

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

11 March 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Review of Leisure, Recreation and Development Opportunities for Young People

Report by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Summary

Strengthening the Highlands, the programme of the Council has a comprehensive set of commitments in relation to services for children and young people. One of these commitments is to review leisure, recreation and development opportunities available to young people.

This report presents an analysis of the findings of an audit of provision, and suggests key themes that would require to be tackled to improve the range, availability and uptake of opportunities for young people. It recommends the Council consider establishing short life working groups, chaired by the children's champions to consider actions as a result of the audit.

1. Background

1.1 Opportunities available to young people are extremely varied and the shape and availability of these opportunities is governed by a number of factors-

- geography
- available facilities
- adults to facilitate activity
- availability of funding

2. What is available for young people?

2.1 The Council continues to make an investment alongside the continued efforts of the voluntary sector to ensure that young people benefit from-

- A range of youth work, sports and arts clubs and groups available in their communities.
- Voluntary and uniformed organisations operating in numerous locations across Highland.
- Access to a range of facilities (dependant on local availability) such as sports centres and swimming pools.
- A range of after school and extra curricular activity.

3. Audit Process

3.1 The Council's Youth Development Officers carried out the auditing of opportunities available to young people [secondary school age and up to 18-20 years] in each Integrated Learning Community (ILC), the geographical area created by the catchment area of a secondary school and its associated primaries. This involved recording provision against the following headings— type of activity on offer, age range; youth clubs; school based open provision; frequency; location; venue; Highland Council support.

4. What are the Key Findings?

4.1 In attempting to audit provision for young people, the diverse nature of the Highland Council area means it is difficult to draw Highland-wide conclusions from data submitted. However, the following broad statements would be consistent with the data collected and reports from young people -

- Even where communities have facilities these do not cater well for young people or provide facilities suited to the needs of youth groups.
- Provision relies to a significant extent on community based voluntary action.
- Uniformed organisations provide a high level of groups but there are geographical gaps.
- Provision can be largely sports based.
- There are a healthy number of youth clubs but they are mostly attended by children of primary age and younger teenagers.
- The most comprehensive provision is in the more populated areas or around secondary schools. Young people in the more remote areas or who live at the periphery of a school catchment area have less access to activities.
- Transport is patchy.
- Provision can be short lived due to funding availability or in response to an initiative eg tackling anti-social behaviour.
- Parents are often the key to accessing provision.
- Key groups of young people don't see current provision as "for them".

5. What Recent Progress has the Council made?

5.1 For a period of years the Council has had a focus on services for young people and to stimulate community activity. This has led to investment in

- Provision of new community schools and refurbishment of some existing schools.
- Investment in staffing including Youth Development, Active Schools Co-ordinators.
- Significant cultural opportunities such as Highland 2007, Highland Promise and Year of Homecoming.

This has had a significant impact on young people and their communities and provides a strong base for tackling a number of the key issues identified by the audit.

5.2 The findings of the audit and the analysis of it would suggest that if the Council wishes to improve the range and availability of opportunities for young people there are key themes that would require to be focussed on -

- Availability, access and suitability of community facilities
- Better support of volunteers
- Support to community and voluntary groups
- Transport solutions
- Support services to youth groups
- Strategies to pro-actively engage looked after and vulnerable young people
- Strategies to engage with young people "on the street" and give them a say in shaping provision.

6. How can we progress the Key Findings?

6.1 It is clear that the key themes above require solutions which take into account all Council services and community planning partners.

It is proposed that ECS take a lead in bringing together representatives from relevant council services and partners to consider action plans related to the key themes.

These short life groups would consider-

- Strategies for engaging young people, particularly looked after or vulnerable young people
- Transport
- Support to community, voluntary groups and volunteers.

It is proposed that these groups would be Chaired by the Children's Champions.

6.2 The Council's Youth work team is well placed to include young people in the process of addressing these themes.

7. Recommendation

Members are asked to

- Comment on the key themes identified from the audit, set out in paragraph 4.2
- Agree that ECS take the lead on bringing together council services, community planning partners and young people through working groups led by the three member Children's Champions, to prepare reports on proposed actions addressing these key themes and for the groups to report before the end of 2010.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 1 March 2010

Background Papers: