases. In Minehead, young people indicated that they might be on the streets skateboarding or drinking alcohol if they weren't in the Minehead Eye. In Norwich, the police reported no crime on the evening of the Halloween event and during the period of closure, two youth gangs who had previously been using the building relocated to a local shopping centre increasing reports of anti-social behaviour and theft. This encouraged the Police to pay for some of the modifications to the building to ensure it re-opened as soon as possible.

In very few centres, notably those run by Onside, is the work restricted entirely to young people and so, as the Salmon and Hinckley figures suggest, increased usage is not necessarily just by young people. Nevertheless the evidence suggests that the centres are places where young people want to go and which engage them. In Chesterfield, the worker is delighted with the ways in which young people's participation in the planning and development has translated into their use of the building: *'Where my office is I know exactly what is going on and just to see them enjoying the space is fantastic. It's been really good'*.

In Minehead, two of the young people who enjoy skateboarding discussed the value of the centre to them and others:

*YP1: Everybody uses it, it doesn't really matter what age you are – it's got a nice café.*

*YP2: Cos when we are at school and then we get from 4pm, from 10-4 anyone comes in.*

*YP1: like mother and toddlers...*

*YP2: ... people come in and teach us to do more stuff and now we help the little kids who want to learn to skate – it's just fun.*

*Interviewer: So would you have been out skating on the seafront at 7.00pm on a Friday?*

*YP2: Maybe, but in here we know it is safe and it is made for skating, bmxing, but the seafront is for walking and there wasn't any ramps.*

*Interviewer - Have you got mates who aren't into skating and do they come here?*

*YP1: One or two, if we come down they might come down and play on the PS3 watch us skate, use the café.*

*Interviewer: Do you know of young people who aren't into skating who come here?*

*YP2: If they don't skate, they come to the café – there isn't anyone who doesn't come because they don't want to skate, everyone I know, knows about and have been here at least once or twice...*

*YP1: This is the best place to come, chill out, my little brother can come in and ride his bike why my dad sits up stairs and watches. My grandma and granddad come in here sometimes and have a coffee and watch me.*

*Interviewer: A good place to get a cup of tea?*

*YP2: Yeah comfy as well.*

Other young people in Minehead discussed the quality of the centre in similar positive terms:

*YP3: Young people if they go to somewhere like this they are less likely to start drinking under age – stop doing stuff that is a threat to anyone else and maybe if the older generation come down and see what is happening it might change their perception anyway.*

*YP4: Well they do anyway...*

*YP3: It's good though because quite a lot of people who were against it for such a long time like older people, we saw them all up here with the grandchildren and children and getting them memberships and stuff – I think they just wanted something to moan about to be honest but now it is there they are using it. Because Minehead is such a small place with not much going on this is what people have wanted for such a long time....*

*Interviewer: What do you think of the location?*

*YP4: Great, just out of the town, not too close to make too much noise, it's not in the way, it's not an eyesore, it's not noisy, on an industrial park. Near McDonalds...*

*YP3: It's a good place to meet, there's the recording studio too...*

*YP4: I sat down there the other day with my laptop and did some work.*

*Interviewer - Do you think more kids will get involved?*

*YP4: Some of the kids you might expect to mess around coming and respecting the place, they respect what's going on.*

In Torbay it was suggested that skateboarding there involves parents as well as young people and this enables that part of the project to 'look after itself'.

Efforts have been made in most centres to make the buildings and facilities accessible to the wider community. Members of local community groups have been consulted and provided with information about the developments (e.g. Hackney, Pegasus, Salmon, Sutton Life) although gaining community participation, as described in the interim report, has not been an easy process. In Bradford for instance, a local community meeting was arranged in November 2010 and nobody turned up. In the pre-opening stage, community relationships have proceeded mainly through contact with pre-existing community groups, for example in Bradford's case with BMDC's Neighbourhood Teams, and in the case of Hackney with local Tenants Groups. There was some evidence of **myplace** centres gaining as a consequence of negative decisions in relation to other youth provision, as well as some active local resentment regarding the ways in which other youth provision was being affected by the concentration of resources upon the **myplace** centres. ..

Once buildings are opened, there are fewer problems in establishing community engagement although encouraging local commitment and a sense of ownership, offering a community service, and developing intergenerational harmony and communication requires what one of the workers in Minehead described as 'subtle effort'. The success of such effort is evident in Minehead as members of a local community group 'Transitions', working with a remit of improving environment, locality and community understand the importance of young people in efforts to improve society: *The community are young people and there are local implications way beyond the current young people, bringing*

*people together on these issues. It's all about people working together and trying to be more balanced community and more balanced approach to life (Member of Transitions).*

Sometimes more focused and considered project work is appropriate to achieve the desired outcomes relating to community. There is particular evidence of such focused work encouraging intergenerational understanding as a contribution to community in the Pegasus Youth Theatre project. Workers described one of their drama projects around this issue which is being adopted as the basis for future intergenerational work:

*We did one project which was looking at King Lear but we called it Caring for Lear and it was about Lear and the whole thing of dementia and aging parents, and you know, how do children deal with aging parents, and aging parents deal with their children. And the company of young people who did that were age 14-19 and they worked, when we were sort of researching it, and starting it, they worked with a group called Age Well Arts who are a group of elders, and they did joint workshops looking at the opening scene, the Lear scene where the daughters have to justify how much they love him. And it was brilliant because the older people played the daughters and the younger people played Lear, and there was a huge conversation about how older and younger people are seen and stereotyped.*

The Sutton Life Centre plans to focus on parents and communities at weekends devising family and intergenerational activities alongside sport and climbing wall activities for young people and with a backdrop of informal café and library use. A plan to organise 'community Tours' of the facilities on Saturday morning will make parents aware of what young people are being taught when they come to the building. The manager in Sutton Life Centre perceives the building overall in 'two modes' – one as a regional educational facility, and the other as a community resource.

In encouraging community use, there is an ever-present danger that the current priority towards the needs and interests of young people will be lost and that young people will be decentred. The figures available for Chesterfield and Hinckley demonstrate a tendency in this direction. In Oldham, there are plans to have a mix of age-ranges of young people using the new centre, and a determination that the local community should feel a sense of ownership, but there will be 'no community offer': *'We've got several golden rules and one of them is that if you want to have community use and make it rubbish then get the community in and if you want to try and marginalise young people get the community in because the two don't go together'*. Here, participation by members of the local community will be entirely as volunteers and contributors to the work of the centre with young people.

## Outcome 2:

More young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development.

### Reach:

maximising reach and focusing on the most disadvantaged.

### Barriers:

overcoming local barriers and attracting and engaging young people to take part in positive activities.

### Quality:

ensuring the effectiveness of provision in improving young people's outcomes, including quality of the workforce.

While **myplace** projects facilitate the participation of more young people participating in positive leisure time activities within the locale of those projects, these young people are not necessarily disadvantaged. However, the meaning of 'disadvantage' is fluid and the subject is complex. For instance, some of the new facilities are attracting young people who are less disadvantaged in terms of social background: *'And now we've got boys from the grammar school coming along who would never have come before, accessing D of E, basketball...'* (Shoeburyness). Young people who spoke to the researchers included those from sixth form colleges (Minehead) and in one project (Salmon) it was suggested that about 50% of structured sessions were accessed by members of a small Asian community *'not necessarily wealthy, but ambitious'*. However, it was also pointed out that such young people might have unidentified disadvantages, including personal disadvantages such as shyness: *'we are doing more positive work to build their self-esteem'* (Shoeburyness).

It was also apparent that when less disadvantaged young people, in terms of social background, educational achievement, future prospects and ambition, become involved in the project, they are often likely to be keen in terms of volunteering and making a contribution to the work of the centre, sometimes with the less advantaged. Thus young people in Minehead making use of the centre, who were also Scouts, were helping with younger groups, while some taking advantage of the facilities at Shoeburyness were volunteering to help with disabled groups as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award. In this way, such young people themselves make a contribution to addressing disadvantage through the centres.

Some projects have been conceived and developed around specific disadvantage. So for instance, Chesterfield Youth Theatre focuses upon young people with disabilities, while New Horizon Youth Centre and Stafford work with youth homelessness. In these projects **myplace**, both in its development phase and in its realisation, provides the means whereby more of these particularly disadvantaged young people might become involved in positive activities, and there is more scope for broadening the range of such activities. This has encouraged further commitment from the young people concerned. For example:

*Now have that new music studio but it goes beyond because we've been able to bring in some other projects. There's this great project called the Mouse Trap Project and they*



*funded a worker of theirs to come in here and work with young people to write lyrics, to put into music and to record it. So young people were fascinated by it and they turned up for those sessions and stuff like that. I mean, it's just things like that that are wonderful.  
(New Horizon Youth Centre)*

However, there was some scepticism about the long-term policy approach to young people who are disadvantaged from the Chesterfield project:

*There's absolutely no point in keep having new projects when you've got your client group which is for us mainly young people and disadvantaged young people with disabilities and at the end of the day their needs are the same whether it's now or those needs have been the same for the whole of my career which has been sort of 20 years you know what I mean? And you think well how many times can you keep changing what you mean by working with young people with disabilities, they just want to lead reasonable lives. So yeah it is a bit frustrating when they say 'we'll fund something new' and it's a bit short sighted I think.*

Such a criticism resonates with the views held by a number of **myplace** workers and managers that identifying and targeting disadvantage is not the best way to go about dealing with difficulties and problems associated with youth. For those taking this approach, (including Barnard Castle, Onside Oldham and Salmon) young people themselves suffer disadvantage simply by virtue of being young, and the **myplace** development is one means of improving that condition. As such, the initial approach adopted is one associated with universalism in youth work in which the offer of accessible, interesting activities supported by sympathetic workers provides a context in which any young person might be helped to identify and address issues and problems in their lives:

*We are starting from an arbitrary position of offering something for everybody.  
(Minehead)*

*You can start to do this work once you have got a universal service. That means you have got them engaged and you have built relationships with them and then you can start to do this work...all of the [Onside] **myplace** centres are going to be able to address these issues but they are not going to open by focusing on them. They are going to open by engaging with as many young people as possible as we can from the catchment areas and the target areas that we know they need to draw them in, and once we've got them engaged and participating, then target these services at them but once they are in a safe environment that they respect and trust and are confident in being in and they know the adults that are in that environment so it will come second. (Oldham).*

This approach, associated with generic youth work, involves separating 'problem-focused' work from informal educational work based on relationships fostered through the medium of young people's engagement with activities and commitment to a club, a centre or an agency. It is understood in these projects that systems of monitoring will reveal that they are indeed addressing specific disadvantages within their universal approach. In Salmon, information collected by the workers suggests that:

*In terms of coming from a deprived area 94.8% come from one of the top 20% most deprived areas. Most are SE16 and SE1 and they are hugely dominant and some from across the river, Lewisham and Deptford, Camberwell but mostly from within a mile radius... the average of the open session is, in terms of class 90% C1-E1.*



In Oldham, the project is not yet open and therefore such evidence is not available. However, '73% of the kids in Bolton come from the 5 inner wards in the town which rank in the top 50 most deprived wards in the country' and

*... we're hoping that our new centres are going to be better than Bolton in terms of measuring impact and we do have to develop that. A young person that spends their leisure time constructively for 3 or 4 years in a Youth Zone will have a 10, 15, 20% less chance of being NEET or pregnant at an early age, have taken drugs, entered the criminal justice system and we believe that is the case; I know it is the case but I just don't have the evidence. (Onside).*

Although their commitment to universalism is central, these **myplace** projects do deal with disadvantage through a number of strategies for removing barriers to participation.

Firstly, barriers are addressed through strategic planning. Specific local barriers have been considered relating to the young people within the catchment area. So, in rural areas for instance, limited public transport is understood as indicative of the disadvantage suffered by geographically isolated young people and this has involved **myplace** managers in negotiations not only with transport providers but also with local authority transport planning processes. While transport questions feature across all **myplace** projects in the planning relating to accessibility, it is a central and continuing concern, involving policy decisions and partnership negotiations in projects such as Minehead Eye, Torbay Parkfield and Barnard Castle Hub and Carlisle. Other general disadvantages are also addressed at a strategic level. For example, individuals with specialist knowledge have been approached to contribute to the development and management projects. For instance in Onside Carlisle,

*the head teacher from the local special needs school is going to be joining the board but she's not joining the board because she's from a school, she's joining the board because of her expertise about young people with disabilities and her safeguarding experience.*

Secondly, the question of work with young people suffering particular disadvantage can be addressed as an 'add-on' to the mainstream work. In Oldham, this takes the form of specialist workers for this feature of the scheme:

*The business plan does... include the provision of a Mentoring Co-ordinator from day one who will be responsible for replicating BLGC's award winning mentoring programme in their area and working with children at risk of crisis. Every Youth Zone will also recruit an Outreach and Inclusion Officer who will develop targeted work.*

In Minehead it takes the form of special events, including for young people with physical and mental disabilities, but even here there is some discomfort with the question of targeting:

*We have intentions to do projects and stuff but again, I guess for us it is difficult, focusing on disadvantaged because it feels kind of a bit weird in a way in that all of our courses which we have run have been accessible through the Give it A Go funding have also been open to anyone else to attend because we don't want to pinpoint people and say, you're especially disadvantaged.*

Thirdly, all the 'universal' projects studied adopt a system of 'signposting':

*'Signposting will be a key element of our targeted service' (Oldham).*

Such projects use the trusting relationships developed in an open approach to working with young people in the context of leisure and informal educational activity to identify any problems or issues which individuals might be experiencing that require expert intervention. Successful 'signposting' requires of the workers a good understanding the services offered by related agencies. Establishing partnerships and a network of professional contacts thus , becomes a key feature of the work.

*Young people are accessing a universal service largely, but where they are identified as having particular needs those needs can be supported by a range of different agencies.  
(Torbay)*

In the **myplace** centres, there has been encouragement to co-locate related services and specialist support within the buildings. However, those centres which self-consciously adopt the universalist approach have preferred to prioritise the positive activities function of the buildings as the basis not only for developing relationships with young people, but also for offering opportunities for informal and formal education. They consider services relating to disadvantage as a separate and additional feature to their mainstream work.

Between those whose work is drawn from targeting specific disadvantages, and those who adopt a universalist stance, are those projects which have accepted some degree of targeting specific disadvantages, and disadvantaged groups, in their work.

Most projects have some awareness of the disadvantages associated with disability and wish to compensate for in their work. Disability featured in most case study discussions with workers in terms of the quality of space offered (Shoeburyness) the development of specialist groups, activities, projects and events (Sutton Life, Staffordshire), the question of access to work (Norwich) and partnership arrangements (Sutton Life, Norwich) . Funding was considered a key area of concern for work with disabled young people (Bradford, Chesterfield, Shoeburyness, Staffordshire, Sutton Life) with specific mention of the Aiming High for Disabled Young People and the associated loss of funding mentioned in the case Chesterfield and Bradford.

Specific disadvantages mentioned as the focus of targeted work were:

- Poverty and social class (Minehead, Salmon, Staffordshire and Torbay);
- Gender (Pegasus, Minehead, Torbay);
- Ethnicity (Bradford, Hackney, Pegasus, Salmon, Shoeburyness).

Issues targeted in associated with these disadvantages include:

- Youth Offending (Minehead, Norwich);
- Health (Staffordshire);
- Homelessness (New Horizon Youth Centre, Staffordshire);
- Youth Caring (Pegasus, Shoeburyness)
- Diversity, difference and territoriality (Bradford, Hackney).

Many of these disadvantages and issues are associated with young people who are considered 'hard to reach' and young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

## Hard to reach and barriers to access

Overall, a range of strategies address questions of disadvantage, barriers to participation, young people who are considered hard to reach and issues associated with NEET. These are as follows:

**Inclusivity in conception and design.** This is apparent in those projects which centre a disadvantage such as disability (Chesterfield), or issues such as territoriality (Bradford and Hackney) or health (Barnard Castle). The intention is to model the projects and activities to enable young people to move beyond the disadvantage or issue, to co-operate around commonalities rather than difference and in this way to encourage integration within the youth population. So for example, in dealing with ethnic difference and conflict, Bradford Culture Fusion has chosen a neutral site, accessible to young people from a variety of districts in the city and stressed within its range of activities the dynamism of difference and the importance of question of global responsibility. In a different way, Barnard Castle Hub addresses issues of health through its activities, its treatment room and spa and its kitchen facilities.

**Social inclusion strategy.** This involves the use of systems to manage equality. In Pegasus it is deployed through a points system associated with registration:

*We have 2 registration events a year, which we invite anybody, it goes out in our brochure, so you can pick up the brochure and know, ok, there's a registration in June, and there's a registration in January. It goes out to our mailing list of 15,000 and they're invited to come, and we say to them that if any of the projects are oversubscribed we put into practice our social inclusion policy, and we explain to them why we have one, which is about reflecting the diversity of the community that we're based in. And so what we do is award a point for ethnic minorities, we award a point for a disability, and we award a point for OX4, which is the area local to Pegasus. ... and we also look at gender to see if we can get a gender mix. And the community accepts that. And if it was all equal we wouldn't need to put into place our social inclusion policy, but because the majority that are able to access theatre and the arts, tend to be from a specific background, you have to work a bit harder to get other people in, and that's what we do.*

In Minehead Eye, subsidised access is available for young people eligible for free school meals. In Shoeburyness planning to increase social inclusion is based on needs assessment around Putnam's (2000) concept of 'social capital' which suggests that in recent years, civic engagement and involvement has declined as leisure and social activity has become increasingly focused on the private sphere.

**Organisational Structure.** Aware of the potential of sporting activities to become male dominated (see Abulhawa 2008), and of work with girls and young women to become victim-focused, decision-makers in Torbay have devised a three part structure for developing the work – wheeled sports, outdoor education and arts. While all young people will be encouraged to take part in all aspects of the centre's facilities, there is an acknowledgement that many young women are arts- rather than sports-focused. At the same time they are ensuring that the question of gender is one which is addressed in the process of management.

**Outreach work.** Projects who adopt this approach have either recognised the possibilities of exclusion in the features and location of their **myplace** centre or they are planning to use their monitoring procedures to identify groups which are not using the facilities fully. In Pegasus,

*Targets are monitored and there are specific outreach projects which go to some of the estates and areas where young people are less likely to access the Arts. The schools projects are aimed at schools where young people haven't been coming to Pegasus again focussing on those young people who might not access Pegasus. Places are kept back on each project to allow room for young people from the schools projects to then get involved in Pegasus projects/productions. So far there has been a 10% take up of projects through work in schools, which also brings in support from parents who had perhaps never seen their children perform on the stage before.*

The Oldham project will use their membership scheme, and the details required for participation in outdoor activities and residentials, to collect basic information including address, next of kin, and ethnicity. Outreach work will proceed in association with partner services once the main facility is established. Outreach work will be undertaken by specialist staff in Hackney and through the volunteer mentors in Oldham.

**Specialist Projects and Groups.** Most projects pay attention to the needs of specific groups of young people through the provision of short and long term events, activities and specialist group work. Other than disability, examples include young people excluded from school, those at risk of offending and young carers. Devising particular activities and projects for specific groups involves firstly identifying which group needs the specialist attention, secondly working in partnership with associated services and thirdly paying attention to the details of the particular needs of the young people involved. So for example, a Pegasus worker described the considerations in relation to targeting young carers as follows:

*Working with the young carers' team, the young carers' project managers we have in the area, making referrals for those young people who interested in the arts, but wouldn't access it because we can't get out. So providing transport, breaking down financial barriers, it would be a free project. Meeting with families to arrange how can this person be at Pegasus for two days, what can we do within your family to support that happening. And really just a much higher level of support for those young people to access.*

*It's really a daunting thing for somebody, especially a more than usual vulnerable young person, to come to a new place, and to participate in something new. So whether that be to meet and have chocolate with someone before, to meet the tutor, to see the space, for either myself or are participation officer MJ to be there in their first session, to break down barriers of transport getting them here.*

Undertaking such work thoroughly and at a high quality is clearly resource intensive and this is a significant consideration in the context of limited and insecure revenue funding.

**Programming.** In some projects, particular attention is given to programming in order to facilitate work with disadvantaged groups. Structurally there has been a tendency to undertake targeted and specialist work during the day (e.g. Hackney, Hinckley, Salmon, Shoeburyness) and given the nature of particular disadvantages, such as school exclusion, that makes sense. However, it does underline the emergent split between generic universalist and specialist approaches to young people. In some circumstances, within the generic provision, it is apparent that specific groups will be more inclined towards some aspects of the programme rather than others. This can create some complications of approach as in the Salmon project:

*It's the new groups, like the Asian families who see a good opportunity. I thought... the bulk of our young people 65% white working class at our open club and then you've got mostly Black and mixed heritage, but the kids who access the extra activity like the homework clubs are Asian and Black African. If we really targeted, what can we do to get the white working class kids to the more structured sessions, you would see them in the arts and sports but not in the homework clubs. This club will stop though because we don't have the staff.*

Programming has also been used in Minehead where a girls' only night has been introduced to create some balance and also a better atmosphere for girls wanting to use skate boards:

*Interviewer: Is it mostly boys?*

*YP1: Last night it was girls only – we weren't even allowed in, we couldn't even watch. Some girls feel like intimidated. If they fall over we laugh, that's why they have the only girls' night – we know the girls who come in and we said they should come along to some of the skate school sessions. We were told to come out and help teach, because there is nothing to laugh at. But we came down and we weren't allowed.*

In Pegasus, there is a sense that those who are most disadvantaged are also those who find it difficult to commit and so drop-in provision has been built into the organisation's programme.

**Partnership Working.** Working in partnership with other agencies enables **myplace** projects to offer opportunities for specialist and disadvantaged groups such as young offenders to access the activities and facilities of the project in ways that pay attention to their specific needs. Occasionally, workers indicated that the individual young people involved might in any case be accessing the facilities, but the partnership work enables the activities to be used specifically by these disadvantaged young people:

*There is a group called the anti-social behaviour panel we can sit on, although it sounds dreadful, the one here works very well because of the small community, so the PCSO's the youth workers housing association, various different people are represented and it's a meeting every 6 weeks. There aren't any people in West Somerset with an Asbo, but there are young people heading in that direction, so I think through that we will definitely pick up on those young people who are teetering on the edge, they will get directed to us and we will do positive activities with them...I guess we'll just give it a go, we probably have...picked up some of these young people anyway. (Minehead).*

*Interviewer: In terms of the hard to reach and the NEET, while you are not excluding those group..*

*Worker 1: We are still reaching them they come in during the day to meet the PA's or the Skills for Life.*

*Worker 2: They do attend some of the clubs like the football.(Shoeburyness)*

Some partnership work associated with addressing issues of disadvantage is threatened by changes in the funding climate for partner organisations. This is having a particular impact on the health zone originally planned in Staffordshire in association with the PCT.



## NEET

All projects are working with a range of issues associated with education, training and employment for young people. In a climate of rising youth unemployment, this is understood as a crucial generic element of the work and also a key feature of work around disadvantage. As such, projects can discuss the ways in which their activities in themselves foster skills development, and the ways in which youth participation both enables young people to make a contribution integral to the project and encourages the development of personal skills and confidence so necessary when they seek employment. In Barnard Castle for instance, the music facility will be run entirely by young people for young people and in the process young people will learn specific skills associated with music as well as with running a facility. In Sutton, it is anticipated that the three main strands of work developed – citizenship, life skills and culture will all be based on the principle not only of youth participation, but of youth direction.

Youth participation in the development, management and running of **myplace** projects fosters not only the confidence associated with such responsibility, but also organisational skills. Opportunities to volunteer offer an additional dimension to this and in some schemes (Barnard Castle) participation offers opportunities to train either as a youth worker or as a specialist worker in relation to the variety of activities on offer. This is a time-honoured process associated with ‘growing’ youth workers within youth clubs.

Most projects are keen to develop specialist projects and schemes relevant to the employment prospects for young people. Sometimes these introduce new ideas and skills sets which would not normally be within the sphere of understanding of young people in order to encourage creative thinking about the jobs market. For example in Pegasus:

*Worker 1: We're working with a local pupil referral unit, Meadowbrook, to start delivering a project at the end of February, although we have been delivering projects, there's kind of a new strand at the end of February. Working with six young people, six year 11 students, that looks at them because they'll be leaving school, and tries to build on what Meadowbrook is doing already and provide them with the skills they need to leave school and go into the world of work. So whether that be looking, using drama to look at interview techniques and things like that.*

*And we'll do similar kind of activities that they're doing on course, we might do some street dance, we might do some technical sessions, some lighting and sound as well, to introduce them to the world of working theatre as well.*

*Worker 2: That it's not just as an actor.*

*Worker 1: Absolutely. You say that to a group of young people, what's the jobs here at the theatre...an actor. And that's where they stop.*

At other times, (New Horizon Youth Centre, Salmon), they concentrate on the development of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy or in some cases, ESOL.

Mostly projects ensure the quality of what they are offering educationally through structured programmes and often in association with the skills offered by specialists from other organisations. So for example:



*They come in once a week, they're mentored by the participation officer, we do a whole training on health and safety, safeguarding young people, expectations of you as a youth assistant. They then have 3 mentoring meetings during the course of the project to look at what they're doing well, what they maybe need to challenge themselves on. The tutors give feedback and they give them space to maybe run games, warm ups, exercises. And so that's about they're getting paid work and hopefully on their CVs they're going to feel like actually I might go and do a degree in applied theatre, I might become a community theatre artist. So that's all about the youth assistance. (Pegasus)*

Working closely with other, specialist agencies, enables **myplace** projects to offer a service to young people which is tailored to specific needs. This is particularly evident in the opportunities for disabled young people developed in Norwich:

*We are pleased to recently partner with MINT, a service based at OPEN managed by Norwich City College. It is the UK's first recruitment employment agency working with young people between the ages of 16-25 years with disabilities. The service started at the beginning of September and was created as a result of identifying the need to support young people with disabilities as they make the transition from school into the work place. The service is located in our conferencing wing at the venue. The young people accessing the provision receive training to help them access employment, support in the workplace and while they are receiving training at the venue the young people will be running the conferencing wing as part of a social enterprise to help prepare them for the world of work.*

The quality of the educational and training opportunities on offer through structured programmes is frequently validated through accreditation. This is understood as particularly important for young people who might have little otherwise to demonstrate their achievements, especially to prospective employers:

*That computer training room that you saw we used a tiny bit of the room with a few computers there... We have 10 lap tops in use there and we are securing accreditation for young people which is, I think, for young people who come here with few qualifications to leave the door after maybe three months of working with us with some certificates in their portfolio – it makes all the difference. (New Horizon Youth Centre)*

However, the introduction of structured, curriculum-based learning is not without detractors, particularly with regard to those projects which are working within a tradition of youth work:

*There is a perceived pressure on projects to become YAFS [Youth Achievement Foundation] which is coming from the Department for Education. They have funded UK Youth. They think they are successful. If **myplace** buildings are sitting empty in the day they let UK Youth come in and run them. The Salmon project looked at the original YAF in Scunthorpe but decided it wasn't for us and it wasn't youth work.*

*The building is now being let to organisations to come in and deliver alternative curriculum projects but there is a view that this is not youth work. (Salmon)*

This highlights the continuing tension in work with young people, which extends beyond the immediate **myplace** setting, between universal and targeted approaches, between process and outcome-based learning and the distinctive methodologies which are used to address questions of disadvantage

among young people. Insofar as the judgement of quality is most easily measured through processes such as accreditation and targeted work, then it is likely to be difficult for those espousing the process-based youth work approach to compete in terms of empirical evidence. Yet the majority of those leading the **myplace** development are youth workers from within the latter tradition. As such, it is possible that to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work in **myplace** in terms of disadvantage, they are being required to move outside of the terms of their distinctive professional knowledge, to the detriment of their capacity to address questions of NEET in a manner which includes all approaches responsive to the needs of the young people in question

**Outcome 3:**  
**More young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable.**

**Co-location:**  
**delivery partnerships enable integrated service delivery models that make advice and guidance services more attractive and accessible to young people.**

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) is intrinsic to the work of all **myplace** centres, but to different degrees. It is structured differently into the work according to the nature of the project and the philosophy of practice adopted by the centre. So for instance, in the traditional youth work approach, IAG is offered in the context of a developing professional relationship between the young person and worker in the longer term of practice. It is in the first instance interpersonal and informal and only in relation to serious issues outside the expertise of youth workers does it lead to signposting and referral to specialist services which are located elsewhere. In Oldham for example, it is recognised that some young people will want to use the centre only for activities: activities are used to draw in young people, and then IAG follows as it emerges in conversation with young people and in the context of their participation in activities. That is reflected in the way in which drop-in and membership operates.

In contrast, there is also a long tradition of centres working with young people facing particular problems and using interpersonal and educational youth work methods to encourage them to both address those problems and also to move beyond them by developing greater personal agency. So for instance, young people who present as homeless to a centre such as New Horizon Youth Centre, will be firstly helped to deal with the immediate crisis of homelessness, and thereafter will be encouraged through participation in the activities of the project and interaction with its workers to address other issues such as illiteracy and drug taking which are related to their homelessness. It is recognised here that young people might present to the centre in the first instance only in order to solve their immediate problem and that encouraging further participation requires a different type of follow-up approach.

Between these two 'ideal type' traditions of practice there are various hybrid models which tend to operate in reality in most projects. So for instance, in Oldham, there is a supplementary mentoring scheme, an intention that some activities will be structured around 'issues' and an overarching network of partnership with related agencies to inform the work, while in New Horizon Youth Centre, there is a range of activities on offer which can be accessed by local young people. Other centres include IAG within their work in various combinations of these approaches. While some include co-

location of activities and IAG services, this is not necessarily considered to be the most practical, or indeed the best approach in the context of any given local scheme and projects have included IAG with specific reference to what makes sense from the perspective of the tradition in which they are working, and from the reality of the context in which they are developing.

A number of models of practice can be identified from the **myplace** schemes which appear with different degrees of emphasis in different projects. Most projects make use of more than one model.

**Model One: Integral IAG.** As indicated above, IAG is integrated into traditional youth work approaches. This is an activities-centred model in which IAG follows from the participation in activities and the trusting relationships which young people form with youth workers through that contact. In this sense, it is primarily young person centred as opposed to ‘youth-issue’ centred, and responds to young people’s needs as and when they emerge or are articulated. Any structured advice and guidance is incorporated into activities programmes or devised as an extra ‘arm’ of the main project. This is the model traditionally used in the Bolton Lads and Girls Club which has influenced all the Onside projects, including Oldham Mahdlo:

*Onside Worker: But in terms of priorities the universal service is the thing that we’re advocating the youth zones get right straight away rather than targeted work. We’re not saying on day one start doing sexual health clinics and I was just explaining that it will come but it will be universal first and then targeted.*

*Chief Executive: Yeah and these are all key elements to your sustainability because you’ve got to be there and successful in meeting the needs of ordinary kids and making the place atmospheric and vibrant and somewhere that is valued and those are the specific things you have to do to achieve that and those I would imagine will be the big focus of our staff in the first year. But as a consequence of being successful at that you know that is where we really believe that you have just as big an impact on those issues as doing specific work around NEET prevention and all the rest of it...*

It is also the principal model used in other centres operating a classic youth work approach, including Barnard Castle and Salmon. Even in projects where other models predominate, there is evidence that an informal approach to IAG is considered integral to the contact between workers and young people via the engagement of young people with the activities. So in Minehead for instance: ‘*We spend a lot of time sitting and talking to young people who come in and use the centre*’. The young people who help voluntarily with the activities also consider informal IAG to be part of their responsibility in that role:

*Sixth Form Student: When I am helping the younger kids they might get scared or something and they might start talking, this kid started telling me about his holiday and that.. they start to put their trust in you and talk to you I am pretty sure if they had a problem they would be comfortable to tell you.*

There is also some evidence to suggest that insofar as young people identify with, and use the centres primarily to meet their leisure needs and their interest in particular activities, they would prefer to have structured IAG categorised separately and not associated with the centre:

*Interviewer: If you had personal problems or things like that is Minehead EYE the kind of place you would go?*

*Sixth form student 1: No not for me but that’s my personality....*

*Interviewer: Would you want to see other services in there?*

*Sixth Form Student 2: They had the sexual health clinic come down and they had loads of visits – just for a laugh!*

This suggests that the combination of IAG services and facilities for positive activities is not necessarily a straightforward matter and that any measure of the extent of use of such services needs to be treated with some caution, particularly in the context of a project whose predominant attraction for young people is one of positive activities.

**Model 2: Issue-based IAG.** Issue-based and problem-focused work with young people has a long history within the field of work with young people, lying between youth work and social work in its approach to young people. It tends to use a combination of drop-in, case-work and developmental education with individuals and groups as a means of addressing the specific issue, or the range of issues which are its main focus. The type of IAG that is offered is related directly to the circumstances of the young people who use problem-based services: *‘...we’ve got to look at the young people that are coming in here. Some are ex-offenders, homeless young people, vulnerable, lacking in qualifications but needing a future.’* As such, a range of general and specialist information, advice and guidance is usually available as an aspect of the main activity of such projects. In New Horizon Youth Centre these include a seven day week service offering:

- Advice and support into accommodation
- Educational and training programmes
- Job search and placements
- Drugs advice and assessments
- Street outreach work
- Tenancy support services
- Practical services such as food, laundry, showers and second-hand clothes store.

[\(http://www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk/about/\)](http://www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk/about/)

**Model 3: Educational IAG.** Where specialist activity is a main theme within projects, such as theatre, (Pegasus), or Citizenship (Sutton Life), then IAG tends to be associated with, or incorporated in the educational aspects of the work in relation to pre-determined themes. So for example in Sutton the worker is thinking in terms of discrete programmes at the same time as listing some key areas of concern to guide a general advice service which might be run by young people themselves:

*[I’m] trying to get a range of life skills courses. I’m looking to work with young ex-offenders, bring in volunteering programmes, mentoring programmes, peer support programmes, work with CAB to build up young persons’ advice services run for/by young people to young people, covering drugs, alcohol, sexual health, all of those kind of areas.*

In Pegasus it is the educational aspects of theatre and drama which are used to address the issues and problems confronted by young people:

*We did a project called Walking on Egg Shells which worked with Oxfordshire Family Mediation who work with young people and parents who are going through separation and divorce. We worked on three projects which again the theatre and dance company and schools worked on, looking at the issues around the affects of family separation on*

*young people, and they created a theatre piece and a dance piece, and the skills to run workshops in schools with year 7...*

*If we get any social services referrals, they get put on a project. So they don't come under the social inclusion, they would just get a place, because by them being referred that's social services telling us this young people really needs to be given access to this work.*

**Model 4: Partnership IAG.** Most models of IAG involve partnership working to some extent – partnership relationships are relevant in cases of signposting, back up, specialist interventions and as in the case of Pegasus, as a source of referral to the work of the **myplace** centre. However, for some projects, partnership is the primary approach involving **myplace** workers in a series of networks and links which are specifically designed to create a comprehensive and overarching approach to the IAG needs of young people in a given area. For example in Sutton:

*We work with a Children and Young People's Integrated Service Panel, CYPISP, which is the Social Services side so you're looking at about three hundred kids who've got Social Services contact. And the idea really of the building is to link into Social Services and link with your YIPS and your YAPS and your YOTS and all of that...*

*We work with Safer Young People's Partnership Board (Youth Justice)*

Projects mentioned a range of agencies with whom they worked in partnership. These included local authority Children's Services, Health Services, Connexions, Positive Steps (in Oldham), PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers) (Minehead), Youth Offending Teams and other specialist youth orientated services such as the Drugs Outreach Team.

Working in partnership enables smoother referral and tracking of young people who might be in difficulty as well as enabling young people to be given expert advice and guidance and in Torbay the CAF system was mentioned as a means whereby young people with particular needs could be identified for extra support when they use the Parkfield centre. The Torbay partnership arrangement has also facilitated the establishment of a separate drop-in facility which is responsive to the wishes and needs of young people:

*We've worked closely with the sexual health outreach team, drugs outreach team, targeted prevention team, and that group sit together with young person representatives, they have helped design the drop in shop in Torquay, as a group the young people were consulted, young people who are passionate about health in Parkfield. It made more sense to have young people who are passionate about health would they go there. Some young people were saying they wouldn't go to the sexual health clinic or the drugs and alcohol clinic in Parkfield.*

**Model 5: Peer support.** There is an understanding in some of the projects that peer support is an effective means of ensuring that young people receive IAG that is not only directly relevant to them in their worlds, but also uses media and methods which are most appropriate:

*What we're doing in the evening here is trying to build programs of activities which will address the issues that we're dealing with there but let them make the message. Let them tell other young people in the way that they want to tell them, in the formats that they want to use. So we use Facebook and Bebo and Twitter and we stick them up on*



*the website, but it's peer to peer messaging. It's more powerful, it's more effective, it's more relevant.*

*If you look at research, peer to peer messages, young people to young people will listen to sixty to eighty per cent of what's said to them young person to young person. If it's adult to young person, it's about twenty, twenty five per cent. I know that's not purely scientific but that's roughly what people are saying. (Sutton)*

The mentoring system devised for Onside schemes also plays to the understanding that young people are most likely to listen to each other rather than to an adult. This scheme will involve twenty young people associated with Mahdlo being trained as mentors to work with 'a caseload' of twenty other young people and through that relationship offer peer-related IAG.

**Model 6: Issue-specific IAG.** Issue-specific IAG responds to particular issues affecting young people. It is a generalised approach which does not focus on the specific needs and problems confronting individuals but anticipates that there will be young people who will participate in group sessions, talks or workshops and gain from them without necessarily identifying personal difficulties. Using this model, Norwich for example have run Chlamydia testing and hepatitis B vaccination clinics in the health suite of the venue, and 1,701 young people received treatment in a twelve month period. With the help of partner agencies, as part of their 'I love Saturdays' scheme, 12 young people have each week attended the sex and pregnancy workshops while through the Connexions Service, 38 young people have accessed the C-Card scheme operating from the centre, and had condoms issued to them .

**Model 7: Co-location of IAG Services.** The idea of co-location of services was one which, associated with partnership working, informed the original conception of the **myplace** programme. It formed part of the early planning for many projects but its potential was always subject to and limited by the dominant philosophy of the leading partner, the quality of partner relationships and the extent of commitment of related services to relocate or to place workers within the new buildings. There were also limitations relating to the physical layout of buildings and their suitability to the internal needs and priorities of support services. So in effect, co-location has become just one among a series of options for IAG services. In some schemes (e.g. Oldham, Salmon, Pegasus, Barnard Castle) it has not been adopted as a relevant approach. In others, (e.g. Staffordshire, Bradford, Shoeburyness) it is integral to the planning. However, it continues to raise difficulties. Co-location of health services was central to the Staffordshire scheme which included a Health Zone to be equipped and staffed by the PCT, and an Advice Zone to be staffed by Connexions workers, neither of which are now feasible. Meanwhile in Staffordshire the plan to raise finance through letting facilities in part of the building to related IAG services is affected by the fact that services are less willing to commit in a period of financial uncertainty. In Bradford there are on-going negotiations which offer a flavour of some of the complexities of co-location. There have been assurances in Bradford from partners that they remain committed to the idea, and certainly insofar as '*they feel this planned project is less at risk of suffering because of the low value for high returns*' (Minutes, *ibid*), then co-location remains an option. However, the **myplace** scheme remains dependent upon verbal goodwill at this stage:

*The partners are still all very committed and we're bringing more partners on board so I think I feel comforted I think the intent is there the goodwill is there, everyone wants it to work, everybody is very committed to seeing it working in the main and people are very excited about it, they feel it can make a difference... (Dec. 2010)*



In Shoeburyness, co-location is key to **myplace** aspirations. The new building is located in close proximity to a local school and the 'localities team' has relocated, but notably social workers have not participated in this move:

*Worker: So upstairs you've got the youth workers and the Connexions workers, you've got the localities team which consists of the locality coordinator, her admin assistant, education psychologists, family support worker, attendance officers, parenting expert and child employment, there are eight of them in total. They do all the work around families.*

*Interviewer: Locality teams are these multi-disciplinary team in one location, so they've got social services, education.*

*Worker: Social workers don't come down here yet, that's a bridge too far.*

*Interviewer: What about the police?*

*Worker: We've got in school a police station and they link with us and our youth workers, they come in for their lunch and hang around – we're trying to get them along to our steering group.*

Such co-location improves opportunities for communication and collaboration between staff, and facilitates the possibilities of workshops and specific programmes of IAG related work taking place in the centre. However, there remains a clear division of labour between 'family' work and the leisure orientation of 'positive activities' and it is unclear to what extent young people can directly access or participate in decision-making in co-located services.

In Shoeburyness, the division of orientation is manifest between 'downstairs' and 'upstairs'. In Torbay it takes shape within a two-pronged model in which leisure opportunities are available on one side of the building and IAG services on the other side of the building. It has already been noted that there is some doubt on the part of some young people that they would use the **myplace** centre for IAG services, and there seems to be a youth preference for keeping leisure and support separate.

#### Outcome 4:

**Stronger partnership working between Local Authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and run financially sustainable facilities with and for young people:**

#### **Partnership: effective cross sector partnership and collaboration**

The **myplace** strategy seeks to improve youth facilities and provision through a more integrated approach to the needs of young people. This necessarily involves building inter-professional relationships. Such relationships, involving a range of social and educational services, are formally structured into the decision-making and delivery systems of projects. They are also pursued on an ad hoc basis in relation to emergent issues and needs. They are maintained informally as well as formally through networking opportunities which are present within the professional environment. Invariably, the nature and content of partnership is subject to received and changing conditions in **myplace** localities as well as to the priorities of the particular **myplace** scheme.

When asked to describe the shape of their **myplace** partnership arrangements, 40% of the respondents to the 2011 Annual Survey said that one centre was the dominant partner (down from 57% in 2010). When the 'other' comments were taken into consideration this figure rises – the change here reflects what the partnerships are working towards – particularly where the local authority is the lead partner. The government's expectation that once construction is complete all local authority-led projects are expected to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people is apparent in this result.

Just under 7% of the respondents described the partnership as involving two broadly equal agencies as being the dominant partners 23% of the projects are described as having three or more agencies as broadly equal partners. Of these projects more have a notional lead partner in the public sector (unchanged from 2010).

Most projects employ workers and involve managers who have a history of partnership working and who understand its importance for an integrated approach to young people's needs; '*we have always worked in partnership, it's just the way we work*' (Pegasus). What has been emphasised to a greater degree as a consequence of **myplace** has been the necessity of making explicit the nature and reasons for such partnerships and formalising arrangements within strategy. This does not obviate the continuing need for ad hoc and informal partnership and association between professional workers responding to emergent practice conditions. In some cases establishing the nature of the partnership arrangements to be secured is still under consideration and subject to the outcome of professional relationship-building:

*Positive Steps, there's a whole range of people who could be partners... The key thing is that they are relationships, we're not trying to secure partnerships in advance of a Chief Executive being appointed because we have learnt from the experience in Carlisle that those partnerships are best formed once the Chief Executive is in place rather than OnSide handing over a partnership and a partnership agreement. I mean this is excluding partners that we had to have for **myplace**. This is like an additional set of partners, so almost delivery partners, not the strategic, bidding partners. What we have learnt in Carlisle is that it is very important that the Chief Executive goes out there, creates those relationships and takes them forward so OnSide's role is to make sure that the key people in the area know about the Youth Zone and know how they could get involved but then the Chief Executive comes in and cements them into what they want them to look like.*

*It would make the centre stronger with stronger partnerships but we don't need them to open the doors. So OnSide is focusing on making friends basically and relationships and keeping everybody interested and excited about the project and trying to deal with any issues that they've got about the, we're not looking to transform them into a three year partnership or anything, we're not getting them to agree to any kind of work., we're just keeping them warm. (Oldham)*

Partnership is interpreted in different ways and there are different arrangements in place to secure a working outcome. These range from the legal partnership agreement drawn up between Minehead Eye and the local authority, through the Service Level Agreements set up in Torbay and memorandum of agreement which is being put in place in Sutton, to a variety of contractual and non contractual agreements relating to the co-location of services and integration into Local Authority strategies for

children and young people services. Various partnership structures are in (see interim report) including the involvement of partner organisations on management boards, the creation of new related partnership organisations, the representation of **myplace** workers within the management systems of partner organisations, and the creation of specific arrangements between **myplace** and individual organisations or for the development of particular projects.

A very wide range of partnership organisations are identified by projects. In the monitoring form, Norwich Open lists 30 partner agencies, of whom eight are identified as tenants and the remainder as regular users of the **myplace** facilities.

There is some instability in the establishment of formal partnership arrangements, even where initial plans were clear, because of the financial situation, as indicated in the case of Torbay:

*Partners because of the financial agreement cannot commit to partnership level, but they have service level agreements, but that is not the same as partnership. We do have YMCA and South Devon College who will be part of the management team who will be seen as partners. But Connexions have become careers south west now, the staff have all gone to part time contracts and the team has gone down from 20 to 9, so in terms of Connexions, there is no way they can establish being a partner, but 18 months ago that was quite a promising thing to happen.*

Even without the current economic conditions, partnership arrangements are liable to change in response to changing conditions: *'It is evolving all the time, it's not what it was three months ago'* (Shoeburyness).

For most of the projects, partnership involves representation within the **myplace** management structure. As representatives, related organisations can express a working commitment in a manner which is responsive to evolving and changing conditions in policy and practice without necessarily tying themselves into legal arrangements. Partnership at the level of management also facilitates the inclusion of young people as partners. Some projects (e.g. Staffordshire, Sutton, Oldham) favour representation on the central board of management. Others (e.g. Bradford) favour a multi-layered approach which reflects either the level of commitment and responsibility which partners wish to make, or the different parts of the project to which partners wish to contribute. The structural arrangements for governance and partnership can become quite complex as the working document for creating the Terms of Reference for the Operations Group in Bradford testify:

*The Terms of Reference for the Culture Fusion Operations Group is so far a draft and needs to be finalised following feedback.*

*The structure of the Culture Fusion working groups was discussed as well as how they link together. The highest level group is the City of Bradford YMCA Board; this is the legal entity and where all the liability and risk lies.*

*The next level has 2 groups: the Culture Fusion Project Board and the Culture Fusion Advisors. The first of these is comprised of strategic staff from key partners... The Culture Fusion Advisors are the young people that are helping in the development of the project; 2 of these also sit on the Project Board.*

*The next level has the Marketing and Communications Group...*

*Sub-groups of the CFOG are the Facilities Sub-Group..., the Quality and Monitoring Sub-Group..., and including evaluation experts from University of Bradford, and the Staff Development and Training Sub-Group. This final sub-group then leads on to the Culture Fusion Practitioners Network. This group involves all the partner staff that will work in Culture Fusion.*

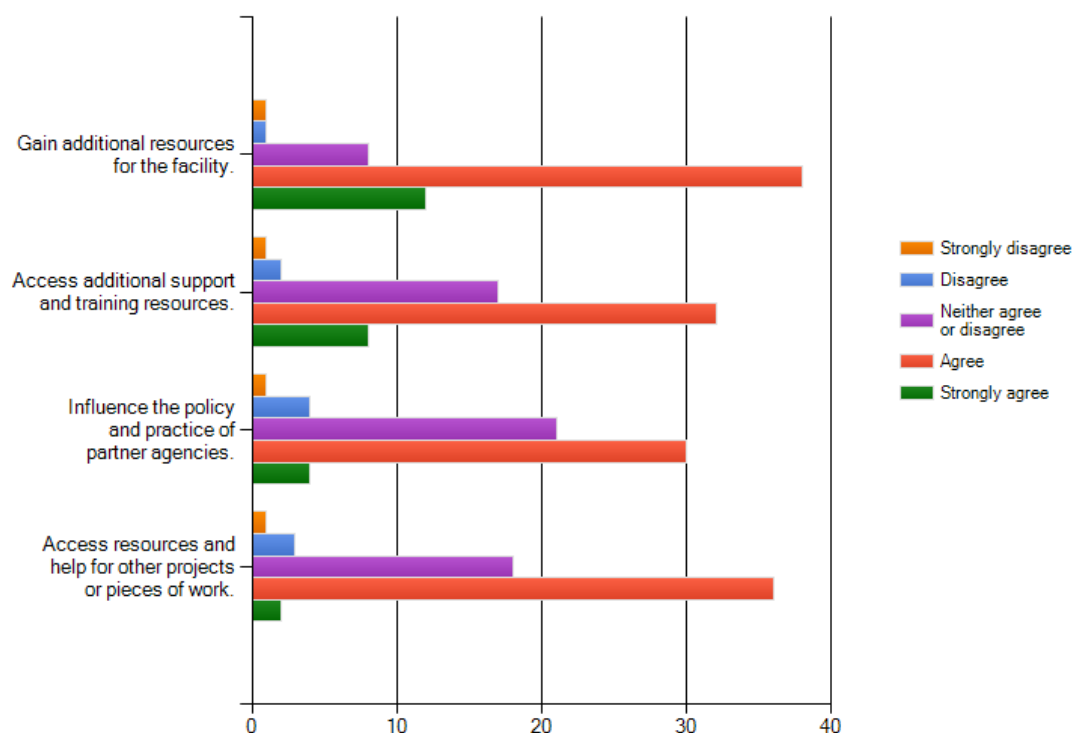
*We welcome key partners nominating relevant people from their organisations to sit on groups.*

Sometimes within, and sometimes in addition to the array of systematic and evolving arrangements with other services, working relationships with schools are apparent in all **myplace** projects. These vary from the central (Sutton, Shoeburyness) to the peripheral (Oldham) but at whatever level, a contribution to schooling is being made through the **myplace** programme. Often this relationship with the formal educational system is supplemented by working relationships with FE colleges (Barnard Castle, New Horizon Youth Centre)

There is broad agreement from **myplace** projects that there are gains from the individual (lead) agency from partnership working. The strongest of these concerns the ability to access additional support and training resources, and the ability to gain additional resources for the facility. Significantly, the latter issue gained the largest number of strongly positive responses. The number of negative responses to questions in the 2011 Annual Survey around the benefits of partnership working to the individual centre was relatively small. Similarly, but less markedly, strongly positive responses were relatively rare – especially with regard to the ability to influence policy and access resources and help for other pieces of work.

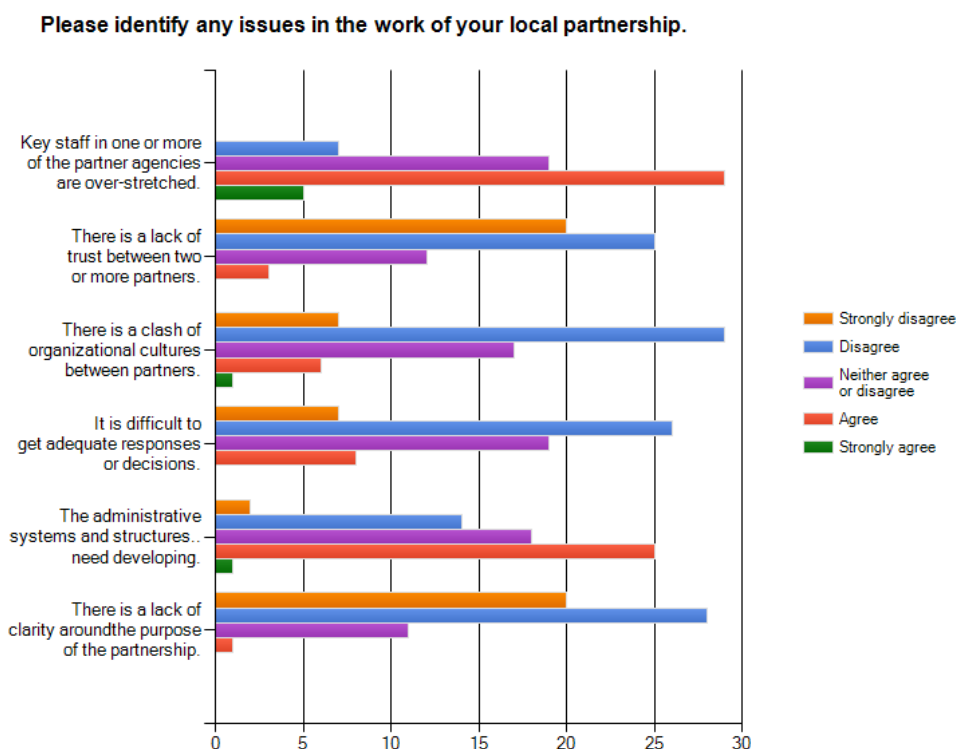
**Figure 2: Gains from partnership**

**Please identify any gains made by your agency from being involved in local partnership working within the myplace Programme. Your agency has been able to:**



The picture of their partnerships painted by survey respondents was relatively positive. In part this may arise from the large number of projects that have one agency as a dominant partner. Over three quarters of respondents report that there is trust between partners, and clarity with regard to the purpose of the partnership. However, as the figure below shows, there are two key areas where tensions or issues appear to be arising.

Figure 3: Issues in partnerships



The strongest issue is that key staff in one or more of the partner agencies are over-stretched. 56% of respondents report an issue in this area (the same as 2010)

A less strong, but still very significant issue concerns the need to develop the administrative systems and structures of the partnership. 43% of respondents highlight an issue in this area (slightly down on 2010).

Significantly, the number of respondents reporting that there is a clash of organisational cultures between partners was down to 12% (from 23% in 2010).

Where survey respondents made additional comments about their **myplace** partnerships what they had to say was broadly positive. For example:

*We have all managed to work across different organisational cultures, with tact and diplomacy. The establishment of an overall aim for our **myplace** project, facilitated the cohesiveness of the individuals involved.*

*We have developing good partnership working arrangements with a number of different agencies, but in particular with [the] Council. This has enabled us to have open, honest, trusting and supportive relationship with them which we have valued and has led to the development of other projects and initiatives outwith the **myplace** scheme.*

*The partnership took a long time to develop but has now reached a point where mostly it works very well. Partners have reached some level of understanding about the each others pressures and organisational responsibilities and have supported each other where possible/appropriate. Our Partners have given up staff time and resources to work with young people, and to participate in **myplace** and other, training/consultation exercises associated with the project.*

*It is, in our experience commendable and reassuring that, even in times of increasingly difficult public spending constraints, our partners are willing to stand by commitments made to the project which will represent good value for money as a result of leveraging large contributions from the private sector.*

*Each partner brings a unique contribution which has helped us to develop a range of creative opportunities and initiatives both in relation to **myplace** and beyond.*

But there were problems – which have been exacerbated by the current financial situation:

*A lot more work involved than I could have ever thought possible! Very difficult at this time for all partners with funding cuts*

*Spending review has meant the withdrawal of staff from the project*

*There is an overwhelming want to work in partnership but this is largely restricted as it involves clarity around revenue and funding. If the government were more clear and timely around what core resources for young people will be funding over the next 3-5 years then LA's and third sector providers would be in a stronger position to know exactly what services can be prioritised and delivered. The current strains [around] funding for youth services is detrimental to the creativity of **myplace** and the ability to challenge and explore new areas of development and funding.*

*The main strain on the partnership is the continuing uncertainty about the continuation of the funding.*

*We have a good and strong partnership, but I think will face challenges over the next 18 months to two years. The issue is that all organisation involved are working in a fast changing environment, facing major restructures, much reduced budgets and uncertainty. The public and voluntary sector organisations do not know where future funding is coming from and some key players may not be in their jobs or some smaller local or voluntary organisations may not even exist in two years' time. I think that is the biggest challenge facing our partnership: to remain strong, engage new players as appropriate and adapt fast to a changing environment.*



### Strategy:

#### integrated and strategic planning for improved youth facilities (including relationship with schools to enable them to focus on core teaching and learning)

At the most basic level, it is anticipated that local schools will be able to use the high quality facilities, and sometimes the staff offered by **myplace**, in the process maximising the usage of space and helping with the costs of running centres (Barnard Castle, Shoeburyness, Staffordshire, Sutton, Torbay). This could make an important contribution to the resources available in the school, especially in view of reductions in resources for school sports (Staffordshire), while enhancing the learning experience of the young people involved in relation to the specific specialism of the centre. For example, in Sutton,

*...we're looking to partner with schools who may well bring their digital media education classes into the building and that way they'll be able to utilise some of the projection spaces like the street area and the 360 room.*

The standard of the facilities also makes the **myplace** centre attractive for extra-curricular activities and rewards systems offered by schools (Shoeburyness, Torbay). On a wider canvas, there is a conviction that partnership with schools in deprived areas can help to equal educational provision by offering opportunities to disadvantaged young people which might not otherwise be available to them at their school (Staffordshire).

Of potential value to schools is the opportunity presented by **myplace** centres to provide alternative settings for young people who are excluded or disengaged from mainstream schooling. Partnership arrangements here are intrinsically concerned with those young people who are likely to become NEET, and the **myplace** centres are perceived to be not only more 'user friendly' for such young people, but also to offer opportunities for them to discuss issues which are less appropriate to the formal classroom setting:

*There are things that we touch upon here which are probably more effectively dealt with outside of the school, outside of the classroom in this kind of environment. That's not to say that we've got it totally right but it's a step in the right direction in that now you're starting to address things like sexual abuse, cyber bullying, cyber harassment and all of that. Those things you can't really teach in a classroom and if you're in a school community every day and you're a teacher with ... kids aren't going to stick their hands up and say, "So-and-so's telling me ... I've just sent him all my pictures with no clothes on and he said to put it up on Facebook," or something, you know.. (Sutton)*

The objective is to help those young people be readmitted to mainstream schooling. At the same time, by introducing them to the other facilities in the **myplace** centres it is hoped to encourage them towards positive activities in their leisure time. In their 'Youth Zone', Sutton Life includes a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to accommodate up to eight students who have been excluded from school on a six week course. Using a different model, but with similar principles, in Oldham three classrooms to accommodate up to 20 children who are unable to deal with mainstream schooling, are being included in the new centre. These are self contained and operated by Oldham Council, but it is anticipated that during the day the young people concerned will have privileged use of the Mahdlo sports facilities, and informal use of the club during their lunch break. In Hackney, the Milton Gardens Centre is also being used for school refusers. Through its 'Added Extra' scheme, Pegasus is working in partnership with Oxfordshire County council on a project entitled 'On course' which works in a positive way with young

people who are at risk of school exclusion and the Salmon Centre is used during the day by the PRU and by the Southwark Inclusive Learning Service. However, as we noted earlier, financial pressures within schools combined with changes to the ways in which excluded and off-site students are counted with regard to league tables and the move to academy status suggest that schools might look increasingly to 'internal' provision or collaborative arrangements with other schools.

**myplace** is also working with schools in relation to the citizenship agenda. With the ending of the Extended Schooling programme, alternative funds are being sought in Shoeburyness to ensure that such work can continue.. The Sutton Life Centre has citizenship at the heart of its work and is targeting approximately 1700 schools within an hour's drive of the centre to encourage them to visit its Life Skills Zone and buy into its Citizenship Education Programme. This programme involves an integrated approach to citizenship education designed with regard to schools and also to the wider population. For schools, a visit will be combined with the potential to download web-based materials, using media systems interactively. . In addition, it is hoped

*... to adapt the Citizenship Experience for adults, young people with learning disabilities, for sensory disabilities, physical disabilities, Asperger's, autism so that we have a range of different experiences. So for example, learning disabilities, you may break down that experience into something which becomes a four week programme.*

The whole programme of work in the Sutton centre, with its focus upon citizenship, youth, learning, new technology and media is considered to be making an important contribution to the current policy idea of a 'Big Society'.

More generally, **myplace** projects appear to have had some impact on local policy formation and strategies. In the 2011 **myplace** Annual Survey respondents were asked about the impact myplace funding may have had on the local authority's youth policy. These questions were linked to current policy priorities. Has it:

- Driven the on-going reform of local youth provision?
- Promoted young people's positive and active role in society?
- Led to civil society organisations delivering more local publicly funded services?
- Led to more engagement with the private sector.
- Leveraged additional investment.

Figure 4: Survey responses on policy

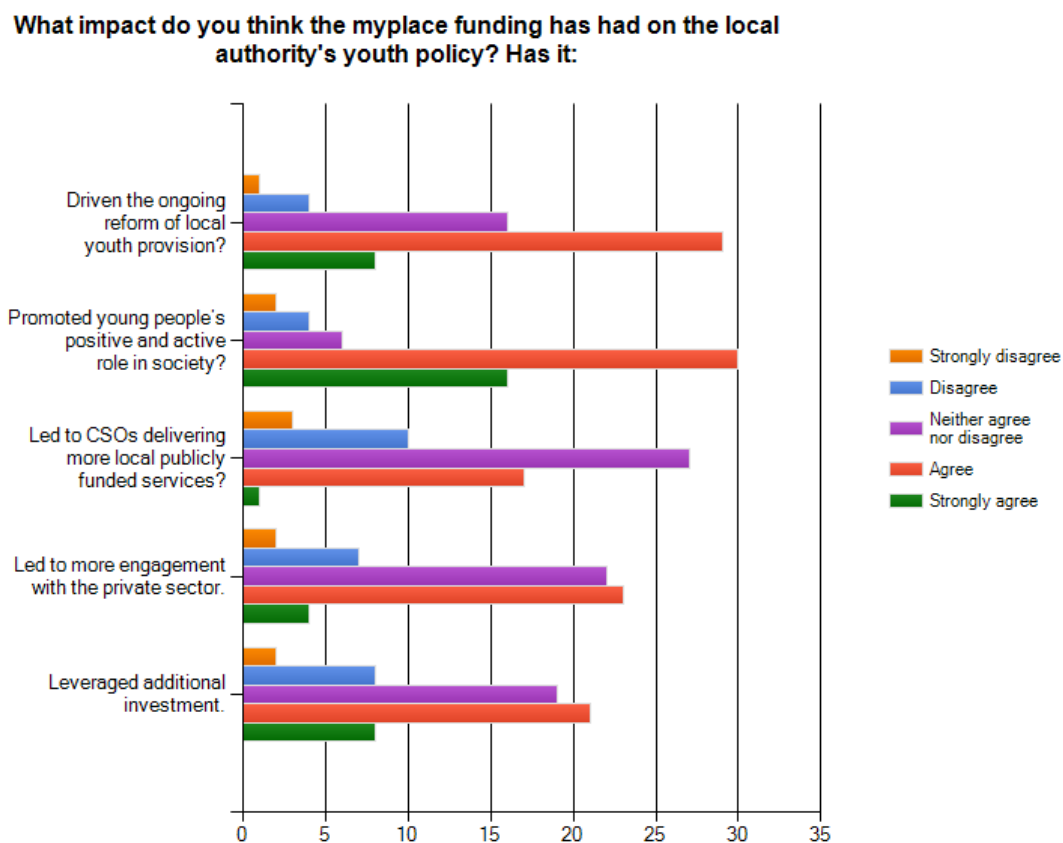


Figure 4 demonstrates some agreement among lead contacts that **myplace** funding has impacted on the reform of local youth provision and promoted young people's positive and active role in society. However, there has been less success around the 'Big Society' agenda, engagement with the private sector, and leveraging additional investment (although some has come).

**Sustainability:  
developing robust revenue and delivery models**

While some projects have been able to continue as planned in the changing climate, this has been largely dependent on their stage of development and the model which they had initially adopted for partnership, including governance and finance. The situation has varied across the case studies. In Minehead, there was never any intention that there would be any financial dependence on local authority funding and other relationships with the local authority were described as 'supplementary' so the impact of the changes has been minimal. In Barnard Castle, where finance through **myplace** has made a major contribution to plans which predated the scheme, progress has also been maintained as planned. In Hinckley, the change of government was said to have had the effect of slowing everything

down, but no major policy implications were identified. Thames Gateway YMCA has a range of funding streams and there is no threat to the funding for the services which **myplace** is expecting to deliver through the service level agreement with the local authority. Letters from the Minister seem to have ameliorated some concerns in the early post-election period and enabled some schemes to carry on with building programmes which were well advanced. At the other end of the scale, Staffordshire, which was already experiencing difficulties associated with building development plans, has had those difficulties exacerbated by the uncertainties accompanying a period of change while in Bradford the changes were temporarily destabilising because they coincided with a particularly intense moment of development.

In some areas, local authorities have reiterated their commitment to **myplace**. In Sutton, the commitment has been enhanced because Sutton Life reflects current policy priorities around the 'Big Society' and National Citizen Service. The level of resource previously committed to it has protected the scheme in Hackney where the two voluntary sector partners will have an improved financial settlement: instead of having to submit bids of £30,000 to £40,000 at a time for a number of different streams of funding, they will receive one payment of £200,000 as the revenue support from the local authority for their **myplace** service.

There is evidence to suggest that in some cases, including Hackney, Dartford and Norwich, **myplace** projects have benefitted from restructuring or downsizing of youth and related services. In Hackney, 'the local authority has restructured its Youth Department around the whole concept...followed to set up the **myplace** programme' with the consequence...that the new business plan 'is actually much more robust and potentially more sustainable than the last one'. The Dartford **myplace project** is 'expecting some increased contracts for positive activities delivering and supporting people in 2012' anticipating that what would otherwise have been funding for youth services, and possibly staff, will be transferred to **myplace**. In Norwich, numbers of young people attending the **myplace** facility have 'picked up dramatically' and this was identified as a consequence of an overall decline in youth provision. However, this apparent benefit in Norwich has been mitigated by the fact that as yet, there is insufficient revenue available to employ the numbers of workers necessary to respond to the increased attendance, and that the hopes invested in plans for a consortium involving the local authority to deliver the necessary level of service 'have now been dashed'. As a consequence, Norwich is now seeking to 'create a model that does not depend on any public revenue funds' and are seeking short-term funding to see the project through the immediate shortfall.

Like Norwich, other projects which were dependent on public sector resourcing have found it necessary to make adjustments to their planning. Two case-study projects (Shoeburyness and Salmon Bermondsey) are likely to have or already have had cuts in daytime sessions. Up to 40 young people have been attending the daytime open-access drop-in sessions in Shoeburyness and in Salmon between 200 and 300 young people had been attending daytime sessions. The loss of anticipated funding was specifically mentioned in relation to *Aiming High* for young people with disabilities (Chesterfield), Development Agencies (Oldham), PCTs (Oldham, Staffordshire, Chesterfield), Connexions (Staffordshire, Torbay), IYSS (Torbay) and the Youth Sector Development Fund (Salmon). The impact has forced some projects to rethink their programme priorities, to reassess which services they can provide and develop and sometimes to contract their original plans:

*We were, 'Oh yes we can deliver all this'. Now we have realised we can't deliver that; now we are at a ground base of what we can deliver and commissioning out.*

In Pegasus it is reported that outreach work which depended on making contact with disadvantaged young people through youth workers and voluntary sector organisations, is diminished as the youth service and voluntary sector lose funding and are therefore unable to buy in services. In Shoeburyness, earlier efforts to work in collaboration with the school had attracted large membership (of 400 young people) and demand from young people for use of the facilities which can no longer be met as resources are re-focused upon targeted work.

Sometimes contraction is not evident in the business plan. For example:

*Nothing has changed in terms of the business plan at this stage. What may change is the offer. Young people will still get signposted from within Parkfield, but some of those services may not be available any more for example Connexions.*

In some circumstances, services will be maintained at the expense of worker time and effort, though workers are facing that with some level of resignation:

*We know the cuts are coming and it's up to us in light of that to look elsewhere for funding and we'll just have to work harder in terms of fund raising, you know bringing the money in and people may end up doing more in their hours but that's the same for management as well.*

*All we can do is just work through it as well as we can, I don't really know what else we can do.*

The 2011 Annual **myplace** survey revealed some significant worries around revenue streams and the future shape of the work:

*Changes in government policy, housing benefit, hostel availability all have had an impact on the vulnerable clients that we see. Currently faced with almost a 50% cut in funding from a range of providers we are of course concerned about the future despite the strategies in place. The cuts at different levels, are increasing the vulnerable client groups in the centre which is adding to this concern.*

*The changing landscape for all partners has made the development difficult. All partners are in the processing of assessing changes on their organisations but have reiterated their commitment to the project.*

*Spending review and uncertainty about the future staffing arrangements has created some concern across the board.*

*Our issue has been in relation to the significant reduction in funding across the public sector. This has meant that our initial project which was to be co-located with a learning centre has had to change when the funding for that centre was reduced and therefore could not be built with the **myplace** project. This has meant a slight redesign of the building and costing for the **myplace** centre. We are also planning to look more at private sector investment to the centre than was originally planned to ensure the sustainability of the project long term.*

This said, projects remained reasonably confident about the future – and are taking steps to try to find other revenue streams. We asked projects to make a judgement as to whether they:

	Rating average
Are confident that the revenue funding necessary to offer the planned range of activities and services for the first year of operation is, or will be, in place.	3.95
Have approached a number of private sector organisations to explore areas where collaboration might be possible.	3.48
Expect to charge young people more for the activities on offer.	2.73
Are making significant changes to the work and services planned in anticipated of a reduction in revenue funding from state sources.	2.93
Are looking to increase revenue from hiring out different parts of the building to other organisations.	3.93

The right hand column shows the rating average (the higher the score the stronger the agreement). A significant number have approached private sector companies (52%) and are looking to increase revenue from hiring out facilities (73%). Over one third (38%) of projects expect to charge young people more for activities.

Significantly, amongst opened projects there was less confidence that the revenue funding was in place to offer the planned range of activities and services in the first year (down to 3.08 – with 30% of the projects saying there were problems).

When it comes to the implementation of programmes of work,

- 87% of projects said they had a clear plan for the staffing of the new facility in order to offer the range of activities we planned at times convenient for young people.
- 67% reported they had a robust system for gathering data and making judgements about how parents and communities feel about the facility.
- 73% claimed a strong focus on early interventions for the most vulnerable young people.



Figure 5: Survey responses on implementation



In addition to accepting that the changed financial environment might mean a reduction in the original ambition of projects and an increase in the workload of workers, projects have adopted a range of practical strategies to address the new circumstances. These include a renewed emphasis on the possibilities of private sector participation and support supplementing fundraising from charitable trusts; increased attention to the potential for income generation from within the projects; and extensive dependence on volunteering.

**Private Sector Engagement and Charitable Trusts.** While the changing context has impacted on the business planning of projects, this has mostly been in terms of changes of emphases and priorities for securing revenue funding in the longer term. So, while attracting private sector support has from the beginning been one of the aims of the scheme, it is now of greater importance. The history of projects and the conditions of the local business environment are quite significant in the potential for raising private sponsorship. For example *Onside*, the umbrella organisation for Mahdlo, Oldham, can draw on a history of private goodwill associated with the long history of the Bolton Lads and Girls Club and ten founder patrons have pledged £25,000 each. To a lesser extent, the Hoxton Hall part of the Hackney *myplace* have been entirely dependent upon local authority support, while other schemes, such as Shoeburyness, Torbay and Dartford have been conceived almost totally

within the framework of partnership between the local authority and a major voluntary sector organisation such as the YMCA.

In some cases the location of the projects is thought to militate against opportunities for private sector investment. This includes Staffordshire which the workers define as ‘not a naturally wealthy area’ with no ‘great tradition of philanthropy’, the Salmon Centre in London, where it is held that ‘there is a perceived London effect where everyone is competing for private sector investment, and often against some very large organisations that have national profiles but are based in London’. In Minehead raising funds from private companies was described as ‘a difficult thing to do locally’ and this also relates to competition for such goodwill:

*We have just got some funding from [a firm] who are building a big new nuclear power station reactor to do some stuff around consultation. So I think that that definitely is a kind of opportunity, if we do some good stuff with them, that there may well be an opportunity to get some money out with them. Obviously everyone in the whole district is trying to do that.*

In Dartford it was indicated that ‘one of the problems we have is that there are not many large organisations’ and that smaller firms are themselves experiencing financial difficulty. In Bradford too, there is evidence that local firms who might otherwise be forthcoming with help cannot at present do so: ‘X Trust has visited the project and although unable to offer £10K capital grant as requested because of their financial situation at the moment they are fully supportive of the project, believe they will be able to make some contribution when they next meet, and have offered to provide on-going advice and support.’ (Project Board Minutes, 11th Jan. 2011). There is a similar effect in relation to local charities. So for instance, in Oldham:

*... Unlike in Carlisle and Blackburn there really aren't any local trusts and grants to go to.... £50,000...is coming from [one] Trust and apart from [that] there isn't really anyone else in Oldham. So I'm actually looking for national funding for Oldham, national trusts and foundations.*

Whatever the history and the local potential, many projects are spending an increased amount of time and resources seeking private sector and charitable support. The strategies adopted involve a combination of high profile activities and specially targeted events such as:

- business launches and special events to attract potential investors (Onside/Oldham, Bradford, Torbay) ,
- marketing services (Norwich, Chesterfield),
- offering opportunities for the private sector to market itself (Norwich),
- engaging in business-orientated events and award systems (Salmon, Chesterfield),
- working with the Rotary Club (Chesterfield, Bradford),
- seeking representation on relevant boards and committees (Stafford),
- identifying opportunities for mutual benefit (Torbay, Hinckley) or simply
- identifying, targeting and ‘courting’ particular local firms (Staffordshire, Bradford, Torbay, New Horizon Youth Centre).

In all circumstances, creating and maintaining a supportive private sector network is seen as the aim, although in most cases it is one not yet realised in any substantive sense. So for example, in Sutton private sector representation is held on the Sutton Life Centre Board, and it is hoped that eventually

there will be a buy in from a large company such as a mobile phone company or an internet company, but there is no sponsorship as yet. Gaining such sponsorship demands a great deal of time, energy and tact which competes with other priorities. As one worker described the situation:

*There aren't the resources to go out to build local relationships. The balancing act is between fundraising and getting on with face to face youth work. There is much more of an emphasis on staff having to fundraise; as much as 30% of time is being spent. In the past 18 months £3million has been applied for with a hit rate of 12% which is low in fundraising terms. (Salmon)*

Even where private support already exists, it is necessary for projects to invest significant personnel time in developing and maintaining relationships with high profile individuals and organisations in the private sector, for instance in organising events, attending business lunches and holding private meetings with key individuals. Sometimes this stimulates creative energy and is experienced positively. For instance in Chesterfield:

*Well, we are working more and more with the private sector, for example just this last year we were Sainsbury's charity of the year and because we've got rooms that we can hire out we've got local accountants that are wanting to use the space so in terms of sustainable through other people coming in that's been quite successful. And we've also set up something called a business team challenge where local businesses can, we've set them like a fundraising challenge to see how much money they can raise for us and we've had prizes donated from other members of the private sector so for example one business has donated a trip to Silverstone and a drive in a Ferrari and that type of thing so it's an incentive to get local businesses involved and that sort of thing. So, yeah that's kind of slowly, slowly but again I'm going to a big business event at the local football club on Thursday and that's a business networking event so that's been really good raising that profile and just a couple of weeks ago Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Chamber of commerce had a big awards ceremony for Enterprising women and I won the Community Champion Award and that was a big event at Chatsworth so that kind of gets our name out again so working with the private sector has been really interesting because as we're a charity and we're the lead on the project it has been easier than if it was a statutory organisation doing that.*

However there are some reservations. There are difficulties associated with gaining 'support for quality work over a sustained period as opposed to support for a one-off event' (Pegasus) and 'there is a concern that the private sector is about commerce rather than working with young people' (Salmon). This was borne out in one project when they tried to win support from a particular entrepreneur who was claiming charitable intent:

*There was a guy we tried to court last year who had been on the secret millionaire and everything but he, you know he was more interested in doing business where he got something out of it rather than just giving any money which I suppose is the reason they've got that kind of money in the first place to be fair.*

Private sector interest is viewed positively in some situations. In Torbay, the project is currently considering opportunities for procurement in which specific parts of **myplace** will be run by the commercial sector, albeit with a condition relating to the underlying ethos of the youth facility:

*... we will look at the commercial sector, however there are conditions on the procurement that there will be a social enterprise element and the profit will go back in to Parkfield.*

Similarly, Dartford has already had three 'private deliverers of positive activities' requesting to offer their services from the new **myplace** facilities and are encouraging other private agencies, including a local dance school with links to the West End, to do likewise.

In Bradford, Culture Fusion is working with a retail organisation with the intention of developing a social enterprise retail outlet in the city centre to support the centre's activities. This initiative is also supported by a local property developer and by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Bradford College. Some efforts are also underway in Bradford to work collaboratively with Bradford City Football Club and Bradford Bulls Rugby League Club, again in partnership with Bradford College, to develop a sports participation programme related to positive lifestyles and community cohesion. Whether or not private sector interest in **myplace** is philanthropically or commercially led, there is a tendency for some in the sector to identify those projects, and parts of projects in for investment based on their own terms of reference. So for example, in Torbay, it is possible that a hotel chain might work with the project in the provision of affordable accommodation based on its specific interests in improving local tourism. This has of course always been the case in terms of charitable funding and in a climate of increased competition it is inevitable that projects will look to develop discrete parts of their service based on funding opportunities identified.

**Income Generation.** All projects are considering how they might draw in income from their facilities and activities, and this has taken a greater importance in the current climate. The opportunities here range very widely and are associated with

- the buildings themselves (e.g. residential accommodation, storage facilities, conferencing),
- the activity specialisms catered for within the buildings (e.g. skateboarding, BMX tracks, climbing walls, music, fishing),
- the surrounding environment (e.g. outdoor activities), and
- the nature of the potential customer base (e.g. local organisations seeking specialist facilities, tourists).

Some project planning depends significantly on income from the services offered to help related organisations such as schools and FE colleges to meet their targets for delivering policy priorities regarding young people's social and vocational learning and accreditation. Insofar as this dovetails with government policy priorities, projects consider such funding to be stable in the immediate future.

The changed climate and the impact of new spending arrangements on local authority youth services has encouraged some projects to consider their own potential for bidding for work which might otherwise have been undertaken by local authorities:

*The local authority is currently on a nine month roll over after which it will be clear which functions and responsibilities will be offered out to tender. New Horizons is currently looking to position itself to be able to tender when such opportunities arise.*

The size of the **myplace** development, the range of opportunities offered and the quality of the facilities suggests that this is a viable approach. Some **myplace** schemes might seek charitable status themselves.

**Volunteering.** The changing context has had a significant impact on *myplace* projects in terms of staffing. It has been noted that in one case, the increased pressure from users due to a focus of youth service resources upon the *myplace* centre has not been matched by increased staffing in *myplace*, and in another case it is anticipated that existing staff will need to work longer hours to maintain services. Volunteer labour is one of the means whereby this shortfall can be met and in one project, the loss of one full time member of staff has been offset by the gain of six volunteers.

Volunteering was already integral to some *myplace* models of work, particularly through the possibility of enabling young people to develop skills and experience and this has taken on a new dimension in the current policy focus on Citizenship and the 'Big Society' (see below). Some projects, such as Staffordshire, have deployed young people in the development of *myplace* through the previous Government's volunteering initiative 'V' which ends in March 2011 to be replaced by funding focusing on National Citizen Service. Where 'V' has been directly involved at a partnership level, for example Shoeburyness, different strategies for volunteering are being considered. Volunteering has been associated with youth empowerment and participation in the development of the *myplace* projects and this is being translated into young people voluntarily taking responsibility for some aspects of the work as projects come to fruition. For instance, young people will voluntarily run the music facility in the Barnard Castle Hub. Such an approach is likely to be reinforced as crucial to the sustainability of projects in the new circumstances.

Generally, projects have strategies for volunteering which include young people and adults involving a clear programme of training and support, often with accreditation. Such programmes are seen as beneficial in their own terms as well as making a contribution to civil society. One project (New Horizon Youth Centre) is currently considering how accredited volunteering might be developed to create a revenue stream. Volunteering is also considered a means whereby the private sector might make a human resource rather than a financial contribution (Salmon, Onside).

Recruiting volunteers is not easy and requires systematic attention. One project manager claimed that 'volunteers are thin on the ground' and the efforts of another project to recruit volunteers from a private firm were unsuccessful. However, a focused strategic approach can pay dividends. Onside has had some success in relation to the Carlisle *myplace* through making structured presentations to companies and general marketing, with 41 people passing an interview and going forward to train as volunteers. Young people are being encouraged to volunteer in Minehead through an arrangement whereby for every hour they volunteer, they gain a free hour skating or studio time: 'every hour I teach I get a free hour in the skate park' (Sixth form student). The Salmon project meanwhile runs two gap year schemes which successfully deploy young volunteers.

Numbers volunteering in projects are quite substantial. For example, New Horizon Youth Centre has 34 paid staff, full time and part time, and 40 volunteers, Salmon's volunteers include 'seven residents, 24 adults and 30 young [people]' and Dartford have 'about one third of the workforce' established as volunteers. While this labour makes a significant contribution to the work, it is not cheap incurring costs not only in recruitment, management and training but also in ensuring that the experience of volunteers remains positive. This is perceived as a significant challenge in some cases (e.g. Hinckley) and in others (e.g. Dartford) it is believed that a paid post is necessary for co-ordinating and sustaining volunteers. There is a perception that volunteers can not and should not replace trained professional workers. This is not only a view held in relation to qualified youth work, as in the Salmon Centre, but also with reference to project-specific skill such as the theatre production and training expertise required in Pegasus.



Reductions in state funding for work with young people (and for local community provision) appear to have accelerated the setting up of Community Interest Companies (CICs) in some areas where **myplace** projects are located. Especially where there are potential programmes of divestment of local public buildings, for example in Suffolk, CICs provide a possible vehicle for their handover and management. Reacting to an immediate crisis in the financial base of the work as in Stafford, or undertaking a long term assessment of the potential for local authority support in the future as in Torbay has led to an interest in different constitutional models which might not otherwise have been present. Nevertheless, except in the case of Minehead which was set up from the first as a CIC, consideration of such models are in very early stages:

*Due to the financial climate it might be that we look at developing things more quickly... my vision for this project would be within the first five years look at trusts, becoming a charity in itself - perhaps because government is changed we have to look at sooner rather than later. So rather than being set up with boards that are local authority led, we have to look at a greater partnership earlier and look at moving into a trust earlier, or looking at youth mutual or social enterprises, these are all things I am going through at present. (Parkfield, Torbay).*

The changed financial and policy climate for statutory work has involved a significant shift away from approaches that look to work with larger numbers of young people and to build social capital and community capacity, toward targeted, preventative and intensive intervention with a much smaller group of young people. Meanwhile, **myplace** facilities have been routinely designed around a larger user base. Here are three responses to the 2011 Annual Survey:

*... it is having a massive negative impact and the Youth Service is being driven into outcome driven services instead of providing something which young people want i.e. - somewhere to go and chill out without having to formally engage in activities. The local authority feels this is something which does not represent value for money.*

*The Youth Service undergoing 50% cuts. [There is an] opportunity for a youth worker to be based at the new Centre i.e. in a targeted area rather than in a school setting offering universal services.*

*... with the current budget situation with the local authority will mean that almost all youth provision on an open access basis will be removed from the LA business. If we are successful in receiving funding for **myplace** the authority has committed revenue budget for staff which may not have continued to exist without it. It is likely that current provision/buildings will not continue to function, and staff will be deployed to **myplace**. However, as stated, the reduction in services and buildings would have happened regardless of this and we can look to have one world class centre service the whole community and surrounding towns, where it is likely there would have been very little provision at all.*

Priorities towards targeted approaches also impact on the way in which **myplace** projects might work – especially those that have been built around the ‘hub’ model implying a movement away from leisure provision and learning toward more intensive, case management approaches. For some, co-location and targeted working may compensate for any loss linked to a move away from open leisure provision. These are two respondents from the 2011 Annual Survey:



*The **myplace** building will be a significant locality hub for the delivery of integrated services for young people. Integrated Youth Service staff will locate in the building and will share space and hot desk with other core partners. The building is located in an area where there are complex needs and is part of a wider regeneration programme for the area. It has been recognised that the building will be a significant focus for services for young people for example sexual health services, employability programmes, information advice and guidance as well as social education. The building will contribute to developing the community's capacity in response to developing the 'Big Society' agenda.*

*The hub concept and the **myplace** investment in the borough have enabled us to cluster staff into integrated teams centred around the hub. The local authority is currently looking strategically at how it will manage the overall reduction of resources it will need to make and developing its approach to maximise spaces that fit with the borough's capital strategy for young people.*

It will be important for projects in these circumstances to be alert to the possibility that the deployment of workers into 'hubs' can lead to 'office creep', shrinking the space usable by young people.

#### **Leadership:**

**high-quality leadership and governance models to define, refine, and deliver vision through changing circumstances [including merits of LA vs. CSO leadership, and YP's role].**

To achieve the wide-ranging vision as described by the worker in the Sutton Life Centre, to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing policy and financial conditions, to create working structures for partnership and to manage large, and multi-purpose building projects requires high quality leadership. That most projects are at present on course to fulfil their aspirations for their centres, albeit with adjustments to deal with changing circumstances, bears witness to the quality of the leadership in place. However, there has been something of a culture shock for some projects in the shift from a small to large organisation (e.g. Hinckley), described as '*like moving ...to the Premiership*' in terms of the scale of the whole operation and the huge increase in management required. Another way of describing it was '*moving from a local charity into a business*'.

The establishment of the centres creates different conditions for leadership as anticipated in the Interim Report. Whereas in a situation such as Oldham, with its tight pre-determined structures and systems of accountability it is possible that the transition from planning to operationalisation will be smooth, there are questions for some centres in practice. In Torbay for instance,

*There will be a project board which will manage the whole site, so the partners will be on that. But in terms of a management team on Parkfield, do we have one or two or three to run the whole place or does it become more fragmented?*

Meanwhile in Hinckley the centre's management felt they had to go into this process with no realistic information on just what the running costs and potential income of such a centre might be, making planning difficult; there were no 'benchmark' facilities to aid their judgment.

As indicated the majority of individuals who occupy leadership positions are those trained and/or experienced in youth work. The multi-faceted nature of their traditional professional role places them in

an ideal position to create constructive relationships not only with young people, but also with partner organisations and to contribute to the planning, organisation and delivery of facilities which are attractive to young people. Their skills have also enabled them to work positively towards creating structures for and encouraging leadership among young people.

*We've set up 3 companies, the theatre company, the dance company and the production company. And they again are open to all young people aged 14-19, but they're for young people that have done at least two projects at Pegasus before so that they understand the ethos, they understand, they have some of the skills, and they have the commitment. And the 3 companies are about creating young leaders. (Pegasus)*

At the same time, because they have usually had experience of working in straitened economic circumstances, they demonstrate continued optimism regarding their ability to deal with the current economic situation. This adaptability is evident in the case study projects:

*It is a LA facility, they do have two major partners the YMCA and South Devon College, those partners help to achieve the funding outcomes stipulated by the BIG lottery, but in terms of where we were looking at, our board of management, and young person's board being led by local authority, due to financial climate it might be that we look at developing things more quickly in terms of - my vision for this project would be within the first five years look at trusts, becoming a charity in itself, perhaps because government is changed we have to look at sooner rather than later, so rather than being set up with boards that are local authority led, we have to look at a greater partnership earlier and look at moving into a trust earlier, or looking at youth mutual or social enterprises, these are all things I am going through at present. (Torbay)*

*We're attempting to create a model that isn't dependent on any public revenue funds and we've got a really desperate need and we've got a bid in to see us through this shortfall period but we are very much a business model, it is about generating revenue to then pay for youth provision so it's a change of model dramatically. (Norwich)*

Nevertheless, behind the optimism and the flexibility, many of them reveal anxiety about the sustainability of the **myplace** projects in the light of the absence of secure revenue funding.

*I just think you've got to think outside the box. And you know there is money out there it is just knowing and I think being positive about it but I'm not going to panic, there's no point, you can only work with what you've got so yes it's a worry, I'm not going to say we'll be fine but it's about I think we'll just have to I mean at the end of a day we provide a really valuable service and that's well known and well used so you just have to hope that it might not be as bad as people think. (Chesterfield)*

The earliest phases of the projects concerning the outlines of the scheme, the planning and the delivery of a building, were in the main, adequately funded and in some cases there was the promise of revenue funding from local authorities but the circumstances for gaining such funding have now changed and the future looks less secure.

*I think the hardest thing about all of that is that we're stood in a brand new building while doing it. So it feels I think to people like a contradiction in terms doesn't it, that we're stood in this brand new building, still fundraising. But because it's about, it's about a continuity of work that we do. We've got the building now but we still need to fund the work that we do.*

The impact of this has been to force the leadership of the projects to revisit their business planning with financial advisers and accountants and to turn their attention increasingly to a wide variety of funding opportunities in the charitable, voluntary and private sectors. This often has consequences for the terms of reference for partnership:

*So again, the way that it works is you're basically talking to local organisations and partnering with them. I don't have programme money with this building. I have no programme money so everything that I do, I'm having to build partnerships with these organisations. I don't have a set rental rate, everything's subject to negotiation, ability to pay, the importance of the groups that you're working with.*

Within this process one of the anxieties relates to the desire to maintain the original vision, informed by a 'youth work' ethos. In Torbay for instance, the manager discussed the necessity for retaining the ethos of youth work in the procurement process and of the careful management needed to ensure that centres brought in to run aspects of the project understood this. In Pegasus the workers talked about the decision-making around sustainability and funding shortfalls in terms of the priority of maintaining the work with young people: *'Do we end up having to cut back because we can't fund and sustain this? And that's something, the last thing that we'll touch is the work with the young people.'*

## Continuing evaluation

We have focused here largely on the process of establishing **myplace** facilities and the issues arising. At the time of writing just 13 of projects were open – and some for just a few weeks. The 2011 Annual Survey indicates that they are all confident in their ability to measure the impact of their work and services on young people). In addition, there is evidence from the annual survey that they are reasonably confident that overall they have a robust and sound monitoring system allowing them to make judgements about young people's usage of the facility and the benefits to them (See Appendix 3). However, what is less clear is whether the data and tools they and other projects have, and the organisational cultures they inhabit, allow them to make the range of judgements necessary for the continuing development of practice, and shaping of provision. The recent Munro Review of Child Protection (DfE 2011) comments apply with equal force to the situation facing providers of services for young people:

*The current management style puts too much emphasis on the bureaucratic aspects of the work. Radical reform is needed to give due weight to the importance of the cognitive and emotional requirements of the work, the need for continuing professional development, and for access to research in order to help workers perform at a high level. The scale of rules and procedures may help achieve a minimum standard of practice, but inhibits the development of professional expertise and alienates the workforce, thus contributing to the serious problems of recruitment and retention. (DfE 2011a: 11)*

## Evaluation within **myplace** projects

There are three primary levels of evaluation at which the **myplace** projects are operating, both in relation to the overall project, and for specific and targeted activities which then contribute to the broader understanding. Firstly data is collected and assessed in relation to the demands of funders

and the stated and anticipated aims and objectives. Often this is a statistical exercise of the type described in Oldham, relating, for example to indices of deprivation and the extent of representation of particular groups involved in the activities of the project.

Secondly, projects are interested in the views and opinions of young people both around empowerment and meaningful planning and development which meets the needs and interests of the young people concerned. The monthly evaluation sheets used in Salmon serve such a purpose.

Thirdly, there is an interest in short term and long term impact. This might involve collecting information at regular intervals. In Shoeburyness a system of needs assessment is in place to inform the inception of projects, and after twelve weeks, whether or not they should be continued and in what terms. In Sutton there is a plan to evaluate each individual's understanding of citizenship before and after a visit to the centre using online tools. Oldham meanwhile will become part of a broader Onside approach which it is hoped will measure change on a much larger scale possibly involving a longitudinal study of a group of young people associated with the projects.

In addition to these primary levels, evaluation is used to inform management and staff development:

*Staff are expected to input data on young people on a daily basis. This data is used in line management/supervision as well as providing a monitoring system/audit of numbers and the work that is being undertaken. (New Horizon Youth Centre)*

It is also used to target disadvantage (Pegasus), to focus promotional work and the engagement of the private sector (Oldham), and to judge specific parts of process such as referral standards (Thames Gateway).

Unsurprisingly, **myplace** projects focus primarily upon evaluating the quality of their work in relation to the experience and development of the young people concerned. They are largely operating with a predetermined outcome-led model of achievement. However, given the changing needs of young people and the developmental, process-based nature of their interventions, there is a danger that evaluation will become a separate and additional rather than an integral part of their work. At present, there is a greater focus upon measurement rather than enquiry, partly because measurement is more tangible and partly because it relates to external demands for information. However, there are indications that projects are trying to develop more subtle and suitable process for evaluation, as in the example of Shoeburyness whose model depends upon a prior conceptualisation of social capital, and which is moving towards an action-research approach:

*Everything is done around need assessment and community, what needs are assessed and how we put that together and we put programmes based on that needs analysis, on a 12 week programme and then we assess it again at the end, if it is working we put in a report to say this has worked and this is why we want to carry on, or this is how I am moving it on. For example we have a group of young men on a Monday night who want to come in and play football, so we brought in a coach, the next part of the work is to develop a team that can compete and the next part of that in the future will be to become part of the league, and that's how it fits in with the social capital model. (Shoeburyness)*

Evaluation is either about *proving* something is working or needed, or *improving* practice or a project (Rogers and Smith 2006). The first often arises out of accountability to funders, managers and those people being working with. The second comes from a desire to do better. Evaluation can contribute to

strengthening practice, organisation and programmes (Chelimsky 1997: 97-188). The indications are that **myplace** projects are engaged in both processes.

### Some issues

When funders and other interested parties ask **myplace** projects for information about impact and outcome they are looking for data that is difficult to obtain and to trust. Four particular issues have been identified by Jeffs and Smith (2005) with respect to programme or project evaluations in projects such as these. First it is not easy to identify why an individual changes their behaviour. Second, given that informal education and youth work are network forms it means that those who may have been affected by the work of practitioners are often not easily identified. Third, change can rarely be monitored even on an individual basis. Last, change of the sort with which youth workers, informal educators and social pedagogues are concerned does not happen overnight. Impact reporting, for example, 'does not lend itself to an annual reporting cycle' (Breckell *et. al.* 2010: 14).

Pressure to demonstrate outcomes and impacts has led to a significant amount of game playing and the manipulation of data in the field generally. As Seddon has commented, there has been growing evidence that public service workers have 'been "cheating" their systems to meet their targets' and that such 'cheating' or 'gaming' has become ubiquitous and endemic (Seddon 2008: 10, 97). This problem arises directly out of systems organised around targets and payment by results. It undermines the moral authority and integrity of frontline workers as it is, in effect, lying (Smith and Smith 2008: 142–144).

There are also important practical considerations as Breckell *et. al.* have pointed out in relation to impact evaluation: 'Changes in personnel, the type of data collected and information systems present a major knowledge management and resource challenge' (*op. cit.*). Their research also found that cost was a major barrier to undertaking impact and outcome reporting. In this regard, one of the **myplace** project workers admitted to us in confidence that there was 'no money in the budget for evaluation'. Many agencies experience reluctance on the part of funders 'to pay for evaluation means that impact assessment has to be wholly funded from unrestricted income' (*op. cit.*).

### A way forward

There are two main routes around such practical problems (Smith 2001, 2006). The first is to focus on practice evaluation and to build out from there - in much the way that the Munro Review has recommended for social work (DfE 2011a). Some funders already look for this form of evaluation activity knowing that it brings the quality of interaction to the fore and there is likely to be less gaming. It entails building participatory practice research and evaluation into programmes and projects from the start. This way of working routinely invites participant involvement and evaluation is seen as central to learning in practice.

The second route is complementary to the first. It explores the linkages between practice and the general research literature. Knowing that it is difficult to establish reliable data around outcomes and impacts from the particular in isolation, this approach looks to the general – and brings it into a relationship with the local. What this entails in practice is, for example, looking to the research around the benefits of participation in groups and the contribution made to the cultivation of social capital –



and then thinking about what might be relevant indicators for practitioners. This approach then takes the pressure off the local project to ‘prove’ an outcome or impact. Reporting can be augmented by individual ‘stories’ and case studies to illustrate how development might occur.

To go beyond this demands major research. The scale of what might be entailed in generating the necessary data particularly in terms of timescale, sample size and methodology is given by the *Understanding Society* Programme (the UK’s Household Longitudinal Survey (see McFall and Garrington 2011)). Much of the material we have to guide policy and local intervention is limited. It can show the potential cost to public finances of some social problems, and can highlight where intervention might be effective. However, what it often cannot do is say what the most effective form the intervention should take. Without significant investment in appropriate research, proposals around devices like Social Investment Bonds (SIBs) (Moynagh 2010), Social Return on Investment (SROI), and schemes that involve payment by results lack a proper and prudent basis. As Breckell (*et. al.*) have concluded, ‘The emphasis which the current Coalition Government has placed on measuring social value and the prominence of SROI, which is rapidly becoming the most widely recognised and advocated measurement tool, suggest that pressure to quantify impact in monetary terms is likely to increase’ (2010: 16). They add that one of the implications of this turn to quantification is that it could well result in demands for such figures to be audited, ‘although it is unclear what level of assurance audit firms can provide and at what cost to charities’.

### **myplace self-evaluation toolkit**

Projects need a repertoire of approaches to capture what they are doing, to make judgements about their performance and how they are to develop. As a result, the **myplace** support team developed a ‘toolkit’ to encourage projects to gather a core of information that is consistent across the programme and that focuses on measuring progress towards the programme outcomes. It also looked to the core issues that Government were likely to see being evaluated across the programme. Broadly the self-evaluation toolkit had three objectives:

- To gather robust information demonstrating the value of the programme;
- To help projects to develop and improve services to young people; and
- To help projects to share learning. (Donoghue 2010)

An attempt was made to make use of the types of information that projects were already gathering through their own registration and management system in order to minimise the burden on frontline staff. The toolkit was designed in the knowledge that:

- providing monitoring data for funders once projects receive all their funding tends not to be a priority for projects.
- projects often have multiple funding streams often with conflicting or non-complementary data and reporting requirements. Attention is therefore given to what will ‘do’ rather than what will actually help make decisions about practice and strategy.

Anything produced centrally tends to have limited influence. The approach taken was, therefore to provide a choice of tools, many of which (for example postcard instead of full survey) are easy to use. The hope was that projects will choose to gather a few things well rather than lots of things poorly. In addition the hope was to also gather information that helps projects identify the value that they are



generating. Work was undertaken to develop a further series of indicators/ measures. These looked at wider social value, return on investment and the impact projects are having on individuals and communities.

The toolkit includes:

- Basic registration postcard
- Baseline Young Person's questionnaire
- Follow-up young person's questionnaire
- Activity/ service evaluation tool
- Focus Group topic guides
- Short Street work survey
- Most Significant Change guidance
- Outcomes reporting tool

The last of these aims to provide a drop-down list of potential tangible outcomes that have been identified through **myplace** projects (Donoghue 2010). This will also gather broad quantitative data on who **myplace** projects have made a difference to, in terms of:

- Reach (general users) – which types of individual were successfully targeted and to what extent?
- Participation (regular users) – numbers and characteristics of young people who are regularly involved in the activities.
- Change (those supported intensively) – in-depth stories of what kinds of transition have been achieved for individuals.

Tools like this have potential for providing illustrative material, but for the reasons we have already outlined, it is difficult to attribute outcomes and impacts to particular interventions or programmes of intervention without a substantial research effort over time.

## In conclusion

The Munro Review of Child Protection discussed evidence-based practice:

*Evidence-based practice is sometimes used in a narrow sense to refer to using methods of helping services users that have research evidence of some degree of effectiveness. Here it is used in the broader sense of drawing on the best available evidence to inform practice at all stages of the work and of integrating that evidence with the social worker's own understanding of the family's circumstances and the family's values and preferences. It is not simply a case of taking an intervention off the shelf and applying it to a family. (DfE 2011a: 44)*

The same sort of appreciation of evidence-based practice is necessary for **myplace** projects and other youth work agencies. The continued evaluation of **myplace** projects (as with the evaluation of other youth work projects) needs to be based in recognition that:

- Practitioners need to be able to respond to the particular situations they encounter in ways that make sense to that situation. Effective practice is flexible, informed and managed at the front-line. The most helpful evaluation is oriented to creating the conditions for this and is integral to practice.
- To make any headway in judging outcomes and impact we need sustained research to generate the data and frameworks necessary to build some indicators for all those involved to use and myplace practitioners and managers do not necessarily have the expertise or the resources to develop this. Without significant investment in appropriate research, proposals around devices like Social Investment Bonds (SIBs), Social Return on Investment (SROI), and schemes that involve payment by results, lack a proper and prudent basis.
- The locus for evaluation has to be the centre and the teams of practitioners within it. In myplace there is evidence of dual systems in operation, on the one hand to meet external requirements and on the other to meet internal needs.
- Funders, if they want data on practice, outcome and impact are either going to have to pay for it – and that it is not going to come cheaply – or demand it from providers. Furthermore, it is unlikely to fit in with the normal reporting cycles. Moreover, it must be understood that even evaluation paid for and undertaken externally has implications for the resources of projects. myplace workers sometimes complained about the amount of time they needed to give to this process.
- There are significant dangers where funders focus on outcome and impact evaluation at the cost of practice and process. They run the risk of encouraging top-down, compliance-driven organisation. This, as the Munro Review found in social work, ‘stifled creativity and distorted priorities, with more attention given to the completion of bureaucratic tasks to specified timescales as the measure of success, than the appraisal of the quality of help received by children and their families’ (DfE 2011a: 17). There are indications in myplace that while workers accept the need to be accountable, even the most experienced struggle with terms of evaluation which will do justice to their work and support the creativity necessary for its success.

## Conclusion

It is apparent that **myplace** centres offer enormous potential to meet the leisure and activity interests of a wider range of young people than was hitherto the case in the localities where they are situated. They have engaged significant numbers of young people in their planning and implementation, and many of those that have opened are popular and well-used by young people and in some places, by members of local communities. Moreover, they have made an aesthetic contribution to local places and where there has been significant local authority involvement there is some evidence that they have animated councils towards a higher level of expectation regarding the quality of local provision not only for young people but for wider community use. Young people in turn are demonstrating more positive behaviour in relation to their participation in projects.

Here we want to draw out some conclusions and make some recommendations. These are derived primarily from the general information available from the Annual Survey and the detailed information gathered in the case studies and supplementary visits to opened projects. The detailed information is not considered to be representative of the overall **myplace** scheme and as such, the recommendations should not be read as necessarily applicable to the whole programme.

## Sustainability

Initial planning for **myplace** projects did not envisage the current circumstances of economic uncertainty and need for fiscal tightening. The maintenance of quality and the ideals of **myplace** depend on continuing financial viability – and that is uncertain for a number of projects. More surprisingly, as we noted in the interim evaluation report, there appears to have been a lack of proper attention to the changing experience of being young and the related shifts in the location of young people's leisure time activity in the overall conception of **myplace**. Larger, free-standing centres focused around the perceived needs of young people have to compete with what is offered in a range of other settings – notably homes, schools, leisure centres and commercial activities. To keep their head above water they will need to find:

- new sources of revenue funding both to compensate for lower overall state funding; and the loss of rental incomes due to changes in the way services are organised. One route is to charge young people more for activities. Another is to host activities that appeal to a wider range of children and young people i.e. looking to work that young people and parents will 'buy into' on a full cost basis. This would be in contradiction to the emphasis upon targeted services (see below). It may also alter the overt age range targeted. A third route is to let out facilities to private operations targeting young people such as dance and fitness classes, or for adult usage.
- new, fundable, targeted work. Options here include developing alternative education provision (which could have limited potential); and looking to integrate some activities with the learning strategies of local schools (an easier option for those that are co-located).

- new partners. Changes in youth policy, for example the 'roll-out' of National Citizen Service (if it can be afforded) may help here. Some projects have been exploring collaborating with private sector companies.

The projects which are opened are not yet working to full capacity and this is largely due to resource limitations. Achieving the full potential of the programme depends upon projects securing adequate and secure revenue funding. Some local authorities remain committed to maintaining their investment in **myplace** but even here, restructuring of related services is impacting on capacity. It was never anticipated that public monies would cover all costs. From the outset they have generally explored different sources of funding but this in itself is a resource-intensive activity.

Projects are investigating opportunities for private sector involvement. This has been a positive experience in some situations. However, networking and nurturing relationships with key individuals and organisations requires significant time, effort and expertise which are not always rewarded. Where the private sector is likely to take responsibility for running specific parts of the scheme, there are concerns that the ethos and motivation might be distorted towards profit at the expense of the values associated with public sector work with young people and embedded in the **myplace** scheme.

Projects are also engaged in the time-honoured activity of seeking specific charitable funding for targeted and specialist schemes. This too requires an investment of time and energy and even when successful can sometimes change the priorities of the work as well as requiring tailor-made evaluation processes to meet the interests and objectives of the funder.

Models of social enterprise are on agendas and CICs seem particularly attractive. All projects are devising schemes for income-generation through their activities and expecting some commercially viable sections of their projects to subsidise other aspects, but this involves considerable managerial skill while at the same time maintaining the central commitment to the welfare and development of young people, and particularly those who are disadvantaged, in all sections of the work.

Projects are dependent on volunteers and all have strategies for recruiting, training and maintaining them. While volunteers make a significant contribution to the work of projects, their participation has resource and priority implications, including whether or not young people using centres have direct engagement with trained and qualified workers, or with volunteers.

All plans and strategies for raising adequate revenue funding and enabling the projects to meet their potential have implications for the priorities of the work and resource allocation within it. The encouragement at the outset to be 'world class' has borne fruit in many excellent buildings, in high expectations about what is possible, and in schemes which are ambitious around the work they set out to do with young people. However the gap between these aspirations and the realities of the financial climate is a serious one. While it might be addressed in the short term and be considered part of the developmental process, the implications for the longer term relate to the possibility of both maintaining the physical quality of buildings and also offering opportunities for their full and dynamic use whilst maintaining a youth work ethos. While the current difficulties are shaped by the context of financial crisis, the issue is more fundamental than that. It is to some extent built into the **myplace** model which excludes any possibility of a long-term public sector commitment to revenue funding.

**Recommendation:** *Strategic attention must be given by Centres to the full utilisation of facilities. This might include the development of programmes and timetables that emphasise the participatory ethos of the work as a basis for community-based and youth-led organisations and fundraising efforts. The*

*ideal of local voluntary action needs to be kept at the heart of decision-making in this regard. This might involve, reframing constitutions, developing local networks beyond those associated with related professional services to include smaller local voluntary organisations, and systematising fundraising activity to include these networks and to prioritise youth and community participation and action. There should be regular reassessment of short and long-term ‘ambition’ with regard to the economic and policy climate and the local assessment of need.*

## Participation and empowerment

Enthusiasm for the **myplace** centres has been generated and maintained partly through the committed participation of groups of young people. Even through the long period of gestation and in the face of problems and difficulties with design and construction, some young people have maintained their interest and gained from the experience. Inevitably soothers have left during the period of development, but in those projects which have opened, the enthusiasm of users for the facilities bears witness to the importance of consulting young people and engaging them in decision-making from the outset.

Models for participation are to some extent context-specific in terms of the stage of development of the project and the smoothness of its progress, its location and the nature of the youth population which it serves, and the priorities of the work taking place. Having said that, some projects are more fully developed than others in considering the necessity for devising structures through which young people can engage in organisational decision making. In some situations their involvement has been evident throughout but in others there is a tendency to adopt an ad hoc approach which works only at the level of the immediate.

There is some evidence that when centres open and workers are confronted with the necessity of focusing upon the management of buildings and fund-raising, they give less attention to the role of young people in decision-making if this has not been structured into governance arrangements from the outset. There is a danger that when this is the case, young people’s participation will be focused upon activities and associated voluntary work and that there will be a loss of the dynamic between the provision in the centres and the needs of young people. This is particularly problematic in any difficulties in fulfilling the promises made at the outset about what **myplace** can offer and the extent to which it represents the social value accorded to young people.

**Recommendation:** *All projects must continue to address young people’s role in governance and decision-making and, as part of embedding the overall ethos and philosophy into the infrastructure of centres, must structure youth participation and empowerment into both their work programmes and governance arrangements. Generating and sustaining participation both provides an excellent focus for developmental work with people, and helps to ensure centres continue responding to local need. There are issues with regard to continuity, succession and priorities linked to the time rhythms of young people’s lives and the different interests of succeeding generations. These require constant attention and methods for the replacement of those young people who outgrow or leave the projects should be put in place to ensure the complete integration of youth participation within each project.*

## Attracting a range of young people - targeted and universal provision

Overall, **myplace** projects have broadened opportunities available for the participation of young people in positive activities. There is evidence that improved facilities are attracting those who are relatively 'advantaged' in terms of family circumstances and educational achievement. However, this can work to the benefit of projects, especially as such young people show willingness to become volunteers. Specific attention is given to the needs of young people who have identifiable disadvantages, variously prioritised based on local conditions and the history of the project. Some projects stress the fact that simply by virtue of their age and their locality, young people are disadvantaged. Others centre on particular disadvantages such as homelessness or disability.

The **myplace** centres which have opened are generally popular not only among young people but also among their families. Family and community use is encouraged to differing degrees, but where this is the case, parents and community groups are using them and enjoying their facilities. In this context, they provide excellent opportunities for intergenerational work and some centres are actively pursuing this. There is a little evidence of active community dissent around those which have opened. Indeed, the centres have been largely welcomed by a range of interest groups affected by them - young people, workers, parents and related agencies such as the police - and there is widespread support for the ways in which they engage young people and provide safe and comfortable facilities alongside interesting activities.

There are tensions between targeted provision designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people or geared towards specific youth problems, and universal or open provision designed to attract a wide range of young people to leisure-based activity. Priorities and tensions need to be acknowledged so that they can be managed, especially in the context of changing policy direction.

In the interim evaluation we suggested that to achieve successful outcomes in this regard, projects will need to:

- review potential areas of tension in their mix of universal and targeted provision.
- follow closely the emerging debate around local communities taking more responsibility for work and provision in their area, around the role of social capital.
- examine the impact on young people of charging more for services and provision— and consider possible models of practice that could safeguard access for those who do not have the ability to pay.

As we have seen, the tension for **myplace** projects around targeted and universal work has grown significantly over the last year. The design of many looks to both areas of work, their sustainability is currently dependent on attracting large numbers of young people, yet state funding is moving away from universal provision. It may be that a number of centres seek to shift their focus and identity more towards concentrating on work with disadvantaged young people because it is fundable. They may also look to sub-letting rooms and facilities to other agencies and initiatives as a way of enabling this. In the process, centres could become less attractive and 'labelled' in the eyes of significant numbers of young people and their parents and carers.

Beyond the orientation towards a universal or a targeted approach, all projects can demonstrate that they have strategies for making contact with and engaging young people who have specific disadvantages and all are working to overcome identifiable barriers to engagement associated with disadvantage. Such work can range from working with transport providers to address the question of



accessibility to projects, through to the requirement that young people accessing projects for help over a presenting problem, also participate in activities that will help them address related problems.

In addition, all projects are all making a contribution to addressing educational disadvantage, through the intrinsic offer within their particular scheme, through their relationships with schools, and through the provision of structured and accredited curricular-based programmes.

Across the board, Information, Advice and Guidance are considered an important part of the work with young people in the **myplace** facilities. However, the extent to which it is prioritised depends on the nature of the organisational framework, the content of the work and the philosophy informing the arrangements. This means that formal, structured IAG opportunities are not always considered appropriate within the new buildings.

Where IAG is prioritised, different models of delivery have been used which suggest so far, that partnership working and the exploitation of opportunities emerging from this are most relevant to the needs of young people. Co-location of services is not necessarily the best option especially where it makes the service needs of disadvantaged or troubled young people particularly visible. There is some evidence that young people themselves do not want their leisure activities and positive activities directly associated with disadvantage or problems although they are willing to participate in issue-based workshops and events where these are presented as educational or developmental rather than problem-focused, and that they learn best from peer-based systems of information and support.

**Recommendation:** *In the light of the preferences of young people, and decreases in the resource-base of related services, the co-location of IAG services should be treated with care and regularly reviewed. Its role in the strategies of policy-makers and **myplace** managers should be reassessed with reference to the underlying ethos of the centres.*

**Recommendation:** *Questions of disadvantage broadly conceived are best addressed in generic **myplace** projects through workshops, groups, peer-based learning and structured educational approaches which offer positive opportunities for peer support, rather than in problem-based services. Projects should explore the potential for prioritising such approaches in their programmes.*

**Recommendation:** *Building on existing relationships with schools would enable **myplace** projects to include more disadvantaged young people. This could facilitate working with them without separating or individually identifying them. At the same time, providing it can be resourced, it could provide facilities for school refusers, who are more willing to attend provision with a culture of informality. Myplace projects should seek to work in collaboration with schools to develop complementary out-of-school leisure activity and supplementary learning opportunities.*

## Centralisation (Hubs)

Many of the **myplace** developments look to a 'hub' model where young people are drawn to a central location or to provision organised around a particular interest or enthusiasm. Some are neighbourhood-based, others are in town centres. Location is a key factor in whether young people use a facility, but there is also an important set of questions about the hub model - and its related parts, whether identified as 'spokes' or satellites. As noted in the interim report, previous large-scale youth provision has often looked to being provision in itself. It has not depended on spokes. Various means such as outreach work, may have been used to draw in young people, but as such work

developed it often led to local activity or ‘satellites’ being set up that made little reference to the ‘centre’.

The hub model has been adopted by many local authorities both in order to promote integrated working, and as a way of limiting costs. It has often been accompanied by reductions in overall staffing – and that is a discernible trend at present. Such centralisation has the potential to impact upon peripheral and neighbourhood provision, which has implications for the hopes of the ‘Big Society’ agenda. Key issues include the extent to which:

- the work is defined by government rather than more locally-generated objectives;
- local work is starved of resources in order to sustain central, and high-profile, provision; and
- there is a decline in the scale of opportunity for positive leisure activity in an area.

Further, the development of central ‘hubs’, sometimes with ‘spokes’ raises questions both about the relationship between the projects involved and the terms of working with agencies not involved in the partnerships. The centralised, hub model has the potential to draw in resources to the centre to the disadvantage of neighbourhood services in the peripheral areas. In this context, as we noted in the interim evaluation report (DfE 2010b):

- the development of hubs needs to be placed alongside an investment in detached youth work, community-based, project work and local groups and activities.
- careful attention needs to be paid to the way individual myplace projects are experienced and perceived by young people – and how they may need to be reconfigured in order to attract wider usage.
- the impact of the hubs on pre-existing services, especially those located on the outskirts of myplace areas, needs to be monitored.

There are some indications of concern from related youth services about the ways in which scarce resources in the sector are being directed towards the centres to the detriment of smaller scale and more localised provision. This is particularly problematic where there are questions of access to the new centres, which mainly concern the quality of public transport, especially in rural areas.

**Recommendation:** *Attention should be given by local authorities to the impact of **myplace** on other services. Some assessment is required of the extent to which work lost by other services is being taken up by **myplace** and, indeed, whether or not the new centres have the capacity to replace such work successfully and in what terms. This should involve monitoring the process of centralisation involved in **myplace** ‘hub’ model, assessing the impact upon outlying localities and implementing strategies for improved access, including outreach work. In addition, myplace projects should monitor the use of their centres in terms of where the young people who use the centre live, whether or not they have been or are users of any other facilities and whether young people find it possible to access all the services they need.*

## Community organisation

There is potential for many of the centres to be used as a resource for energising local community groups and providing opportunities for extending the work of local civil society organisations. The strong ethos of volunteering within the centres provides an appropriate organisational culture within

which such work might flourish. With their educational emphasis and their focus upon local community organisation, some **myplace** projects are demonstrating characteristics which are suggestive of the tradition of the settlement movement. These agencies often developed large centres offering a range of activity and support, and emphasised local participation and involvement. As such they made an important contribution to local dynamism, particularly in areas marked by disadvantage. They also may also come to resemble community centres offering facilities for local community groups and organisations to rent.

In the light of the limited resource base, some tension might emerge in the use of the **myplace** facilities across age-ranges. In particular, where community groups are willing to pay for the use of facilities or where parents with younger children find the activities appealing, it is possible that the youth focus of the centres will be compromised. There is already some evidence of this occurring.

**Recommendation:** *Centres should continue to monitor their use by particular groups and the age-ranges of those participating. The aim should be to encourage community participation whilst maintaining the central focus on activities and services for young people.*

**Recommendation:** *Centres which have the potential to develop local community organisation and education might refer to the settlement tradition to inform and extend their approach with particular regard to the possibilities for community-based youth work and inter-generational work. Here the focus would be upon accessibility to the centres by all members of the community in an environment determined primarily by the needs and interests of young people as citizens and members of that community.*

**Recommendation:** *The possibilities of structured inter-generational work should be widely communicated between projects.*

## Evolving youth policies and strategies

We have noted the major movements that are occurring in the direction, organisation and ethos of work with young people. A number of these are long-standing, but some are new. The current economic crisis and fiscal tightening has accelerated some changes, and the new Government has changed the emphasis. In many authorities, more open and developmental work has been left to civil society organisations, schools and commercial providers with relatively little state funding following these activities. This poses a major challenge for **myplace** projects that were designed in significant part with reference to local authority support around open usage and with business plans based on the participation of large numbers of young people.

In addition, important and developing issues facing young people as yet, lack a comprehensive policy focus or response. Perhaps the most important of these concerns:

- the growing level of unemployment among young people – and the quality of the work that is open to them.
- the experience of children and young people living in poor families and in overcrowded conditions. The combination of economic change following the 2008 banking crisis and fiscal tightening are likely to exacerbate issues for larger numbers of children and young people in these areas.

- the educational experiences of significant groups of young people – particularly those living in poorer areas. The OECD (2011: 11) recently noted that ‘schooling outcomes’ in the United Kingdom are among the more unequal in the OECD area. ‘This leaves many students from weaker socio-economic backgrounds with insufficient levels of competence, which hampers their chances in the labour market and higher education’. Here it is also important to note the significant lower levels of achievement of ‘White British’, ‘Bangladeshi’ and ‘Pakistani males’, and ‘African-Caribbean students (e.g. Cassen and Kingdon 2007).

Over the coming period many **myplace** projects are likely to have to address one or more of these questions if they want to respond to the needs young people are articulating. They may well have to do so without a strong government policy framework and without funding from that source.

Last, the speed and scale of change in policy and strategy affecting local conditions for young people could pose a major challenge. To some extent, at a local level policy is being made ‘on the hoof’ and the resulting provision may not make great sense initially. It is quite likely that projects will have to ‘chop and change’, and to reorient provision in ways that are not necessarily in harmony with their design.

**Recommendation:** *Centres should continue to monitor and respond to policy developments and issues facing young people including: the growing level of youth unemployment – and the quality of the work available; the experience of children and young people living in poor families and disadvantaged localities; and the negative educational experiences of identifiable groups of young people. This would involve prioritising partnership work with specialist agencies, such as those emerging to deal with the new government work programme, and developing programmes of activity and intervention which target particular issues and concerns without necessarily targeting particular young people themselves.*

## Leadership and partnership

The recommendations above indicate that there is pressure on all the **myplace** centres to adapt in the face of the ambition of the scheme and the emergent contextual conditions for its realisation. In dealing with the range of challenges presented, leadership qualities are essential among those involved. The leadership qualities which have been deployed in most schemes to date are associated with the creative energy, adaptability and optimism of youth work, and these remain important as the projects move into their next stage of opening. However in the process of adaptation there is renewed energy required. The application of such energy is apparent in the efforts towards working with the private sector and discovering sources of income beyond those originally identified. Business plans have been revisited, models reworked and increasing attention given to the potential of the **myplace** organisation to offer opportunities to partner organisations. In addition, as we noted in the interim report, the orientation and abilities required to sustain the work of a centre may well be different to those needed to set it up.

The original principles of partnership working remain intact but as partner services themselves confront change, so the **myplace** projects are changing their field of vision. There is now much greater emphasis upon the capacity of the facilities to produce revenue, and the necessity of fully utilizing the facilities. Attention is now focused on that problem, particularly in those centres already opened, to retain the **myplace** ethos. Increased work with schools reflects the opportunities opening in this

direction and it is apparent that there is much of mutual benefit to be gained from developing close partnerships with schools whether or not this involves co-location.

**Recommendation:** *The qualities associated with youth work leadership should be emphasised in the changing circumstances to maintain the **myplace** ethos and to sustain the positive informality needed for working creatively with young people. Particular focus on the relationship with local schools will be complementary to the overall aims of **myplace** especially with the informality of the educational opportunities which can be offered by youth work. Youth workers should try to maintain the central focus of their leadership qualities with reference to young people by developing strategies to build structures of support from a wide range of interested parties from the private, community and voluntary sector whose expertise is diverse and complementary.*

## In conclusion

Based on historical experience – and what we see working now – it would seem that for larger centres to be successful they generally have to have one or more of the following qualities. To:

- offer some unique activity or enthusiasm which attracts core groups of enthusiastic and committed young people who might make a broader contribution to the success of the centres (e.g. Northern Lights Academy Hartlepool, Parkfield Torbay, Pegasus Theatre Oxford);
- be located on or near a school or college campus in order to ensure visibility and to offer access to a wide range of local young people in a way that is complementary to school timetables and content (e.g. The Buzz Halton, Carlisle Youth Zone, Shoeburyness Youth Centre);
- be designed around offering specific services associated with the circumstances of young people such as counselling or housing support as a basis for the development of a wider range of participatory activities and youth education and empowerment (e.g. Access All Areas, New Horizon Youth Centre Youth Centre and the Young Person's Village, Stoke-on-Trent);
- link into some long-established provision and/or tradition of work that is able and has a history of mobilising resources and volunteers, and managing larger buildings in order to improve the network of opportunity available for young people, to draw upon existing local expertise and to offer opportunities for the further development of these complementary organisations. Classic examples here include churches and religious organisations such as the YMCA (e.g. Culture Fusion Bradford, Tab Centre Plus Enfield) and those linked into what was the old boys' club movement (e.g. Blackburn Youth Zone, Hinckley Club for Young People);
- exploit some aspect of the local economy in order to benefit from and contribute to that economy and to emphasise its relationship with local young people's experiences (e.g. Minehead EYE's involvement in providing for tourism).

**Recommendations:** *It would be appropriate for the **myplace** centres to review the extent to which they possess these qualities and the degree to which they might wish to develop significant aspects to maximise their potential for success in the long term. This could include a system for working in communication with, and learning from each other.*

Specifically:

- **myplace centres** should seek to build upon and further develop any specialist activity which they have developed and into which they have dedicated resources with reference to the original principles of providing ‘world class’ facilities for young people. The success of the indoor skate park in the Minehead Centre offers an example of how this can be used to further the participation of young people from different backgrounds and of different ages, whilst at the same time encouraging volunteering and social responsibility. In a different way, the work of Pegasus Theatre is indicative of the possibilities for working with issues and questions of disadvantage which might be adopted for specialist activities in other contexts.
- Whilst the realities of physical location mean that not all centres will be located on or by a school or college campus, **myplace** strategies and planning should address possibilities for closer partnership working with schools and/or colleges in a manner which can help rationalise overall educational provision and maximise use of resources. The ‘state of the art’ health and residential facilities offered in Barnard Castle Hub, which will be used as a regular training resource by the local FE college offer an example of the potential in this area.
- **myplace** centres should seek to develop expertise in a specific area of IAG related to the particular conditions of the area affecting local young people, such as housing, drugs or employment. This might involve the cultivation of particular partnership arrangements with other services but should be associated with a broad view of the interrelatedness of issues and the potential to encourage young people in need of support to engage in the educational and leisure activities offered in the centre as in the case of New Horizon Youth Centre for example.
- Liaison with voluntary youth groups and long-standing voluntary youth organisations in local **myplace** areas will offer opportunities for tapping into the expertise available in that setting where it is not already incorporated into the **myplace** arrangements. The boys’ club model used and developed through Onside in the Oldham Centre offers a particular example of the potential here. However, care must be taken to communicate with smaller as well as larger independent youth organisations in order to maximise local co-operation.
- Local circumstances offer opportunities for considering the breadth of the work to be developed within **myplace** centres. Circumstances such as those available in rural areas for offering outdoor activities or those available in tourist areas for contributing to, and benefiting from the tourist industry are not always obvious. However, there should be some focus upon the local community and economic context and to work taking place outside the specific youth field, e.g. in relation to regeneration of local areas such as Bradford town centre, in order that **myplace**, and young people can be part of that larger process.



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## Appendix 1: myplace projects

**Access All Areas**, Bridgwater (£3,922,000). This carbon-neutral youth facility in Bridgwater has a focus on sport and outdoor activities and includes a health and fitness suite, a sports hall, indoor climbing, a water sports area and a MUGA. It will offer activities such as a community radio station managed by young people, a cafe area and community recording studio. A wide range of advice and work experience services will also be offered. The centre has a particular focus on helping disadvantaged young people aged 16-25, who are in housing need, to achieve the transition to independence. It looks to a holistic approach to the young person's needs, offering access to guidance, affordable accommodation and job searching facilities. Lead partner: Bridgewater YMCA. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.bridgewaterymca.org/myplace.asp> . *Open*.

**Buzz**, Halton (£2,500,000). A multi functional activity centre offering a cinema, exhibitions, performance and arts activities, gym, chill-out rooms, ICT facilities, meeting rooms, and one to one advice and guidance. The centre will be located at the heart of a developing "Youth Village" comprising Riverside College, local High Schools, the Leisure Centre, local library and children's centre. Lead partner: Halton Borough Council. [Public sector]. *Open*

**Dawlish Integrated Youth Centre**, Dawlish (£1,700,000). Facilities at this youth centre for 13 to 19 year olds include a recording studio, a social and games area and a disco area with DJ booth. There is also an IT suite, office area, and facilities where young people can learn vocational skills from building to hairdressing. Lead partner: Devon County Council. [Public sector]. Website: <http://www.devonyouthservice.org.uk/centres/40/dawlish-youth-venue> . *Open*.

**Minehead EYE**, Minehead (£3,155,856). This facility is a dedicated, purpose-built extreme sports skate park and youth centre. Its aim is to give the young people of West Somerset access to facilities which encourage creativity in sports, art, music and media in an exciting yet chilled environment. Minehead EYE is self sustaining, all revenue being generated by the centre. Activities vary from training to fun events including: competitions and events, skate school where older members can teach new users help, skills and training outside of conventional training areas, support and guidance via various support services and community projects. Lead partner: Minehead EYE Community Interest Company. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.mineheadeye.co.uk/> . *Open*.

**Hinckley Club for Young People**, Leicestershire (£4,505,415). This project has created a new club building at Richmond Park, including sports halls, quiet rooms and chill out zone, computer workspace, climbing wall, fitness suite and outdoor skate/BMX and football areas. Lead partner: Hinckley Club for Young People – Reg Charity. (Third sector). Website: <http://www.greentowers.co.uk/> . *Open*.

**myplace Chesterfield**, Chesterfield (£3,108,226). This project refurbished and added to an existing centre. It includes sports halls, an art room, recording and dance studios, performance spaces and chill out area. Lead partner: Fairplay (Chesterfield). [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.fair-play.co.uk/> . *Open*.

**OPEN Centre Project**, Norwich (£1,256,571). This project involved the refurbishment of a listed building into a meeting place for young people. Facilities include a live music venue, theatre, conference and other arts-based activities, a young people's nightclub, climbing wall, educational

kitchen and café, music recording studios and video editing suites, plus a dance and performing arts space, health centre and education space with computers. The project will target young people aged 13 to 25 years but, more specifically, young people under the age of 18. Lead partner: Open Youth Trust Norfolk. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.open247.org.uk/>. *Open.*

**New Horizon Youth Centre**, Camden (£1,500,000). This project has extended, built and refurbished a centre in Camden to benefit young people across London and particularly those who are homeless. Lead partner: New Horizon Youth Centre. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk/>. *Open.*

**Pegasus Theatre Project**, Oxford (£1,800,000). This project create an innovative youth-led dance studio, workshop space, café and improved auditorium for young people. As well as performing arts they can also get involved in the technical aspects of theatre, including sound engineering, lighting, stage production and set building. Lead partner: Pegasus Theatre Trust, Oxford. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.pegasustheatre.org.uk/Home.aspx>. *Open.*

**Salmon Youth Centre**, Bermondsey, London (£1,188,679). This project was built to provide a training kitchen, ICT suite, counselling room, fitness studio, bicycle workshop and drop-in area for support and advice services. Lead partner: Salmon Youth Centre. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.salmoncentre.co.uk/>. *Open.*

**Shoeburyness Youth Centre**, Shoeburyness (£2,988,362). This project involves an environmentally sustainable building offering youth facilities, a social enterprise initiative, a youth volunteering centre and the co-location of a range of youth support workers. Serving young people in the 10-19 age range, facilities include a full size sports hall, climbing wall, gym, dance studio, media lab and recording studio. There is also rehearsal space for local bands, a restaurant (run by partners YMCA), and a garage for bike and car workshops. It is built on a school site. Lead partner: Southend on Sea Borough Council. [Public sector] *Open.*

**Sutton Life Centre**, Sutton, London (£4,074,688). This project has created a modern, multi-functional facility with youth advice services, a citizenship and life skills centre, rehearsal space for arts projects, coffee shop, Internet café, community rooms and a state-of-the-art library. It also includes a regional teaching facility - The Life Skills Zone, which provides innovative tours and experiences for Year 6 and Year 8 pupils. Lead partner: London Borough of Sutton. [Public sector]. Website: <http://www.sutton.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6930>. *Open.*

**TaB Centre Plus**, Enfield, London (£2,168,228). The objective of this project is to reach out to the local community and provide services and facilities that are in acute shortage in the London boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Barnet. It has involved the refurbishment of an existing building to provide a sports hall with semi-sprung floor, climbing wall, gym space and a sprung floor dance and drama studio. When fully complete, it will also house a children's centre, nursery school, music recording studio, TV studio, IT suite and computing centre, counselling and mentoring services, and health information services. Lead partner: Trinity at Bowes Methodist Church. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.trinityatbowes.co.uk/>. *Open.*

**Big Hub**, Leeds (£4,979,376). The new centre will be an extension of what was the sports hall at Merlyn Rees High School on the Belle Isle Estate in Leeds will extend an existing building and include a multi-use games area, café, ICT, motorcycle repair, hairdressing training and creative arts studio. Lead partner: Leeds City Council. [Public sector].



**Bradley Youth Hub**, Pendle (£1,335,533). This project will replace an existing youth centre with a youth-led facility designed by local young people. The centre will include a mini-MUGA sports activity area, IT facilities, basic literacy and numeracy skills courses, careers, training and employment information, and other advice. It will offer studio and performance workshop areas for arts, music and drama, and a café with Internet access. Lead partner: Lancashire County Council. [Public sector].

**Carlisle Youth Zone**, Carlisle (£4,980,234). Carlisle Youth Zone will be a new youth facility in the city centre for young people, including a sports hall, climbing wall, games and social area, kitchen, arts/crafts zone, changing rooms, kitchen, hall and multi-purpose rooms. Run in partnership with the Richard Rose Academy Trust and University of Cumbria. Lead partner: Onside North West Ltd. [Third sector].

**The Hub**, Dartford (£2,200,000). This project will build new and refurbish an existing building to house facilities for young people aged 8-21yrs old including, a music studio, rehearsal room, multi-use activity area, IT suite and chill out lounge. Lead partner: YMCA Thames Gateway, Kent. [Third sector].

**The Hub**, Barnard Castle (£4,951,830). This project will provide a building comprising a café, music rehearsal facilities, dance and drama studios, a performance area, art and media rooms. There will also be 36-bed accommodation for visiting youth groups. Lead partner: Teesdale Community Resources. [Third sector].

**Northern Lights Academy**, Hartlepool (£4,516,000). This project will create a specialist performing arts facility including all varieties of dance, music practice and recording. Operates in partnership with St Hild's Church of England School (on whose disused playing field the project will be built), Northern School of Music, and Minto Music (an organisation that specialises in music recording). Lead partner: Headland Development Company, Hartlepool. [Third sector].

**Primetime**, Bournemouth (£1,300,000). Youth provision covering performance, music, film, and radio across two sites. The project's hub at Pokesdown will include an acoustic shell and performance area, as well as a wide range of multi-media facilities. A separate wing will offer supported accommodation for vulnerable young people and a children's centre. A site at Boscombe will focus on community projects, planning and business support for youth enterprises. A youth bus will also undertake outreach work. Lead partner: Bournemouth YMCA. [Third sector].

**Young Person's Village**, Stoke-on-Trent (£4,800,000). This project will renovate and add to an existing YMCA building, to include a sports hall, library and basement areas beneath residential blocks to provide additional training and exhibition facilities. Lead partner: Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire YMCA Foyer. [Third sector].

**myplace at Westfield Folk House Young Peoples Centre**, Mansfield (£5,000,000). Westfield Folk House is a Grade II listed building that has been used as a youth facility for 60 years. It will be completely refurbished and extended, to create two large open spaces, multiple smaller rooms, a café, performance space and dance studio. The grounds will offer a multi-use games area and allotments. Support services for homeless young people and those with hearing impairments are also based there. Lead partner: Nottinghamshire County Council. [Public sector].

**Showroom**, Lincoln. (£4,842,500). The refurbishment of a disused car showroom into a two-floor youth centre. The building will comprise a gym, performing arts space, games areas, recording studio, indoor climbing wall, safer driving car simulator and cyber cafe. The centre will aim to reach isolated

young people, such as those with disabilities and who have been excluded from mainstream education. Lead partner: Lincolnshire YMCA Ltd. [Third sector].

**Blackburn Youth Zone**, Blackburn (£5,000,000) - With significant private sector backing, this new youth facility in the city centre will offer young people access to a climbing wall, boxing gym, fitness suite, arts, dance and football, and support and advice on a range of issues from support agencies including Connexions. Lead partner: OnSide North West Limited. [Third sector].

**Chesterton's Vision**, Newcastle-Under-Lyme (£4,389,474) A project to replace an existing youth facility with a centre serving Chesterton and Holditch incorporating a new sports hall, fitness suite, dance studio, cinema/TV area, arts and crafts zone, IT suite, kitchen/coffee bar and meeting rooms. Young people in need of additional support services or at risk of exclusion from mainstream school will be catered for at the centre. Lead partner: Staffordshire County Council. [Public sector].

**Culture Fusion**, Bradford (£5,000,000). The project will see the refurbishment and extension of an existing building to create a six-storey climbing wall, gym, dance studio, hostel accommodation, IT suite and rooftop café. Lead partner: City Of Bradford YMCA. [Third sector].

**Dream Street**, Havering (£4,704,492) A new centre in the Harold Hill area, which will include a recording studio, cycle and motorbike workshop, IT suite and an urban sports area for skateboarding, blades and BMX. Lead partner: London Borough of Havering. [Public sector].

**ExtremeConnexions**, Hemel Hempstead (£4,999,684). This project will offer young people an exciting range of extreme sports and access to advice and information on issues including employment, education, training, benefits, housing, sexual health, counselling, volunteering, parenting, bullying, substance abuse and diet. Lead partner: Dacorum Sports Trust Ltd. [Third sector].

**Hackney Youth Hubbz**, Hackney. (£4,990,902). An area-wide 'hub and spoke' approach to improving youth facilities. Includes two new buildings and three refurbishments. Lead partner: London Borough of Hackney. [Public sector].

**Hastings Youth Hub**, Hastings (£4,246,275). Conversion of a church building into a youth facility. Features will include a live performance area, music studio and workshop, digital media and enterprise space. Lead partner: Hastings Trust Limited. [Third sector].

**Hornsey Road Baths Youth Centre**, Islington (£3,547,720). The project involves refurbishing and remodelling the old gatehouse and laundry buildings into a facility including performance space, media centre, dance studio and café. Lead partner: London Borough of Islington. [Public sector].

**HUT**, Wakefield (£5,000,000). This new building, situated in the Airedale Estate of Castleford, will feature a sports hall, bowling alley and sports courts, as well as a 'chill out' zone, computer lab, cinema, and conference areas. The project will also work in close partnership with schools to provide an alternative curriculum. Lead partner: Wakefield Metropolitan District Council. [Public sector].

**ICE Centre** (Inspiration, Creativity and Entertainment), Stockton (£4,995,250). The centre will provide a range of activities and services for young people including sports, arts and social enterprise training. Lead partner: Stockton on Tees Borough Council. [Public sector].

**Integrating Youth Project**, Ladywood, Birmingham (£4,999,802). This facility will include a sports hall, youth radio station, IT room, kitchen, social area, media centre, workshop area and performance arts room. Activities will include sports, fitness, arts, music, education and social enterprise. There will

also be drug and alcohol support services, sexual health advice, training advice, and counselling services. Lead partner: Birmingham City Council. [Public sector].

**Leicester City Youth Hub** (£5.0m). The Hub was to consist of six themed zones, each offering different activities and spaces where young people can meet. Activities were anticipated to include a climbing wall, skateboard and BMX track, sports area, performing arts space, recording studio, dance and aerobics rooms and a library and research centre. Lead partner: Leicester City Council. [Public sector].

**Manchester Youth Zone**, Harpurhey (£5,000,000). A new centre that will include a sports hall with climbing wall, two multi-purpose halls and changing rooms. Lead partner: OnSide North West Limited. [Third sector].

**Middlesbrough myplace at the Custom House** (£4,262,062). The GRADE II listed Custom House will house a performance and dance hall, café, chill out space, crèche, climbing wall, media studio, interactive library, music facilities, gym and a bowling alley. Outdoors, there will be a multi-use sports pitch, allotments and wildlife gardens. Lead partner: Middlesbrough Council. [Public sector].

**myplace Bristol** (£5,000,000). A city centre facility including a climbing wall, outdoor ball court and fitness suite, a health and beauty room, radio, film and music studios, retail outlets, exhibition areas and a café and kitchen. Lead partner: Kingswood Foundation. [Third sector].

**myplace in Doncaster** (£5,000,000). The Bentley Hub, near Doncaster town centre, will feature a skatepark, café, dance studio, outdoor games area and multimedia facilities including a recording studio. The Spoke, in Conisbrough, will have multi-use activity rooms and space for vocational training and accredited learning. Lead partner: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council. [Public sector].

**myplace in Solihull** (£4,990,000). A youth hub including a multi gym, a multi purpose hall with telescopic seating, a climbing wall, a boxing area, a cyber café, a recording studio, a sensory room, a multi media facility and a quiet area. Seven support agencies will also be based at the centre. Lead partner: The Colebridge Trust Limited. [Third sector].

**myplace@Vine Lane**, Newcastle on Tyne (£4,924,422). This centre's range of activities includes sports such as I-ball (a range of sports played illuminated by ultraviolet), music decks, a chill out zone, a café with free internet access and a hairdressing salon for training. Support services will include agencies providing sexual health education, counselling and mental health advice. Lead partner: Newcastle On Tyne City Council. [Public sector].

**NGY**, Nottingham (£4,906,000). This project involves the refurbishment and extension of an existing building in the city centre over three years. It will include a music recording studio, DVD production area, dance studio, café and gym. Lead partner: Nottingham City Council. [Public sector].

**Oldham Youth Zone**, Oldham (£4,994,577). Facilities will include a sports hall with a climbing wall, an external floodlit multi-use games area, fitness suite and a coffee bar. There also will be several flexible recreational and social areas for arts, music and dance, an atrium, training rooms, offices, a coffee bar and catering facilities. Lead partner: OnSide North West Limited. [Third sector].

**OurPlace**, Knowsley (£4,999,274). The project will create a new youth centre based in Huyton, which will provide indoor facilities for a creative performance and media space, arts suite and recording studio. It includes a café with terrace and shop, IT area, offices, climbing wall, dance studio, gym space, games room and a wildlife and flower area. It will also open up exciting new spaces for

adventure and environmental activities, including allotments and a BMX/skate park. Lead partner: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. [Public sector].

**Parkfield**, Torbay (£4,875,000). This project will refurbish an existing centre and build a new facility to include a skate park, games area, performance space, recording studio, café, BMX dirt track and rope course. Two mobile centres in Brixham and Eltham will also be set up. Lead partner: Torbay Council. [Public sector].

**Peoples' Place**, Sheffield (£2,144,595). This new build project will combine a multi-purpose indoor youth facility with an outdoor sports centre and all-weather football pitch, providing young people from the local community with a wide variety of activities. Lead partner: Sheffield City Council. [Public sector].

**Phoenix Centre**, Bognor (£1,500,000). A new youth complex on the site of the brand new Bognor Regis Community College. Includes provision for the performing arts, sport and learning how to run a radio station. Lead partner: West Sussex County Council. [Public sector].

**Plasnet Young Peoples Hub**, Newham (£4,980,000). The new Hub will include a wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities including a computer suite, recording studio, chill out zone, abseiling tower, mountain bike track and allotment. Lead partner: Community Links Trust Ltd. [Third sector].

**Rotherham myplace** (£3,356,750). The new youth hub, built on the site of a disused car park, will offer a range of facilities including a graffiti art room, IT suite, cinema, performance hall and rooftop café. The project will focus on social enterprise activity and recreational activities. An alternative curriculum will be offered to young people who have been excluded from mainstream schools. Lead partner: Chantry YMCA. [Third sector].

**Roundwood Centre**, Harlesden (£4,997,151). The centre will include an IT suite, café, arts workshop, climbing wall and performance area and will enable young people to get involved in dance, theatre, cookery, sports, computing and radio broadcasting. Lead partner: London Borough of Brent. [Public sector].

**Southpoint** - the Blackpool Youth Hub Centre (£3,996,049). The new centre, being developed on an existing campus with a children's centre, primary school, sports college, leisure centre and library, will include a community kitchen, café, ICT suite and a gym. Lead partner: Blackpool Council. [Public sector].

**Southside Regeneration Youth Project**, Bath (£2,036,473). The former Southside Youth Centre is to be transformed into a new venue with a community café, music studio, ICT suite and various sports facilities. Lead partner: Bath and North East Somerset Council. [Public sector].

**TeenSpace**, Shrewsbury and Oswestry (£3,900,000). A rural 'hub and spoke' project including a new youth hub in Oswestry and the refurbishment of an existing centre in Shrewsbury, and further outreach through mobile provision. Lead partner: Shropshire County Council. [Public sector].

**Thamesmead Youth Leisure Zone**, Thamesmead (£5,000,000). A mix of new build, extension and refurbishment that will transform The Southern Arches in Thamesmead offer young people opportunities such as sailing, climbing, dance, music and educational courses. Lead partner: Trust Thamesmead Ltd. [Third sector].

**The Pitch - A Place to Go**, Harrow (£4,198,000). Led by Watford FC's Community Sports and Education Trust, the project will see a new centre built on the Cedars Estate, Harrow Weald that will

include a multiuse sports hall, gym, café, IT suite art room and recording studio and will have a 3G multi-use pitch outdoors. Lead partner: Watford FC's Community Sports and Education Trust. [Third sector].

**Toxteth Youth and Sports Centre**, Liverpool (£2,300,000). The new centre will expand a variety of leisure and social opportunities to include a climbing wall, an IT room, and a small cinema room and chill out area complete and snack bar. It will also offer opportunities for dance, drama and arts and crafts, along with vocational, educational, volunteering and mentoring programmes. Lead partner: Liverpool City Council. [Public sector].

**Trafford Youth Village**, Partington (£4,999,951). Based at Broadoak High School, the centre will feature a 400-seat theatre/cinema with retractable seating, a projection room with music recording and film editing facilities, a sports area with a virtual floor for hockey, gymnastics and other sports, a gallery/exhibition centre with studios, conference facilities, an ICT room, catering and refreshment areas as well as youth services. Lead partner: Broadoak High School. [Public sector].

**Tuned In**, Redcar (£4,946,280). A seafront building that will comprise a central atrium, main hall, and stage surrounded by workshop areas, a green room, beauty suite, IT suite, multi-use area, quiet zone, café, kitchen, gallery, juice bar and reception. Outdoor areas include patio space and balconies. Lead partner: Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. [Public sector].

**XCHANGE Project**, Stowmarket (£4,750,500). Includes multimedia centre, community radio station, creative arts zone, multi-use hall with facilities for concerts and performances, IT learning zone, conference rooms, community café, training kitchen and a life skills training zone. Outside there will be a sports court, horticulture project and barbecue area. There will also be emergency supported accommodation and youth advice and counselling sessions. Lead partner: Suffolk County Council. [Public sector].

**Youth Centerprise**, Longbridge (£4,998,500). The building will include multi functional rooms, performing arts space, multi use theatre/sports hall/conference space, ICT suite, media centre, workshop area, MUGA, cafe and garden. Activities will include sports, creative and performing arts, education, active citizenship and volunteering, youth business and social enterprise. Counselling and health services will also be offered. Lead partner: Birmingham City Council. [Public sector].

**Hull YP Interchange**, Hull (£5,000,000). Sited in the centre of Hull, this project will create an environmentally sound five-storey building that will provide young people with activities including performing arts, skateboarding, parkour, music recording and film making. There will be chill-out zones, access to healthy food and drink and enterprise units. Support services will include advice on accommodation, substance misuse and teenage conception, careers and training. Lead partner: Kingston on Hull City Council. [Public sector].

**myplace, Walsall** (£1,287,000). This facility will provide a range of activities for young people as well as access to support services. Also providing flexible spaces for training as well as a health clinic. It will be based at Joseph Leckie Community Technology College. Lead partner: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. [Public sector].

**Orangebox Young People's Centre**, Halifax (£3,826,972). Aiming to target disengaged young people, this project will have two sites. The main centre will offer a performance space, recording studio, IT suite, enterprise start-up units, a roof garden and a rooftop skate park. The second centre will offer climbing wall, skating, boxing, aerobics, football and a running track. Advice on housing,



health, violence, crime and careers will be offered. Lead partner: The Square Chapel Trust. [Third sector].

**Project Inspiration@ Edmonton Youth Hub**, Enfield (£3,015,000). Targeted at 13-19 year olds, especially those who are not in education, employment or training, the activities offered will include arts, a range of sport, music studios, radio and TV broadcasting, arts and driving simulator. Support services will include advice on alternative education, teenage pregnancy and young parenting, healthy eating, substance-misuse, counselling and anti-knife workshops. Lead partner: London Borough of Enfield. [Public sector].

**Spotlight Youth Centre** (£3,873,000). This project will bring together local young people aged 13 to 19 from some of the most deprived areas in England. Activities offered will include a range of sports, music, cookery, dance and MCing as well as counselling, and training. Lead partner: Poplar Housing and Regeneration Community Association (HARCA). [Third sector].

**STEPS: Weymouth Young People's Union**, Weymouth (£3,056,240). A two site project with the main centre offering dance, cinema, football, cricket, netball and a café. Advice services will address sexual health, mental health, bullying, education and training opportunities. The second site will offer outdoor activities, canoeing, sailing, archery and climbing. Lead partner: Dorset County Council. [Public sector].

**The Street**, Scarborough (£3,983,902). This project will offer a multi-media suite, street dance, music, arts, sports, cooking and mini-cinema to young people aged 13-19. Particularly benefiting young people from Scarborough communities within the 10% most disadvantaged in England the project will also offer support including guidance on training and employment. Lead partner: Coast and Moors Voluntary Action. [Third sector]. Website: <http://www.coastandmoors.org>

**TOKKO**, Luton (£4,753,800) This project will offer activities including media production, sports, art, music, street dance and cookery club. It will benefit young people aged 13-19 (up to 24 for young people with disabilities) from across Luton including young people in care or in hostels, young people not in education and young offenders. Support services will include advice on employment, education and sexual health.. Lead partner: Voluntary Action Luton. [Third sector].

**Wells Park Youth Facility**, Sydenham (£3,500,000). This project plans to offer a training kitchen, recording studio, IT, youth theatre, horticulture, skateboarding, graffiti art and dance. There will also be advice services on sexual health, housing, substance misuse and finance. Lead partner: London Borough of Lewisham. [Public sector].

**'Y'** - Stoke Aldermoor Inspiration Centre, Coventry (£2.2m). A single storey youth centre linked to supported accommodation, a multi-faith zone and a health centre. It was to contain training suites, a youth enterprise zone, computer suite, internet café, media lab and studios, large multi use hall, youth kitchen, chill out area, arts and craft centre as well as interview and counselling rooms. Lead partner: Coventry and Warwickshire YMCA. [Third sector].

These details are correct as of April 2011



## Appendix 2: an overview of the methodology

### Introduction

Our earlier work sought to establish a baseline for the evaluation of standard track **myplace** projects, founded in a descriptive account of the types of projects that are emerging. For that work two elements of data were analysed.

First, application documents were examined to understand the range and nature of the **myplace** applications and to provide some basic descriptive quantitative information. Sources of variation were analysed by case to permit a detailed initial exploratory analysis of documents.

Second, and the major focus of the first stage of analysis, the qualitative dimensions of documents were assessed. This documentary analysis provided information about the ways that projects were being developed in the localities. From this, eighteen sites were contacted for telephone interview. The aim of the interviews was to learn how the issues discussed in outline in plans, were manifest in interaction with the structuring features of localities. Concurrent with the above process, five case studies were selected, approved by BIG/DfE, to add to three case studies originally identified in the scheme as forming the core of in-depth work. These eight sites were included in the telephone interviews, to provide material for inclusion in a Baseline Report. These case study projects are based in Minehead, Shoeburyness, Stoke on Trent, Torbay, Bradford, Oldham, Hackney and Dartford.

All eight case studies were visited and key individuals interviewed to provide data for an Interim Evaluation conducted in March 2010. Published contextual material from each case study area and the results of a questionnaire distributed to all 62 **myplace** projects and completed by 59 of them, further informed that evaluation.

This final evaluation builds on previous stages but is derived primarily from data gathered during further visits to the eight case studies originally identified in the Baseline Report. A range of interviews have been undertaken with key participants, members of community groups, managers, partners, young people and interested members of local communities, depending on who was available when the visits took place. Follow-up telephone interviews with project leaders have added further focused information. In addition a further seven projects have been visited and further two have participated in telephone interviews in order to provide a wider view from projects which are already open, or on the verge of opening. The projects visited are Barnard Castle Hub, Co. Durham, Hinckley Club for Young People, Leicestershire, ICE Stockton, New Horizon Youth Centre, Camden, Northern Lights Academy, Hartlepool, The Salmon Youth Centre, Bermondsey, Sutton Life Centre, Sutton. Those which participated in telephone interviews are Open, Norwich and myplace, Chesterfield.

The work involving project visits and telephone interviews is supplemented by data from a second survey of the 68 projects now participating in the scheme, from whom 62 responses were received during February 2011.

## Case Studies

The purpose of the case study work is to gain a deeper understanding across a range of projects of the emergent issues in different local settings, each of which is developing their **myplace** project in the context of specific local issues and priorities using models of development and practice relevant to their circumstances. In this sense, each of the case studies is unique.

Those included in the evaluation are not intended to be representative sample. Within the constraints of the extent to which projects had made progress at the point of the interim evaluation, the cases selected each contained features which might be highlighted as a variable which would impact on the nature of development. This involved

- Contextual considerations: historical; geographical; environmental; organisational.
- Systemic features: the nature of the partnerships; voluntary/statutory/third sector balance; management structures; participatory models; business planning.
- Organisational frameworks: hub-spoke; satellite; institutional location.
- Activities focus: aims and purposes; range; specialist and generic; fundraising.

With the significance of these differences in mind, the case studies are mainly an opportunity to study in-depth the ways in which the different projects develop around the key objectives and anticipated outcomes of **myplace**. The questions used for interviews, observations and in textual analysis were constructed with primary reference to the four key planned outcomes drawing on interim indicators and key performance indicators as identified at an earlier point in the evaluation process.

These questions were further refined with around a set of leading practice themes which were identified at an earlier stage of the evaluation process as follows:

1. The development, implementation and measurement of an effective youth facility strategy;
2. The nature of links established between local agencies to deliver joint action;
3. The question of establishing a scheme as 'world-class' (what a world-class facility looks like and how it works);
4. The planning and delivery of facilities against the perceived ideal of 'world-class';
5. Methods used for engaging young people and communities in planning and delivery;
6. Securing funding and generating income;
7. Running a world-class facility to achieve real advantages for young people;
8. The significance of leadership.

The questions devised for the cases studies were used selectively with different respondents within each case study, including managers, partners, workers, young people and representatives of other interested groups from the locality. They have also been used to guide the organisation and processing of the data.

Because of the differences of developmental stages among the case studies the level of information and the number of people who could make a contribution has varied between cases. In some cases it was necessary to conduct conversational interviews rather than using structured interview schedules. There were some difficulties in arranging visits to suit participants in situations where attentions was fully absorbed by crucial stages of development of the projects. Nevertheless, it has been possible to

talk to at least one person from each of the main case studies and where particular questions have not been answered during a visit, follow-up telephone interviews have focused upon missing information.

The case study visits were contextualised by information gathered from *desk research* which involved gathering factual, contextual information about each area, and young people in that area, from five data sources: Tell Us Survey, Citizenship survey, British Household survey, CLG Places Analysis Tool, Instantatless. It also involved revisiting the applications and business plans of each case study.

The earlier visits were intended to establish interpersonal contact between evaluators and participants in the scheme and to provide a basis on which future case study work might proceed. Researchers were sensitive to local situations and to the need to establish constructive working relationships with participants. They approached key individuals within each situation and negotiated a date to visit when that individual would be able to offer time to discuss **myplace**. This was followed up with a request that the individual concerned should identify other participants who might be available on the relevant day and to facilitate discussions with those individuals and groups. A specific request was made that young people be prioritised in this process highlighting the importance given to youth participation within the scheme. This work paid dividends for subsequent visits and respondents were generally positive about giving time and offering information for this final evaluation report.

Follow-up telephone interviews addressed specific gaps apparent in the analysis of the data from the case study visits

Visits and telephone interviews involving additional projects followed a similar approach to that undertaken in the main case studies. However, although interviews were undertaken, the emphasis in these visits was upon gaining a general understanding of the ways in which projects were working and the issues and problems confronted by key participants.

Where possible, and in most cases during case study visits and telephone interviews, discussions were recorded and transcribed. Where this was not possible, research notes were made immediately after the discussion. The data was thematically organised around the key aims and outcomes anticipated by the **myplace** scheme.

## Annual Survey

The annual survey in 2011 followed the principles of that undertaken in 2010 involving all projects participating in the **myplace** initiative. It was intended to offer a snapshot overview of progress to date within the scheme and to highlight any significant developments, issues or concerns to date. The survey offers a simple, but useful comparator for the case study information, while at the same time providing an extra layer of information.

It was intended from the outset that the survey should be a supplement to the case studies. Because it was not a primary source of information, and because there is ample evidence that responses to complex and time consuming surveys can be intrusive, elicit a low response rate, and yield data which requires complex interpretive analysis, it was decided that this survey should be devised using a simple framework, with a view to it being easy and quick to complete and that it should lend itself to simple factual analysis. As such the survey was designed using *SurveyMonkey*. It used a framework of four main headings devised primarily, but not exclusively, to questions around leading practice,

strategy and impact. The questionnaire employed mainly simple choice and ranked scale questions, although some space was made for comment where appropriate.

These four heading around which the questionnaire was organised were:

1. **Partnership.** The survey sought to gain a picture of the shape of the partnership and a judgement with on how it is functioning relative to the lead agency. Respondents were asked to identify any emerging or current issues based on initial statements from earlier Rowntree and other research on partnership working.
2. **The Facility.** Here the survey questions relate strongly to the evaluation questions identified around leading practice.
3. **Participation.** The questions in this category sought some indication of the level of involvement of young people and local community members in the development of the new facility.
4. **Strategy.** These questions relate to the second broad area of the *myplace* evaluation - To what extent has *myplace* funding impacted on youth strategy, services and facilities provision more widely?

The survey link was sent to a central contact – with the request that they either complete it themselves or pass it on to the person most suited to complete it. Those who did not complete within the 3 week time schedule were subsequently reminded and asked to give it their attention.

The responses to multiple-choice questions were analysed using standard procedures – and where appropriate using cross-tabulation. Responses to open questions were coded and grouped thematically. The data was then used in the analysis based on the key aims and outcomes associated with the *myplace* brief.

## Appendix 3: the 2011 *myplace* annual survey

### Introduction

The *myplace* annual survey (of which this is the second) is designed to give a snapshot of some of the key dimensions of the programme. It covers five main areas:

- Basic information about the programme, lead partners and who was completing the survey.
- The nature and experience of partnership working within the *myplace* programme.
- The location, design and development of the facility.
- The nature and scope of participation and involvement by young people and local community members in the design and operation of the facility.
- The impact of the *myplace* project on local services and strategies.

The survey was completed by one person – identified as a ‘lead contact’ - in each project.

### Survey design

The survey was designed in consultation with the lead partner in *myplace* support team and the evaluation team at the BIG Lottery Fund. The questions concerning partnership, design and participation were further informed by a literature review and discussion within the evaluation team.

Participants were assured that answers would be aggregated, and that reporting would not identify specific projects. However, they were also aware that their responses were feeding into a public document clearly identified with a programme through which they were receiving funding. It is reasonable to assume that this may have resulted in some ‘positive’ reporting. However, it is also reasonable to assume that respondents may also have used the survey as an opportunity to give feedback around the operation of the programme in order that adjustments could be made.

The later sections on participation and the impact on local services and strategy used more open-ended questions. In part this was because the majority of the projects were at a reasonably early stage of implementation. Some of the processes and impacts that would have been useful to explore would not, thus, be necessarily in play. A further factor, particularly with regard to the impact on services and strategies, was recognition that following the banking crisis of 2008 significant changes could be occurring and that a standard multiple choice approach might not surface these.

### Survey implementation

The survey was completed on-line (using SurveyMonkey). The invitation to take part in the survey was mailed on February 1, 2011; the final response was received on March 2, 2011.

Of the 68 active projects involved in the *myplace* programme, 62 took part in the survey – a 90% response rate (down from 95% last year).

## Survey analysis

The responses to multiple-choice questions were analysed using standard procedures – and where appropriate using cross-tabulation. Responses to open questions were coded and grouped. As such they provide some indicative material worthy of further exploration.

## This report

In this report we have set out the responses to each question. Quotations from respondents are in *italic*. We have altered some material to protect anonymity. Our replacement text is in square brackets.

## The participating projects

Survey responses were received from 18 fast track projects, and 35 Round 1 standard track projects and 9 Round 2 projects.

30 of the projects reported that they had lead partners located in the public sector, 32 in the third sector. There were no private sector lead partners.

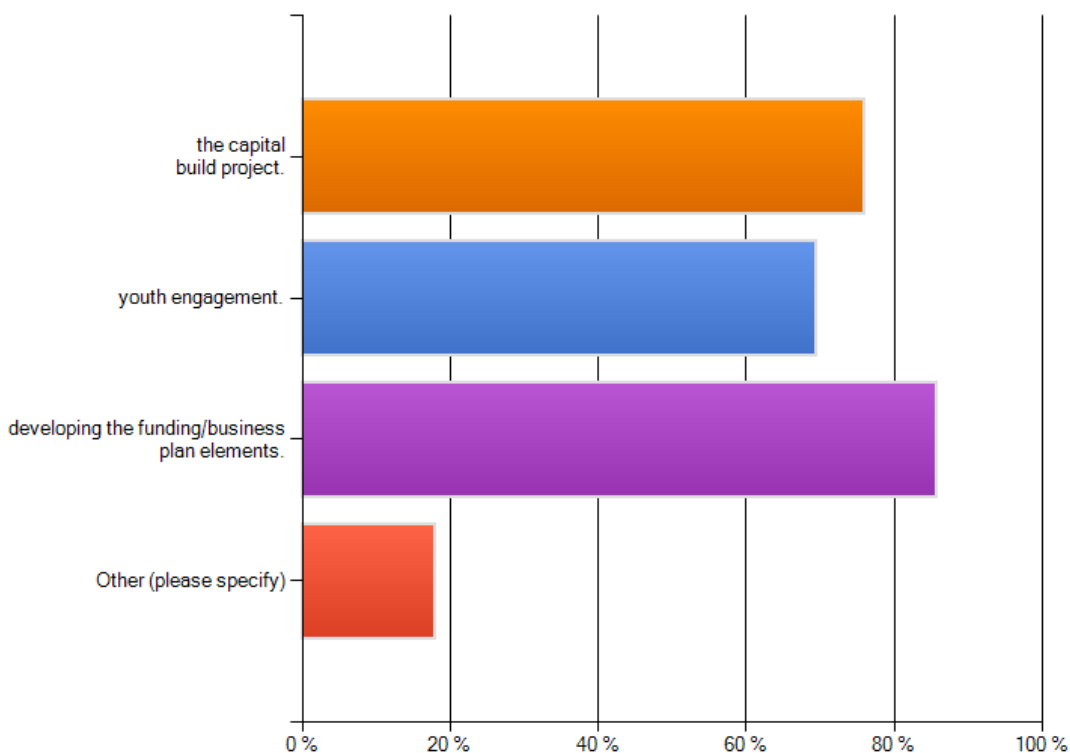
Respondents were asked identify the role they had in taking forward the **myplace** project. They could make a multiple response and add their own comment.

As can be seen from *Figure 1*, over 85% of respondents described themselves as being involved in developing the funding/business plan elements of the project. It is noteworthy that a high proportion of respondents had multiple roles with regard to the **myplace** project.



Figure 1

Please identify the role you have in taking forward the myplace project. You can tick more than one box. Is your role mainly related to:



Whether the project's lead partner was in the public or third sector did not make a significant difference as to what roles were taken, although a larger number of third sector respondents were involved in developing the funding/business plan elements.

## Partnership

### The shape of the partnership

When asked to describe the shape of the **myplace** partnership they were involved with, 40 per cent of the respondents said that one agency was the dominant partner (down from 57% last year). When the 'other' comments were taken into consideration this figure rises – the change here reflects what the partnerships are working towards – particular where the local authority is the lead partner. The government's expectation that once construction is complete all local authority-led projects are

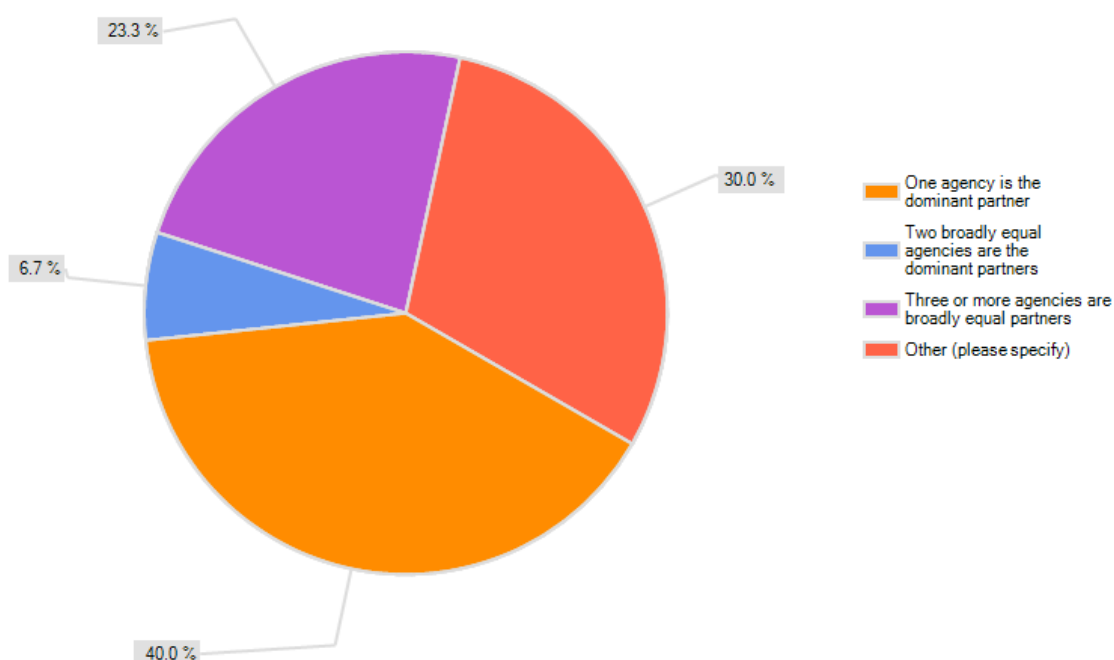
expected to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people has been reflected in this result.

Just under 7% of the respondents described the partnership as involving two broadly equal agencies as being the dominant partners.

23% of the projects are described as having three or more agencies as broadly equal partners. Of these projects more will have a notional lead partner in the public sector (unchanged from last year).

Figure 2

**How would you describe the shape of the myplace partnership you are involved in?**



**The gains from partnership working**

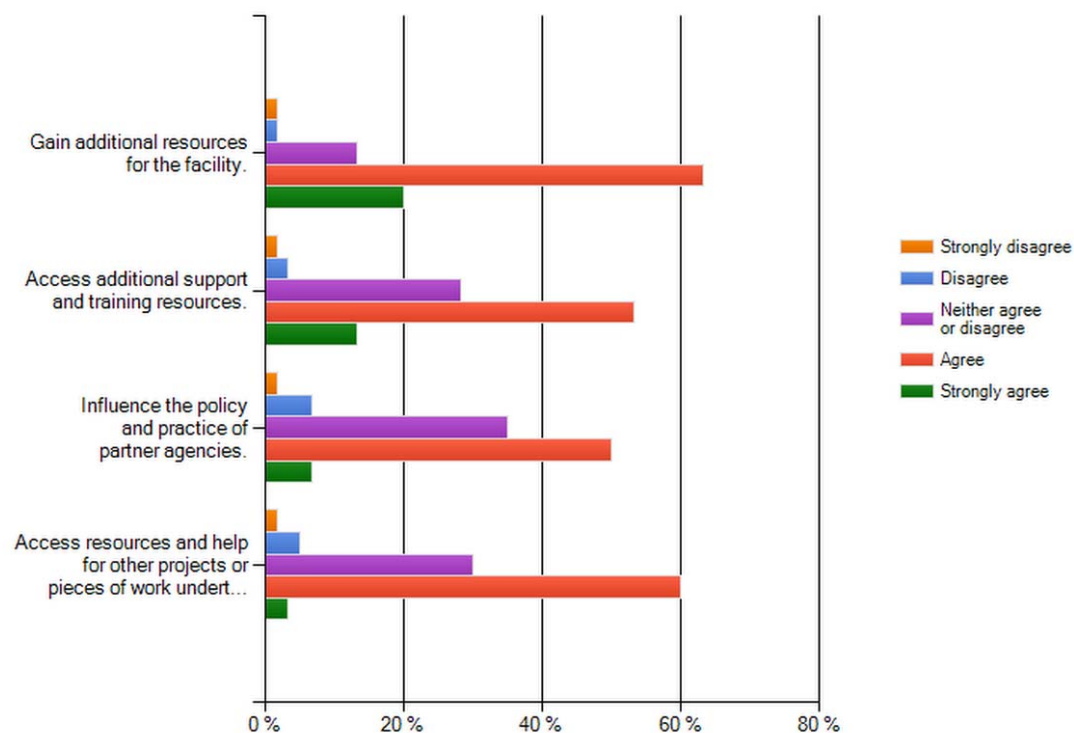
As can be seen from *Figure 3* there is broad agreement from within **myplace** projects that there are gains for the individual (lead) agency from partnership working. The strongest of these concerns the ability to access additional support and training resources, and the ability to gain additional resources for the facility. Significantly, the latter gained the largest number of strongly positive responses.

The number of negative responses to questions around the benefits of partnership working to the individual centre was relatively small. Similarly, but less markedly, strongly positive responses were

relatively rare – especially with regard to the ability to influence policy and access resources and help for other pieces of work.

Figure 3

Please identify any gains made by your agency from being involved in local partnership working within the myplace Programme. Your agency has been able to:



## Issues

The picture painted by respondents of the partnerships they were involved in was relatively positive. In part this may arise from the large number of projects that have one agency as a dominant partner. Over three quarters of respondents report that there is trust between partners, and clarity with regard to the purpose of the partnership.

As can be seen from Figure 4, there are two key areas where tensions or issues appear to be arising in a significant number of partnerships.

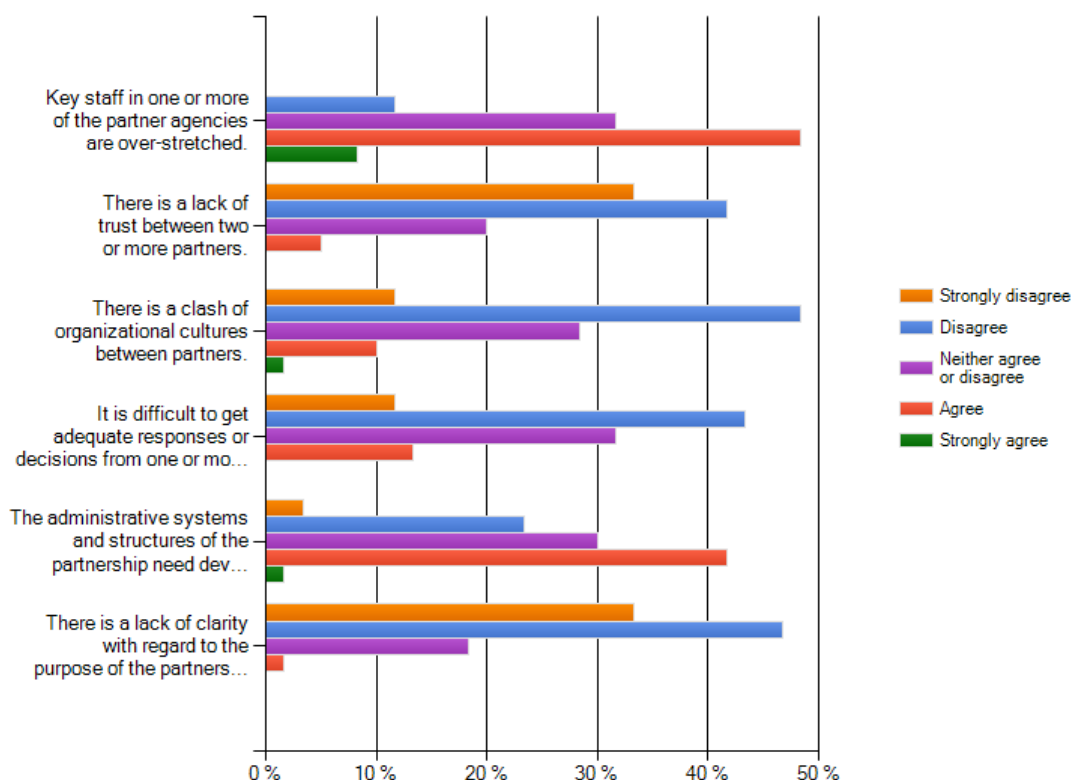
The strongest issue is that key staff in one or more of the partner agencies are over-stretched. 56% of respondents report an issue in this area (the same as last year)

A less strong, but still very significant issue concerns the need to develop the administrative systems and structures of the partnership. 43% of respondents highlight an issue in this area (slightly down on last year).

Significantly, the number of respondents reporting that there is a clash of organisational cultures between partners was down to 12% (from 23% in 2010).

Figure 4

**Please identify any issues in the work of your local partnership.**



**Additional comments**

Where respondents made additional comments about the **myplace** partnerships they were involved in what they had to say was broadly positive. For example:

*We have all managed to work across different organisational cultures, with tact and diplomacy. The establishment of an overall aim for our **myplace** project, facilitated the cohesiveness of the individuals involved.*

*We have developing good partnership working arrangements with a number of different agencies, but in particular with [the] Council. This has enabled us to have open, honest, trusting and supportive relationship with them which we have valued and has led to the development of other projects and initiatives outwith the **myplace** scheme.*

*The partnership took a long time to develop but has now reached a point where mostly it works very well. Partners have reached some level of understanding about the each*

*others pressures and organisational responsibilities and have supported each other where possible/appropriate. Our Partners have given up staff time and resources to work with young people, and to participate in **myplace** and other, training/consultation exercises associated with the project.*

*It is, in our experience commendable and reassuring that, even in times of increasingly difficult public spending constraints, our partners are willing to stand by commitments made to the project which will represent good value for money as a result of leveraging large contributions from the private sector.*

*Each partner brings a unique contribution which has helped us to develop a range of creative opportunities and initiatives both in relation to **myplace** and beyond.*

But there were problems – which have been exacerbated by the current financial situation:

*A lot more work involved than I could have ever thought possible! Very difficult at this time for all partners with funding cuts*

*Spending review has meant the withdrawal of staff from the project*

*There is an overwhelming want to work in partnership but this is largely restricted as it involves clarity around revenue and funding. If the government were more clear and timely around what core resources for young people will be funding over the next 3-5 years then LA's and third sector providers would be in a stronger position to know exactly what services can be prioritised and delivered. The current strains [around] funding for youth services is detrimental to the creativity of **myplace** and the ability to challenge and explore new areas of development and funding.*

*The main strain on the partnership is the continuing uncertainty about the continuation of the funding.*

*We have a good and strong partnership, but I think will face challenges over the next 18 months to 2 years. The issue is that all organisation involved are working in a fast changing environment, facing major restructures, much reduced budgets and uncertainty. The public and voluntary sector organisations do not know where future funding is coming from and some key players may not be in their jobs or some smaller local or voluntary organisations may not even exist in 2 years' time. I think that is the biggest challenge facing our partnership: to remain strong, engage new players as appropriate and adapt fast to a changing environment.*

## The facility

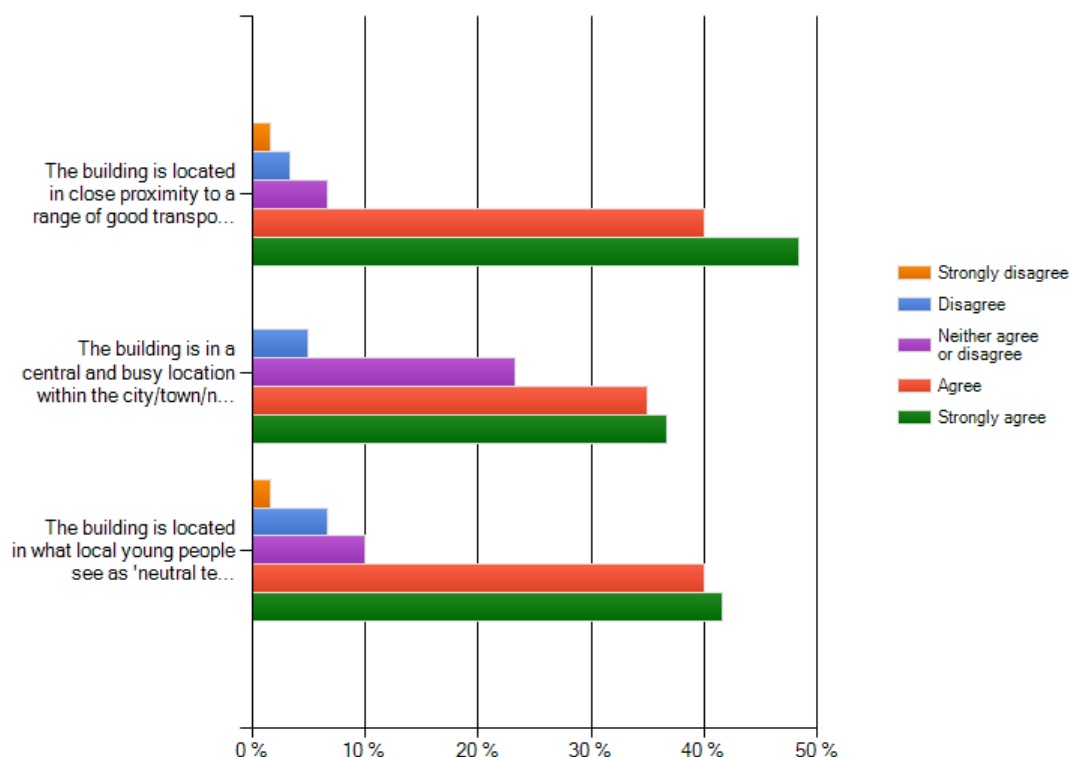
### Location

Respondents were very positive about the location of their new facility. Over 88% of respondents judged that it is located in close proximity to a range of good transport links. Over 81% said it is in what local young people see as 'neutral territory' i.e. it is not in an area that is seen as 'belonging' to a particular group who might be hostile to them.

Fewer agreed that the building is in a central and busy location within the city/town/neighbourhood. (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

**Location. Please reflect on the location of the myplace development with which you are involved. Rate your facility on the scale below.**



There have been one or two problems with interim arrangements:

*The centre has had to move temporarily to a building just across the road, opposite the new centre (on the old site). This is considered as in the Asian community, even though it is literally directly across the road, and the local youth leader has recently commented on the way this has led to a significant reduction in the number of white young people attending sessions. He has already pinpointed this as an area for particular attention for the new centre, not to be seen as belonging to any specific community.*

## Design

Responses to the design of the new facility were strongly positive. This may well be the result of the relatively high degree of involvement by young people in consultations around this area – and the expertise (both internally and externally) that projects were able to call upon. It could arise from the



general optimism associated with building projects of this sort. Whatever the case, the numbers of respondents strongly agreeing is particularly noteworthy.

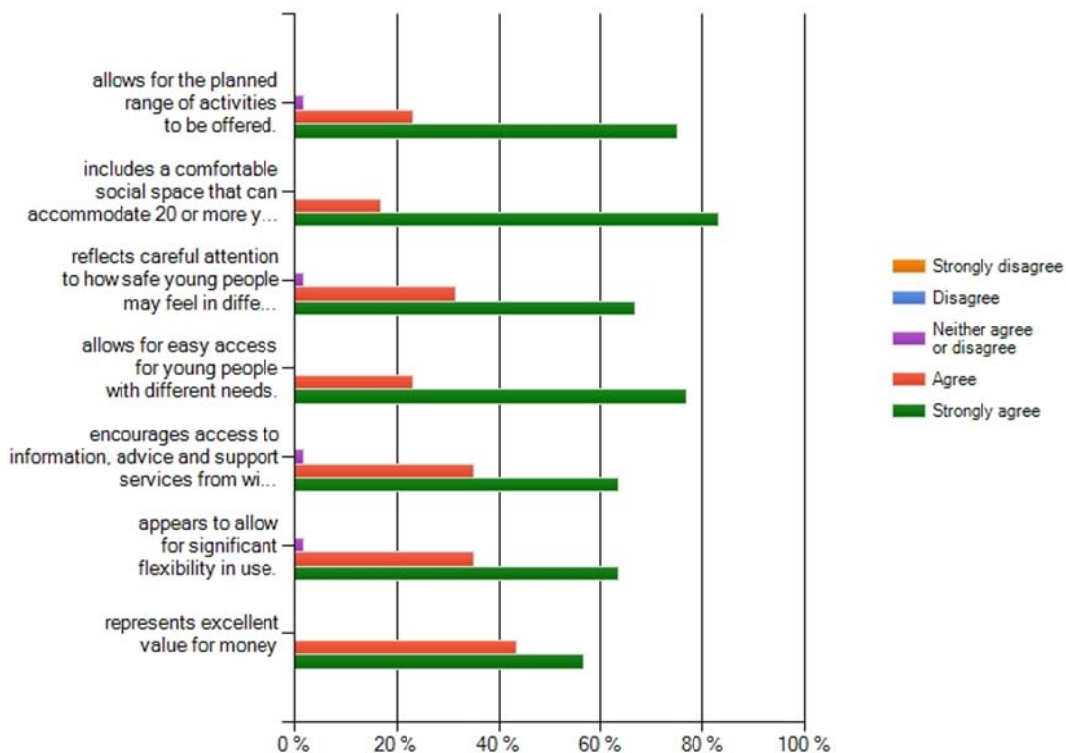
Respondents were asked if their facility had completed the design process to rate their building on a scale.

The design of the building:

• allows for the planned range of activities to be offered.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• includes a comfortable social space that can accommodate 20 or more young people close to the main entrance.	100% agreed or strongly agreed
• reflects careful attention to how safe young people may feel in different areas of the facility for example the toilets.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• allows for easy access for young people with different needs.	100% agreed or strongly agreed
• encourages access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• appears to allow for significant flexibility in use.	98% agreed or strongly agreed
• represents excellent value for money	100% agreed or strongly agreed

Figure 6

**Design. If your facility has completed the design process please rate your building on the scale below.**



In some ways the design of the buildings appears to have been more straightforward than actually getting permission to go ahead, and with building them. First, there were planning issues for quite a number. Sometimes they could be resolved, often they involved significant work

*Because of the rural nature of the area, particular issues needed to be addressed in the design stage. These were worked on with the local planners and design team and we employed a legal planning specialist as part of the design team from the outset. The local knowledge and practical experience of staff within the host organisation was an unexpected bonus.*

*Ours is a listed building, specifically chosen by young people to invest in the history and future of [the city], however it has come with a load of building restrictions and additional costs that we are constantly factoring in to the design and build.*

*Severe problems with site acquisition meant that the project nearly stalled completely. The design process has been challenging in the way we have had to push our architects to be more creative. The support of CABE was invaluable.*

*PLANNING CONSENT. The project includes two distinct elements (Youth & Community Centre and Supported Housing for young people) on a shared site. The local perception of what might happen on site, particularly regarding the negative perceptions associated with homeless young people had to be overcome, as a part of the planning approval process. Partners worked together to persuade local people that the site will be well managed and offered speedy access to staff to ensure problems could be addressed sooner rather than later. This process was drawn out, but it was also encouraging in that the local residents association attended the planning meeting to voice their support for the project, and in addition, a young person who had been previously been a young person in need, and a client in ... supported housing, and who now works there, spoke up for the scheme describing her experiences. She represented an excellent but most importantly a tangible example of successful work with a vulnerable young person.*

Then there were problems associated with the change of government (and the hold put upon project approvals) and the general process of getting approval and getting funding. This has had knock on effects on project planning.

*The biggest problem has been the delay in getting approval. Our project was recommended for ministerial approval nearly a year ago!*

*We are still in the planning stage, and as yet, haven't had a definitive answer from the BIG Lottery. Although there have been significant delays in the decision process the Capital Build Deadline remains the same. While we are able to meet this deadline, more flexibility, taking the decision delays into account, would have been helpful.*

*Clearer guidance on how partners can contribute towards the project i.e. in-kind rather than financial contributions. Extracting room data sheet information from partners has also been difficult.*

*The primary problem at present is the timescales to which we will be expected to build the **myplace** centre. As yet we have not received confirmation that we have received the funding, yet we still need to have the build completed by end June 2012. As such the schedule is extremely inflexible.*

*Uncertainty over "**myplace**" funding (6 months) set us back as we had to reassemble the design team, some of whom were then engaged in other projects. Very challenging brownfield site in town centre poses issues and increased cost, but it is an excellent location for young people to get to.*

*Cash Flow! The lead in payment is simply not enough. The arbitrary figure of 5% is just not workable on large projects. Most of the design (almost 70%) team work and planning is carried out at the beginning of the project so the finance needs to be flexible.*

Then there was the building process:

*2 contractors have gone bust on the project. Dealings with HMRC regarding vat*

*Our building contractor went into administration at the end of the project which has left us with a number of issues to resolve.*

*Some building snagging issues have taken a long time to resolve following completion and are still on-going.*

In some projects there was a combination of issues:

*Our project has thrown us some fairly unique problems which have required different resolutions: 1. Contractual obligations between [the council and a company] - managers of a local Leisure Centre which young people identified as being too expensive for them to use, meant we needed to re-define use of the space to exclude a multi-purpose sports hall from the scheme and major more on the arts which means further design revisions. 2. The discovery of a significant sewer that cut across the proposed development site (and which Severn Trent would have charged in excess of £500k to divert which would have taken them in excess of 12 months - time we did not have) meant a further re-design to go 7.5m away from the easement line of the sewer. 3. These delays have impacted on the timeframe in which we have been working - a situation that has been hampered further still by the delays to the programme while decisions were made as to cutbacks evoked from the analysis of the Governments Comprehensive Spending Review*

## Implementation

When it comes to the implementation of programmes of work,

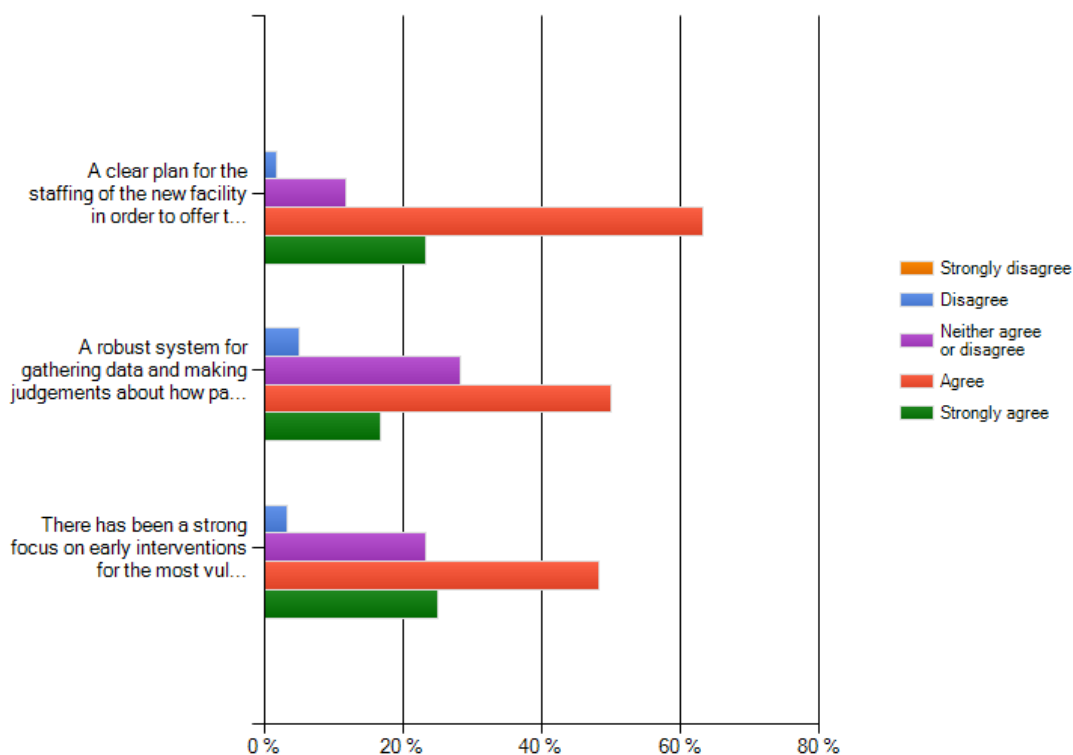
87% of projects said they had a clear plan for the staffing of the new facility in order to offer the range of activities we planned at times convenient for young people.

67% reported they had a robust system for gathering data and making judgements about how parents and communities feel about the facility.

73% claimed a strong focus on early interventions for the most vulnerable young people.

Figure 7

**Implementation. Please make a judgement as to the following. We have been able to develop for the new facility:**



There were some issues bubbling underneath:

*Recent budget cuts at local authority level have caused concerns. We have lost a key partner from the 3rd sector which failed to secure continued funding through a grant which they bid for unsuccessfully. This will have a knock-on effect for staffing the centre.*

*Describe the journey from managing at a Vauxhall conference league standard to the Premiership - that's a huge step up in standards, professionalism, support required, expectations etc.*

*Business planning involved some innovative thinking to accommodate the changing face of council funding without compromising the delivery model.*

*The business planning element is an on-going exercise, the plan includes a number of innovative ways in which the project team are confident income can be generated, which is being market tested over the next 3 weeks. At present the facility is reliant on generating income to cover costs, there is no subsidy from the local authority. The project team is committed to meeting the needs of local young people but there is also a need to generate income. Ideas gained at a recent **myplace** seminar connected to private sector*

*funding have proved useful and this is an area which the project team will be concentrating on during the next 2 months.*

*Identified need for diverse marketing strategy to target range of stakeholders and strong strategy has been devised.*

*Clearer guidance was needed on how partners can contribute towards the project i.e. in-kind rather than financial contributions. Extracting room data sheet information from partners has also been difficult.*

## **Sustainability**

The 2011 Annual **myplace** survey revealed some significant worries around revenue streams and the future shape of the work:

*Changes in government policy, housing benefit, hostel availability all have had an impact on the vulnerable clients that we see. Currently faced with almost a 50% cut in funding from a range of providers we are of course concerned about the future despite the strategies in place. The cuts at different levels, are increasing the vulnerable client groups in the centre which is adding to this concern.*

*The changing landscape for all partners has made the development difficult. All partners are in the processing of assessing changes on their organisations but have reiterated their commitment to the project.*

*Spending review and uncertainty about the future staffing arrangements has created some concern across the board.*

*Our issue has been in relation to the significant reduction in funding across the public sector. This has meant that our initial project which was to be co-located with a learning centre has had to change when the funding for that centre was reduced and therefore could not be built with the **myplace** project. This has meant a slight redesign of the building and costing for the **myplace** centre. We are also planning to look more at private sector investment to the centre than was originally planned to ensure the sustainability of the project long term.*



This said, projects remained reasonably confident – and are taking steps to try to find other revenue streams. We asked projects to make a judgement as to whether they:

• Are confident that the revenue funding necessary to offer the planned range of activities and services for the first year of operation is, or will be, in place.	3.95
• Have approached a number of private sector organisations to explore areas where collaboration might be possible.	3.48
• Expect to charge young people more for the activities on offer.	2.73
• Are making significant changes to the work and services planned in anticipated of a reduction in revenue funding from state sources.	2.93
• Are looking to increase revenue from hiring out different parts of the building to other organisations.	3.93

The right hand column shows the rating average (the higher the score the stronger the agreement) – and we can see that a significant number have approached private sector companies (52%) and are looking to increase revenue from hiring out facilities (73%). 38% of projects expect to charge young people more for activities.

Significantly, when we look at what the projects that are open said, there was less confidence that the revenue funding was in place to offer the planned range of activities and services in the first year (down to 3.08 – with 30% of the projects saying there were problems).

## Impact

As can be seen from the table below, projects are confident of their ability to measure the impact of their work; and have sound and robust monitoring systems around their work with young people.

Impact. Please make a judgement as to the following. We:							
Answer Options	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Rating Average	Response Count
Are confident in our ability to measure the impact of our work and services on young people.	0	0	5	32	23	4.30	60
Have a robust and sound monitoring system that allows us to make judgements about young people's usage of the facility and the benefits to them.	0	2	8	30	20	4.13	60
Are familiar with the research literature concerning the effectiveness of different ways of working with vulnerable young people.	0	3	5	35	17	4.10	60
Have received significant positive feedback from residents and parents about the project.	0	0	10	33	17	4.12	60

We also asked those projects that were open for feedback on whether they had attracted the numbers and groups of young people expected - and any judgements they can make about impact so far. In terms of numbers making use of the facilities the feedback was positive.

*We have been very pleased with the numbers of users attracted to the centre. This is growing and developing all the time still. Certainly a greatly increased number of young people taking part in physical activities, good feedback about somewhere to go, good intergenerational use.*

*The centre has attracted far more young people than expected.*

*We have exceeded our targets for participation of the programme in the first 3 months.*

*2,000+ on opening day - October 2010 Membership doubled. On an average Thursday night over 200+ young people attend.*

*Marked increase in different types of young people participating in provision (our range has increased); increases in the targeted work with other agencies (for example LEA and working with young people excluded or at risk of exclusion from school) and these now taking place in the building. new system of self-assessment in place for young people and impact has been positive.*

However, there were some clouds on the horizon:

*Cuts and/or threat to cuts in community and youth services have affected our ability to confirm outreach programmes for April and July/August.*

## Participation

### The involvement of young people

Respondents were asked to make a judgement about the involvement of local young people in decision-making around the purpose, design and operation of the new facility. Specifically they were asked whether a significant number of young people had been centrally involved in making decisions about:

- The specific activities to be offered.
- Opening times.
- The design of the facility.
- Income generation and funding to run the facility.
- The conduct of partnership meetings.
- The awarding of contracts.
- The development of the business plan.

Their responses can be seen in *Figure 8*.

In a number of areas respondents describe a situation where there has been significant discussion and exploration with young people. This is especially marked around opening times, activities on offer, and the design of the facility.

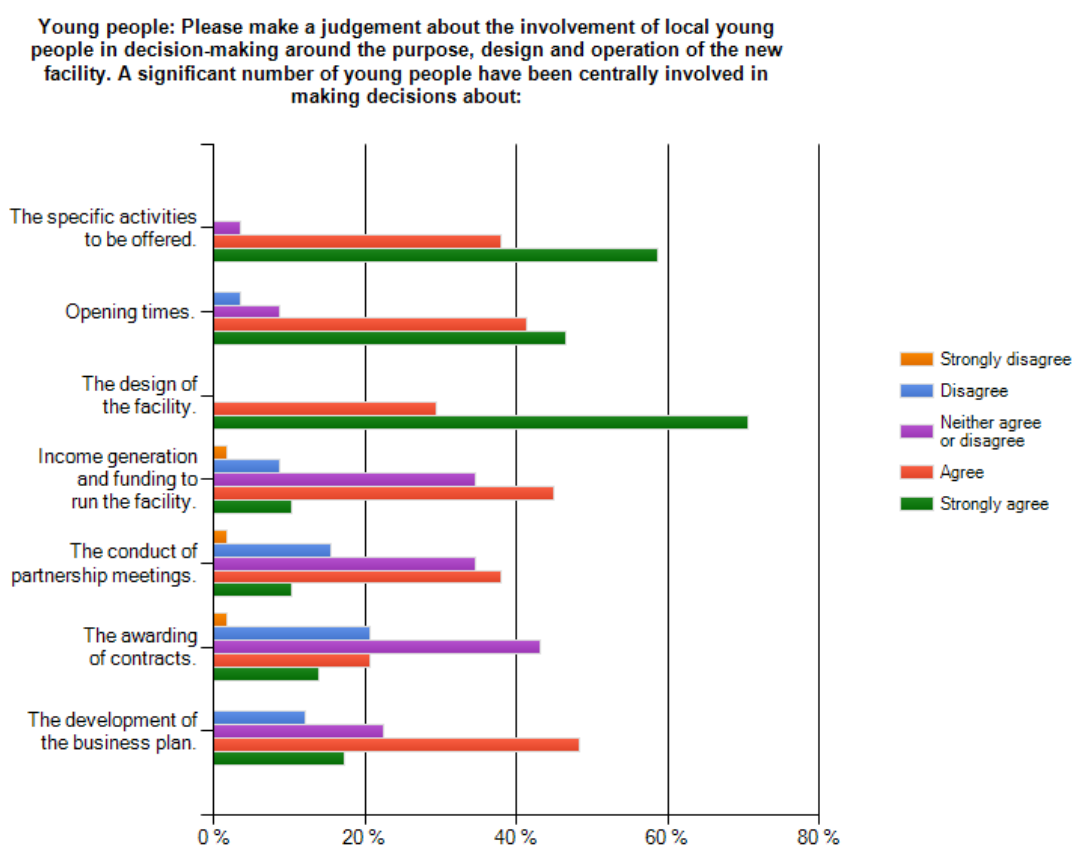
Other aspects of the project have been less of a focus for exploration:

- Income generation and funding to run the facility.
- The conduct of partnership meetings.
- The awarding of contracts.

While respondents have not necessarily disagreed in these areas there are a significant number of 'Neither agree or disagree'.

Responses to the survey in 2011 are broadly in line with those in 2010.

Figure 8



### Community involvement

The responses to the question 'Briefly describe the level of involvement of community members (other than young people) in decision making on the purpose, design and operation of the new facility' were

varied. The vast majority of respondents describe some activity in this area within the myplace project. The approaches utilised fall into six broad categories (as they did last year).

The first, and most widely reported, approach uses community forums, community meetings and public consultations as a means of getting feedback on the proposed provision.

*We held three consultation days in the town centre. Developed a **myplace** Website for feedback Held a breakfast event for all stakeholders Held a launch event for all stakeholders Presented to groups of young people at different forums and schools; including teachers Provided details of the Project to Overview and Scrutiny Have a Facebook and Twitter page to use for providing feedback and information Numerous press releases, inviting comments*

*We undertook significant community consultation pre stage 1 to harness the views of the local community. This was undertaken at parks, shopping centres and outside schools to attract as many as we were able and helped inform the scope and shape of the scheme. Since this date, the project has been taken out to events at which the community as well as partner organisations would congregate. We have been clear about the potential of the centre to offer locally based employment opportunities as well as opportunities to volunteer in the centre and this has already attracted local interest.*

*We have involved over 1500 people in decision-making. Almost a third of those are not young people. We have used a range of methods including public meetings, questionnaires, stakeholder meetings, drop-in sessions and interviews.*

From the responses both in 2011 and 2010, we can conclude that the majority of projects used this approach as part of their local engagement. A significant number appeared to have relied on this alone.

Second, a significant number of projects look to involve local people and groups in the governance of the project.

*Representatives of community groups were and are involved in the steering group. This led to consultation during the preparation of the bid and design of new facility.*

*Community partnership group have a representative on the management board, also another local person on the board too. Community consultation hut on site, main contractors have community liaison officer. Community input in design relating to proximity and acoustic noise levels. Friends of [the centre set up], Christmas coffee morning, and regular articles in community magazine.*

*Local people on the Management Committee including the Chair. Various local groups use the centre for various meetings.*

A third approach is to engage directly with local community groups and organisations and, in a number of cases, to ask them to become part of the process of informing the development of the project.

*There is no local community of any significance surrounding the facility. We have worked with a wide range of community groups / partners and undertaken a lot of consultation at open days / community events.*

*Local estate boards very much involved. Local consultation with residents, school governors closely involved. Local agencies and management committees involved.*

*A need for a localised provision to support the engagement and delivery of work with young people was identified through the local governance and localisation agenda. Over 40 partners, working together on an operation, delivery, advocacy and associate role, worked together to provide the relevant information for submission of the grant application. An event was held in March 2010 to consult with local community, voluntary and third sector and public services, on design and delivery of the project. Elected members have been involved through out the development of the project*

Fourth, a small number of the projects are local organisations engaged in a process of community development and participation.

*We are fortunate in that the lead 3rd sector organisation has been established since 1978 and enjoys a great deal of support from the local community. Many of the `adult` population have been involved with the organisation in the past so understood what was being done and were happy to support the project. The `buy a brick` campaign clearly demonstrated the level of community and business support with over 500 contributions.*

Fifth, a small number of respondents discuss making use of elected members both in terms of articulating local concerns and in 'selling' the project to local people.

*Local Elected Members and local school heavily involved.*

*We have a community stakeholders group which consists of statutory community and voluntary sector organisations which meet on a regular basis to ensure the facility has the right mixture of community usage and services, this includes members from the community, local councillors and grass roots community groups.*

Last, there is some evidence in responses of everyday conversation and contact playing a part. This may take the form of conversation with current users of a centre or, in the case of those organisations already working in the local area through the normal course of engaging with local people.

## Emerging issues

Respondents were asked to comment on any significant issues that they have had with the involvement of local young people and other community members. A number had not experienced significant problems in this area. The two main areas where issues are faced concern managing expectations and dealing with the current financial situation.

Comments concerning managing expectations and handling different local concerns and needs were fairly common:

*Managing expectations of young people and the community will be an issue for us to negotiate. Also handling political agendas with counsellors especially if this building will mean a reduction in settings will have to be managed carefully.*

*Ensuring the wider involvement of those who do not access any current provision was difficult.*

*There was some early dissent with regards to the scheme from people that lived close to the centre. Their concerns were founded on access to the centre via a footbridge (which was subsequently removed) as well as concerns about large numbers of young people leaving the centre at the same time. Both we and the local police who are committed to making the scheme happen recognise that this may require careful management to ensure that negative impacts are minimised. Some local people (who is felt were in the minority), were also against the scheme because of the inclusion of a local boxing club. This carried a level of notoriety in the area which was perhaps borne out by the fact that they were occupying the development site and not only was the owner of the club personally attacked, but the site was also then subject to an arson attack. Because of child safeguarding issues, this meant the centre occupying the development site (a dilapidated single storey flat roof building) had to be closed down and has remained so since. The Boxing Club will not be part of the new centre.*

*The biggest issue has been managing expectations, particularly those of young people but also the wider community as this whole process has gone on for such a long time – by the time we start on site 3 years will have elapsed since we first started the project and sustaining interest throughout this period has been challenging.*

A number also mentioned the current financial situation:

*Given the current context of cuts to local authority services, there has been some scepticism about the on-going viability of the project. This has been addressed and concerns assuaged, however it is assumed that these concerns are likely to continue.*

*Most people are supportive, however with cuts to public services some people have commented that spending money on young people is a waste, but they would have that opinion regardless of the cuts, budget etc. There will always be retractors where young people are concerned.*

*Reductions in funding across the board has affected service signing up to the programmes, increased in unemployment and increased poverty starting to impact*

*We managed to keep young people engaged during the period of indecision about funding by focussing less on the building itself, but working on how the new building will be run and the constitution, planning marketing events etc. The local authority is reducing funding for youth clubs, but we managed to secure funding to keep activities for young people going until the "myplace" facility opens as we do not want to lose momentum.*

## Strategy

Within this final section of the survey, respondents were asked to make judgements around the current situation in their local authority with regard to strategy and services.

They were also asked about the impact **myplace** funding has had - and might have - on the local authority's youth policy; and upon the deployment of staff and on other provision for young people funded by the local authority? They were also asked about the impact **myplace** funding may have had on their local authorities youth policy



## The current situation

Taken as a whole, respondents appeared reasonably positive about the state of youth strategy, the opportunities available to young people, and the range of support services on other. However, as soon as we distinguish between the responses of those in the third and public sector, the picture changes.

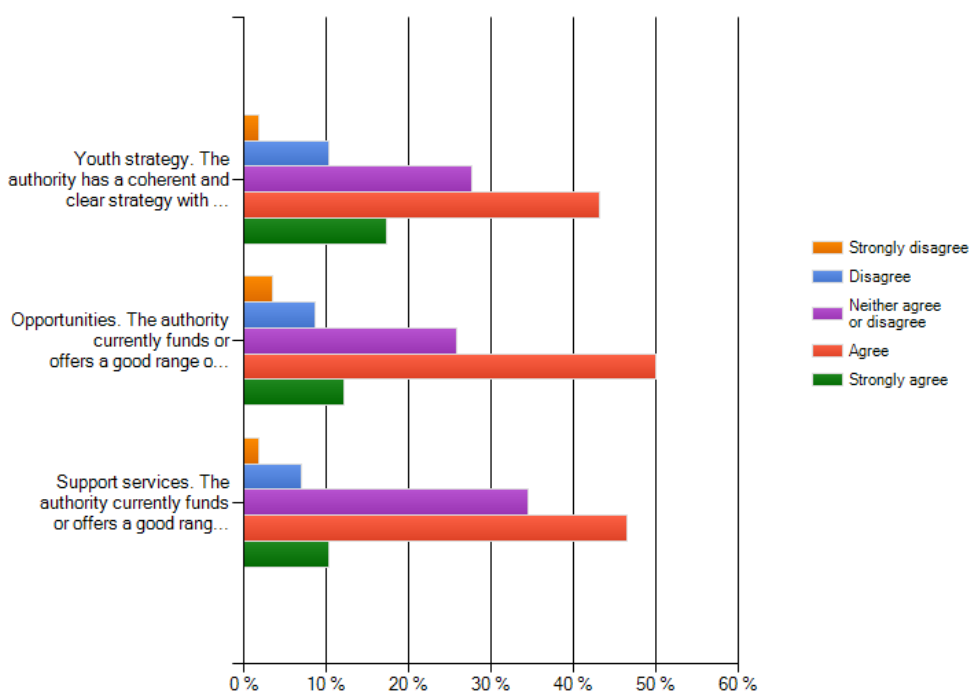
Response to survey questions showing rating average	Third sector	Local authority	All
Youth strategy. The authority has a coherent and clear strategy with regard to offering places to go, activities and learning opportunities for young people outside of normal school hours.	3.38.	3.90	3.64
Opportunities. The authority currently funds or offers a good range of facilities, activities and learning opportunities for young people generally.	3.17	4.00	3.59
Support services. The authority currently funds or offers a good range of support services for young people who face particular difficulties or who suffer significant disadvantage.	3.21	3.93	3.57

The starkest contrast arose when people were asked to comment on the statement 'The authority currently funds or offers a good range of facilities, activities and learning opportunities for young people generally'

The following figure shows the overall response.

Figure 9

**Please make a judgement about the current situation in your local authority area with regard to:**



### The impact of *myplace* upon local youth policy

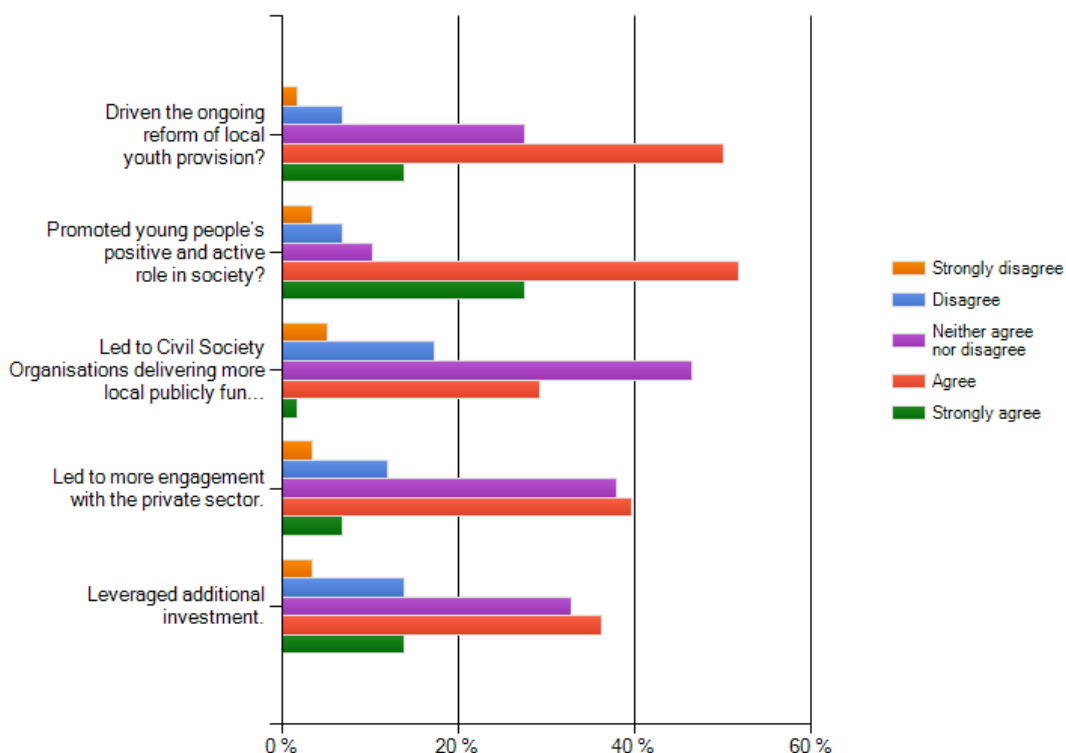
*myplace* projects appear to have had some impact on local policy formation and strategies. In the survey respondents were asked about the impact *myplace* funding may have had on the local authority's youth policy. These questions were linked to current policy priorities. Has it:

- Driven the on-going reform of local youth provision?
- Promoted young people's positive and active role in society?
- Led to civil society organisations delivering more local publicly funded services?
- Led to more engagement with the private sector.
- Leveraged additional investment.

From the chart below it can be seen that there is some agreement on the part of the lead contacts in projects that *myplace* funding has impacted on the reform of local youth provision and promoted young people's positive and active role in society. However, they have been less successful around the 'Big Society' agenda, engagement with the private sector, and leveraging additional investment (although some has come).

Figure 10

**What impact do you think the *myplace* funding has had on the local authority's youth policy? Has it:**



A number of respondents gave additional details with regard to other impacts. Some reported that the

project was in an early stage of development and the impact was limited:

*Not as yet but it would be surprising in as the project develops this does not occur.*

*Not to date, but the Capital Phase isn't started yet- we still need to have the decision to proceed and are at the tail end of this process. We would anticipate full engagement on a strategic level with both Borough and County Authorities.*

Others report a clear impact:

***myplace** programme [is the] new blue print for reform of other areas of council youth service*

*This new building will provide a localised provision to support the new Operating Model for services for young people which will be clearly operational by the time this new building will be open*

*It has forced the local authority to analyse existing expenditure, targets outcomes and value for money which is resulting in a reduction in funding/provision for universal youth services.*

However, the issue of cutbacks wasn't far away:

*The on-going support of the local authority the budget reductions could have been greater if we hadn't had the **myplace** and the commissioning process may have been stepped up*

*Unfortunately the presence of our centre means that youth services in [locally] are not as high a priority as they should be within funding cuts.*

*The young people's service as a part of a large public service authority is facing huge budget reductions. However the **myplace** facilities will be the focus of yps provision the town, operating as a key centre, with several other satellites in the district. Staff will be deployed to this base from other centres and it is planned for delivery if anything will, be increased from this base, when in other places provision will inevitably have to be reduced.*

One commented:

*The issue of seeking private sector funding has been hampered by the local authority's aversion to sponsorship. This is due to be relaxed with a recently produced protocol defining the types of companies that are and are not acceptable. The youth service are therefore or actively starting to seek additional private sector input.*

## **The impact of *myplace* on the deployment of staff and other provision for young people**

One of the clear themes coming through the responses to this question concern movement into the hub model and the growing emphasis upon targeted and integrated provision within local authorities.

*The **myplace** building will be a significant locality hub for the delivery of integrated services for young people. Integrated Youth Service staff will locate in the building and*

*will share space and hot desk with other core partners. The building is located in an area where there are complex needs and is part of a wider regeneration programme for the area. It has been recognised that the building will be a significant focus for services for young people for example sexual health services, employability programmes, information advice and guidance as well as social education. The building will contribute to developing the community's capacity in response to developing the 'Big Society' agenda.*

*A wide range of services working together under one roof [will] enable a greater understanding of joint/shared working practices from public, private and third sector.*

*It has led to the development of further partnership working across targeted provision. This **myplace** building is now being utilised by the Youth Offending team to deliver specific group training programmes to young offenders.*

*The hub concept and the **myplace** investment in the borough has enabled us to cluster staff into integrated teams centred around the hub. The local authority is currently looking strategically at how it will manage the overall reduction of resources it will need to make and developing it's approach to maximise spaces that fit with the borough's capital strategy for young people.*

Respondents also note some other gains:

*We anticipate a net gain in the local workforce as a result of the facility (allowing for the currently planned reductions in Council staff engaged in Youth Services). There will also be enhanced training opportunities and large numbers of trained volunteers.*

*Given the range of activities the opportunities for placement of students and trainees to have a quality placement has increased tenfold. I cannot see any negative impact on the deployment of staff as they have been working in partnership with young people on the whole development.*

*There is strong evidence to suggest that our **myplace** funded project is being used by our local authority to justify staff and services that otherwise might be victims of cuts.*

However, there were a number of comments about the negative impact – which are largely to do with the impact of cutbacks, the focus on targeted work and the impact of youth provision being brought under the more social work oriented ethos of integrated services.

*It is having a massive negative impact and the youth service is being driven into outcome driven services instead of providing something which young people want i.e. - somewhere to go and chill out without having to formally engage in activities. The local authority feels this is something which does not represent value for money.*

*I believe that with the current budget situation with the local authority will mean that almost all youth provision on an open access basis will be removed from the local authority business. If we are successful in receiving funding for **myplace** the local authority has committed revenue budget for staff which may not have continued to exist without it. It is likely that current provision/ buildings will not continue to function, and staff will be deployed to **myplace**. However, as stated, the reduction in services and buildings would have happened regardless of this and we can look to have one world class centre*

*service the whole community and surrounding towns, where it is likely there would have been very little provision at al*

*Due to government cuts the local authority may not be able to deploy staff at the **myplace** facility as previously agreed - work is in progress on this.*

***myplace** funding is a side issue, due to government funding cuts we will no longer have a 'universal youth service' the youth service in whatever business model will be the **myplace** project*

Many respondents were awaiting the budget settlements in their local area:

*Unsure given current onslaught. Hope for the best – fear the worst.....*

### **Steps taken to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and young people**

Local authority projects were asked what 'what steps have been taken to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people?' This was in response to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families letter to projects. There he outlined an expectation that civil society organisations would 'deliver' more local publicly funded services, and once construction is complete all local authority-led projects are expected to transfer or share ownership and management with the local community and with young people.

Some local authorities hadn't started exploring this yet. Some had set up workshops and begun discussions. However, concrete steps had been taken with regard to a number of projects and represent significant change. One aspect of this is the different vehicles used – including: new community interest companies, social enterprises, community trusts and existing partners.

*The project will be managed by an established local charity post-construction with support financially across the partnership. The board and governance arrangements all involve young people.*

*The Project Board Members consist of Young People from both sites as well as elected members along with partner bodies. The local authority will look to share ownership once the Governance and Buildings are established and in operation through the Project Board.*

*We are developing a social enterprise led by young people to co-manage services and activities.*

*Massive steps!!! This is why we have effectively redesigned our entire project. We will now fully transfer the capital assets and operational management of the youth centre to a third sector provider. This is a complete opposite to our original plan where the local authority would retain full operational management and ownership. [The] transfer [is to] a third sector provider... – a newly established Academy with public sector organisations as lead sponsors. This is the first academy of its kind in the country and it also will be the first ever newly constructed academy and **myplace** centre being built as one integrated facility. This reflects all the current government policies and agendas to empower third and private sector providers, joining up of services, demonstrating key partnerships and*

*maximising resources for young people. It will be very interesting to see how this model will work in practice!*

*Setting up the Board which has key role in supporting .[the]. forum to build capacity to take on facility. Also development of forum to build skills to do this by Local Authority. Forum has a bank account and awaits ability to register as CIO (not yet available but due this year).*

*The management and running of the building will be transferred to the Social Enterprise partner upon completion of the build. Young people and the community will sit on a Board to determine the management of the facility and decision making. The Local Authority will be part of this as one of the partners contributing to provision run from the centre.*

*The facility will be transferred to a charitable trust made up of local people and young people (that has always been the intention). Governance arrangements are in place, we are working on the legal side of the transfer.*

***myplace** service delivered by Youth service, within first year of trading transfer into a Trust with the youth service being a mutual and having a service delivery contract with the trust.*

*The Centre will be transferred to a Community Trust within the first two years of operation.*