



Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience

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The National Youth Agency

Getting it right for young people

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Bones Youth Centre



Crew Club

1. Executive summary

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) asked The National Youth Agency (NYA) to produce case studies on recent capital investment in youth facilities to help those applying to **myplace** learn from the experience of others. Between June and September 2008, The NYA compiled 36 case studies on individual facilities, and eight case studies on local authorities' strategic approaches to capital investment. The facilities cover a broad range, including voluntary and statutory sector provision, new builds and refurbishments, specialist provision including arts, sports, outdoor education and mobile provision, and the co-location of youth provision with other services. All case studies are available at www.nya.org.uk/myplace.

This report draws on the findings of the case studies to highlight current practice related to the 10 **myplace** principles, and identify issues and challenges which emerged from our visits and discussions. However, no suggestion is intended that the projects would necessarily be suitable for **myplace** funding.

Young people's outcomes

- Young people said that high quality facilities offered them clear messages that they were valued, and would encourage more young people to use provision where they develop trusting relationships with youth workers, take part in activities, and increase their confidence, skills and employability.
- Managers of new or improved facilities reported an almost immediate increase in the numbers using the service and/or attracting young people who had not previously used provision. They reported improved outcomes in a wide range of areas, including healthy lifestyles, community safety, and educational attainment.

Young people's active participation

- Young people are involved in decisions from strategic to operational levels. However, various practical factors, particularly lead-in times and availability of funding, affect the extent to which projects can be said to be driven by young people.
- However, a range of structures and mechanisms are being used to involve young people. These include building on existing structures such as youth councils and forums, setting up new formal structures, and using approaches such as detached work.
- Arrangements for involving young people in design include visits to other provision; working with architects and builders; and sourcing and selecting furnishings, fittings and equipment.

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Salmon Youth Centre



Woking Ypod

- Young people are involved in ongoing management through management groups, young people's groups, and peer inspection processes.
- The role of adults has been critical in helping young people develop ideas within budget or other constraints – at times challenging unrealistic or impractical ideas, but more commonly in helping young people 'think big' beyond their existing experience.

Accessibility

- New or refurbished facilities appear to share some common features which are key to engaging young people and improving outcomes. These include: welcoming reception areas; café and/or kitchen areas; stylish chill-out areas; creative arts; access to the internet; different size spaces; a mix of open access and specialist provision; and extended opening hours. Sports and outdoor provision have an important role in some, but not all facilities, and attract young people who might not otherwise use facilities.
- Projects have identified various strategies to overcome barriers that prevent young people accessing provision. They include outreach work to build bridges between neighbourhood and larger, more central provision; addressing location and transport issues (including providing transport); and mobile provision.
- All facilities included in the case studies make provision for specific groups of young people, including disabled young people, young people in care, Muslim young people and young people not in education, employment or training. This is often done in partnership with other organisations and services.

Community cohesion

- Many facilities offered programmes – often using arts or sports – to bring together young people from different backgrounds.
- The location of facilities in central, neutral venues with good transport links is seen as important.
- Some facilities place a high priority on promoting intergenerational activity, particularly where youth provision has been developed within or alongside community provision.
- Mobile provision is seen as helping solve community problems and improving relationships across the generations.

Community leadership

- Young people's involvement in local community events helps promote projects' profile.
- Where projects are part of regeneration initiatives, local residents are often heavily involved. Some facilities have a strong focus on involving and investing in local volunteers.

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Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre

- Some facilities open (or extend) their provision – for instance cafés – to the wider community. In other cases, co-location of youth and other services has increased interaction between young people and other community members.

Partnership

Approaches to developing partnerships include securing support from local authority departments other than youth services; successful collaboration between county, district and parish councils; partnerships between local authorities and the voluntary and community sector; and securing support and sponsorship from the private sector.

Long-term viability

- Management arrangements recognised the importance of securing a mix of professional expertise and representation of different sectors.
- Most facilities include some arrangements for generating income through rental and room hire, and this has been a high priority in some. Several projects are seeking to ensure that this will add value to their work with young people and strengthen their community role.

Co-financing

Facilities have secured funding from a range of sources, including charitable, public, corporate and private sectors. Some are part of larger scale developments such as Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or regeneration programmes.

Sustainable development

- The design of new facilities is often intended to make their activities visible to others – both adults and young people – to create a greater sense of community ownership.
- Facilities are involved in preparing young people for employment in specific industries, supporting youth enterprise, offering volunteering opportunities and ‘growing their own’ staff.
- Considerable attention has been paid to designing in safety, efficiency and the effective use of resources, and gaining recognition that high quality design offers long-term value for money.

Strategic context

- Most local authorities are at an early stage of developing integrated capital strategies. Many have undertaken or are planning reviews of existing provision. This may result in closing existing provision, and



Pennywell Youth Project

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Bolton Lads and Girls Club



Devon Mobiles

the need to handle this sensitively was acknowledged.

- The **myplace** process has provided the catalyst for bringing together partners – including young people – to improve local provision.

Issues and challenges

Some major areas of debate and difference have emerged. These include:

- The advantages and disadvantages of co-location of services and shared use buildings, particularly across age groups.
- Getting the balance right between investment in large scale facilities and smaller scale investment in a greater number of facilities across an area.
- Improving understanding between architects and other contractors, and young people and youth workers.
- Developing effective partnerships between different sectors, including clarity about the contribution of each sector and acknowledging potential conflicts of interest.
- Issues relating to sustainability included the importance – and sometimes difficulty – of getting the balance right between income generation and retaining the integrity of work with young people.
- There is scope to learn from other countries, particularly the USA.
- Both policy makers and practitioners need to continue to explore the concept of projects being ‘driven by young people’, particularly in identifying the characteristics of appropriate and effective adult support.

2. Background

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) asked The National Youth Agency (NYA) to compile a series of case studies on recent capital investment in youth facilities, in order to help those applying to **myplace** to learn from the experience of others. In particular, the case studies seek to exemplify good practice around each of the ten **myplace** principles. The case studies, all available at www.nya.org.uk/myplace, comprise a mix of detailed and outline case studies on individual facilities, and case studies profiling local authorities’ strategic approaches to capital investment. They were identified through information already held by the DCSF, The National Youth Agency, and through a survey sent to the heads of children’s services throughout England.

Although some of the local authority case studies include plans for developing facilities with **myplace** funding, most of the facilities featured were developed before the announcement of the **myplace** programme. In many cases the investment was considerably less than **myplace**’s lower threshold of £1 million. While there is therefore no suggestion that the case studies individually represent projects that would be eligible or

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Dukeries Young People's Centre



Ashford North Youth Centre

suitable to apply to *myplace*, this report seeks to draw on the findings of the case studies to highlight current practice around the *myplace* principles and identify issues and challenges which emerged from our visits and discussions.

3. The case studies: a brief description

Between June and September 2008, The NYA compiled 36 case studies on individual facilities, and eight case studies profiling local authorities' strategic approaches to capital investment. The individual facilities cover a broad range of provision, including voluntary and statutory sector provision, new builds and refurbishments, specialist provision including arts and media, sports and outdoor education, fleets of mobiles, and the co-location of youth provision with other services.

3.1. Detailed case studies

- **Beacon Young People's Resource Centre**, Salford: two-storey new build based on a circular design opened in 2004.
- **Bolton Lads and Girls Club**: town centre new build opened in 2002, offering a mix of universal and targeted provision which interact with each other.
- **Castle Hill Young People's Centre**, Bolton: PFI 'community learning hub' opened in 2003, including purpose-built youth and sports provision.
- **The Crew Club**, Brighton and Hove: single-storey estate-based centre with arts, music and ICT provision plus outdoor multi-purpose sports area opened in 2007.
- **EC1 Music Project**, Islington: music provision for children and young people which relocated to a converted factory in 2007.
- **Open Youth Venue**, Norwich: providing a wide range of activities and services in a Grade II listed building, which will be fully operational in May 2009.
- **Pennywell Youth Project**, Sunderland: community based voluntary youth provision in new build centre opened in 2003.
- **Salmon Youth Centre**, Southwark: seven-storey youth centre offering sports, arts, IT and training facilities plus residential accommodation, with the first stage opened in 2008.
- **The Stowe Centre**, Westminster: four-storey new build centre developed as part of a regeneration programme, opened in 2006.
- **Woking Ypod**, Surrey: youth development centre planned in two stages, with the first stage opened in 2006.
- **Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre**, Manchester: large community centre and sports facility with dedicated youth provision, managed by a housing trust.

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Nottinghamshire Mobiles



EC1 Music Project

3.2. Outline case studies

- **Ashford North Youth Centre**, Kent: new build youth centre opened in 2008, replacing a centre on the site of a school which was rebuilt using PFI funding.
- **Avenues Youth Project**, Westminster: two-storey new build replacing a previous centre, opened in 2003.
- **Benham Sports Arena**, Northampton: one of the East Midlands' largest sporting venues, used by 100,000 people a year, of which 80 per cent are under 18.
- **Create Studios and Flux**, Swindon: digital arts studio which was relocated and upgraded in 2006, with a range of outreach work including a custom-built mobile digital studio.
- **Carnforth Youth Hub**, Lancashire: multi-agency provision combining a youth and community centre, children's centre, small business centre and school learning provision.
- **Crawshawbooth Youth and Community Centre**, Lancashire: conversion of three terraced 19th century properties to provide a dedicated youth space and extend a small library's community facilities.
- **Devon Youth Service mobile provision**: investment in a fleet of five mobiles (plus two on order) since 2005, to extend young people's access to the service.
- **Dukeries Young People's Centre**, Nottinghamshire: the first of five new youth centres planned for the county, opened in 2008.
- **Ebury Bridge Youth Club**, Westminster: estate-based club which was refitted in 2005-06 to provide access for disabled young people.
- **Gillingham (Bones) Youth and Community Centre**, Dorset: two major refurbishments since 2002, including the creation of a café, music and recording facilities, motor vehicle training, and indoor skate ramp.
- **Heysham Youth and Community Centre**, Lancashire: conversion and extension of an existing youth and community centre to incorporate a children's centre.
- **High Street Library, Bolton**: new build library with a dedicated youth area which includes the prototype for the national HeadSpace initiative.
- **Lighthouse Youth and Community Centre**, Dorset: refurbishment of a listed building offering open access youth provision with an arts focus.
- **Maypole Centre**, Birmingham: estate-based youth centre, totally renovated in 2002.
- **Mill Adventure Base**, Nottinghamshire: centre offering a range of water and land-based adventurous activities which was completely redeveloped in 2007.
- **Newark and Sherwood Mobile Youth Project**, Nottinghamshire: one of a fleet of seven identical mobiles which replaced older mobile provision in 2007.
- **The Old Library**, Nottinghamshire: refurbished facility opened as an arts and media centre in 2007.
- **The Pump**, Birmingham: new build young people's centre,

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St Andrew's Wharf



Rollercoaster Youth Centre

developed through a multi-agency partnership and opened in 2007.

- **Richmond Youth Partnership KCafé Project:** disused brick pavilion next to a BMX track and skatepark, re-opened as a youth and community café in 2008.
- **The Rollercoaster Youth Centre**, Somerset: youth centre built as part of SRB programme.
- **Springwell Community Arts (SCart)**, Derbyshire: performing arts centre at a community school, offering a range of structured arts based activities outside school hours.
- **St Andrew's Wharf**, Tower Hamlets: youth centre re-opened in 2006 after extensive refurbishment and development of youth provision in a park.
- **St John's Youth Centre**, Worcestershire: new youth centre replacing a smaller centre due to open in autumn 2008, financed through 'planning gain' money.
- **Tipkinder Park**, Cheshire: skatepark and BMX track, opened in 2006 and 2008 respectively.
- **Young Dewsbury**, Kirklees: youth centre located in Dewsbury Town Hall, converted in 2000.

3.3. Local authority strategic case studies

- **Birmingham Integrated Youth Support Service:** ten-year development plan based on a combination of seven centres of excellence, smaller community provision, detached and outreach work, and specialist projects.
- **Bristol Integrated Youth Support Development Services:** a 'campus' approach to improve the local offer to young people using a variety of venues, coupled with the development of a major city centre facility.
- **Hackney Youth Services:** developing a hub model to securing youth provision across the borough through high-profile facilities with co-located services.
- **Kirklees Young People's Service:** plans for 11 youth hubs across the borough by 2010, which will be at the heart of locality youth provision.
- **Lancashire Young People's Service:** following the development of a capital strategy and asset management plan, the service has secured funding for new provision, particularly through partnership arrangements.
- **Leeds Integrated Youth Support Service:** integrated capital strategy for youth centres based on an earlier hub strategy for youth provision.
- **Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Services:** strategic approach to securing youth facilities across the county including generic, community, mobile and specialist provision.
- **Shropshire Youth Support Service:** the council has committed £1.1 million to upgrade provision as part of a capital investment strategy to provide a minimum entitlement for young people across the whole county, and is seeking funding for two new youth centres.

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Fluxmobile



Heysham Youth and Community Centre

4. Implementing the *myplace* principles

This report is structured around the ten *myplace* principles, with each section looking at ways in which projects featured in the case studies were found to demonstrate the principles.

4.1. *myplace* principle: young people's outcomes

Significant value for money impact on the outcomes underpinning the youth Public Service Agreement, particularly for young people living in deprived communities and those who would not otherwise participate in positive activities.

When asked what they liked about the facilities, young people moved between talking about the building, equipment and programmes and about the relationships they developed with youth workers – as people they trusted, who treated them with respect and who actually liked young people. While these relationships between adults and young people lie at the heart of youth work, it was also clear that young people felt that high quality provision offered a powerful message about how they were valued. They believed that high quality provision would attract more young people who would benefit from opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities, increase their skills and develop relationships with youth workers. In the words of one young man from the Salmon Youth Centre, 'It's a statement. Being ready to invest £10 million shows how important youth work is, that people do care about young people.'

This link between the quality of facilities and young people (and indeed youth workers) feeling valued was endorsed by the recent Ofsted inspection of Nottinghamshire Youth Support Service, which provided one of the local authority case studies. 'The council is investing considerable sums to improve facilities and accommodation for youth work. A consequence of this support is a perception, clearly articulated by both staff and young people, that they are valued in Nottinghamshire.'¹

Managers of new or improved facilities reported an almost immediate increase in the numbers of young people using the facilities. At the Open Youth Venue in Norwich, visits to the relocated Connexions service increased from 80-120 per month to 400-600. Membership of the Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey had increased by 50 per cent within a few months of the opening of the new centre, without any specific efforts being made. Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre met its funder's targets for usage within the first year, and two years on, was described as exceeding expectations.

In other instances, new provision had enabled facilities to reach different groups of young people. The conversion of a garage at Gillingham ('Bones') Youth Centre to develop motor vehicle courses had attracted young people who had not previously used the centre.

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Mill Adventure Base

In Swindon, young women, young offenders, refugees and asylum-seekers and disabled young people have made videos on the theme of 'Our Town' with Create Studios, while in Westminster the Avenues Youth Project set up an after-school homework group for Muslim young women in response to their request for appropriate opportunities.

Young people are offered opportunities to gain accreditation for their achievements through a range of programmes, including Duke of Edinburgh Awards, sports leadership and football coaching qualifications, arts awards and qualifications, and Youth Achievement Awards. Celebration and showcase events also provide opportunities to highlight young people's achievements, particularly through the performing arts.

The specific outcomes identified as arising from new or improved provision included:

- Independent research showing that local residents (young people and adults) believed that the new facility had improved community and personal safety;
- Promoting healthy lifestyles through sport and physical activity, healthy eating and cookery.
- Increasing young people's employability, in areas including youth work, catering, cultural industries and construction trades.
- Offering an alternative to drink and drug use.
- Helping refugees and asylum-seekers to improve their English and communications skills, develop IT and music technology skills, and access local information and services.
- Police attributing reductions in anti-social behaviour incidents or alcohol-related trouble to the introduction of the new facilities.
- Schools reporting improvements in attendance, behaviour and achievement among pupils attending alternative education programmes.
- The number of young people gaining recorded and accredited outcomes at a new centre exceeded targets by 20 per cent in first six months.



Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre

What young people said

'This is where you gain key skills like teamwork and communication, not from school.'

'I've cut down on smoking a lot since I've been coming here. The staff help, they're getting me NHS support.'

'It's ten times better than school and more fun. You can learn on the computers and I've been horse riding and quad biking.'

'You're encouraged to go for awards and accreditation. The more you get it boosts you.'

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Salmon Youth Centre

'It's a good place that helps people behave.'

'There's so much to do, you don't get bored. The staff encourage you to do some activities, you're guaranteed to learn different things each day.'

'I got everything I wanted out of the course, it was hard at first but I got better and enjoyed making our own CD.'

4.2. *myplace* principle: young people's active participation

All decisions about the design, use, and ongoing management of the facility being driven by local young people including:

- the influence of young people on the architectural design specification for the new facility;
- the influence young people have on the range of services that will be provided for them to bring about the best possible outcomes for themselves and other young people;
- the involvement of young people in reviewing and evaluating what is and is not working well within the project; and
- the inclusion of young people in the day-to-day decision making and ongoing management issues of the project.

It is clear that young people are being involved in decisions about provision at a variety of levels, from strategic to operational. However, different projects have developed in very different ways, and this has affected the extent to which the projects can be said to be driven by young people.

In some instances, it has taken years from the initial idea for facilities to their actual opening. This may result in greater ownership among young people, particularly in neighbourhood-based provision, where young people have grown up with the planned projects and in some cases are employed as staff at the new facilities. However, it also means that individual young people move on, and that those young people who remain involved recognise that it is their younger peers, not themselves, who will directly benefit from new facilities. On long drawn out projects, therefore, different young people may be involved at various stages, and their influence may be most obvious at the level of decisions about equipment, furnishings and programming.

The availability of funding has been an obvious factor affecting the lead-in time for projects. For many of the projects featured in the case studies, securing funding has been a difficult process. In some instances staff have had to be ambitious and entrepreneurial in moving quickly to take advantage of new opportunities – limiting the direct involvement of young people at this stage of the process, but building on their previously expressed needs and ideas. The requirements of funding streams also

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Woking YPod



Beacon Young People's Resource Centre

vary; not all have as strong an emphasis as *myplace* on demonstrating that projects are driven by young people. In this sense, *myplace* itself is acting as the stimulus for increasing young people's participation.

It is apparent, however, that the introduction of the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF), giving direct responsibility for financial decision making to young people, has had a major impact on the level of young people's involvement in decisions. Adults responsible for supporting the grant-making panels have consistently reported that young people have rejected applications which they suspect are not led by young people. For some authorities, the challenge is now how to build on the YCF experience to ensure that young people are involved in decisions on all capital spending, working alongside adults.

4.2.1. Developing new facilities

In some areas, existing structures – particularly youth forums, councils and parliaments, and the YOF/YCF panels – have been used to involve young people in decisions about new facilities and the activities and services they should provide. In Shropshire, for instance, young people, through the youth forum structure, made decisions about the proposals which the local authority should support as *myplace* applications. In others, new structures were set up; in Bristol, for instance, a young consultants' team was recruited to lead the Centre for Youth initiative (intended to make city centre venues more accessible to young people).

These formal structures were often accompanied by other approaches to engage harder to reach young people, or those who are not comfortable with formal processes. These were frequently undertaken by or with detached or participation youth workers. In Nottinghamshire, detached youth work was used to seek the views of a wider range of young people, with staff showing them plans for a new youth centre and presenting options for layout and furnishings. In Devon, before a mobile facility is deployed in an area, streetworkers approach young people to consult them on the sort of activities they want and the best location for the mobile. The consultation process for the development of a new high street library in Bolton used arts-based methods to involve local people, including a group of young Asian women. In Shropshire, youth service staff have carried out consultations with specific groups of young people, including young people with special needs and looked after young people.

Consultation about new facilities and an improved youth offer also drew upon services' broader planning and review processes. Hackney's 'good place to grow up' consultation in 2006 included methods such as peer research, focus groups, community events and faith specific consultations. This was followed by further consultation through the neighbourhood youth forums and youth parliament, and the service's annual survey. A team of young people was then trained to consult other young people about the service's concept of creating 'hubs' across the borough.

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Bolton Lads and Girls Club



Beacon Young People's Resource Centre

Young people have also organised events bringing together a range of local stakeholders. In Leeds, for instance, young people involved in plans to develop a new youth centre in the south of the city led a consultation event in partnership with adults, where they ran table discussions, answered questions from adults and demonstrated their commitment to the project and their ability to take it forward.

Collectively, the case studies highlight a range of ways in which young people have been involved in the design of new or refurbished youth facilities. They have carried out audits of existing provision; visited other projects; explored and expressed their ideas for new facilities through words, games, drawings and photos; made presentations to officers, elected members and building professionals; been involved in the selection of architects; met architects to discuss, review and change their plans; visited sites during construction; been involved in the final 'snagging' (checking for faults) stage; sourced and selected furnishings, fittings and equipment; and chosen colour schemes.

The case studies highlight the role of staff in supporting young people involved in planning and developing new facilities. Staff have occasionally had to challenge unrealistic or impractical ideas, although this has more commonly been seen as a process of negotiation and priority setting within budgetary and other practical constraints. However, young people have also come up with ideas which would not have occurred to adults, particularly drawing on their familiarity with ICT to include features such as the use of Bluetooth. Staff have also helped young people consider the needs of specific groups, such as wheelchair users or visually impaired young people, when choosing furniture or colour schemes. Where provision already existed, staff sought to consult young people who were not currently using it as well as existing users.

However, rather than needing to rein in young people's ideas, staff more frequently stressed their role in helping young people 'think big', particularly when their other experiences do not lead them to expect high quality provision. Young people's expectations may be limited or they may not know what is available, and staff therefore need to help them develop a vision of what is possible, rather than simply basing their ideas on what they are already used to. This may also present a challenge for some staff who have grown used to a 'making do' culture based on creative use of very limited resources.

Staff reported a range of approaches to helping young people extend their ambitions, including working with artists in residence; setting out a range of imaginative options; visiting other facilities (in different sectors) and commercial suppliers; using the internet and bespoke suppliers to secure higher quality equipment; and staff making use of their expertise and experience to interpret and upgrade young people's initial ideas.

Projects also identified issues related to involving young people appropriately. At EC1 Music Project, young people were involved from the early stages of the project, working with architects to develop and

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Mill Adventure Base



The Old Library

agree drawings and plans. However, they were not directly involved while the proposals went through the legal and planning processes, but were kept informed about progress and timescales. After agreement was secured, a young people's steering group was set up to make decisions about colours and furnishings. In Norwich, the Open Trust stresses that involvement of young people must be meaningful. While young people were involved in decisions about design and provision, they were not involved in mechanical or building processes because of their technical nature. They also tended not be involved in drawing up funding bids, but were always involved in speaking to potential funders when they visited the project.

Other issues identified included maintaining the involvement of young people over long periods of time, particularly when projects were delayed. In some cases projects had taken a number of years from initial discussion to opening, and the young people originally involved had moved on, or had become disillusioned that nothing was happening.

In Nottinghamshire, for instance, the long lead in for the capital development programme – three years until the first youth centre was built – meant that the service had to engage new groups of young people, whose involvement focused on the interior of the facility and on the activities and services rather than the design of the building itself. In some cases, young people had overcome considerable obstacles. In Ashford North, where Kent County Council had allocated money for a new youth centre alongside a PFI school development, delays to the PFI process meant that costs for the youth centre rose from £1 million to £1.25 million. However, young people involved in the project succeeded in getting the council to increase its funding.

Other projects had devised ways to reinvigorate young people's involvement. The Open Trust had set up a youth forum after a building was secured, involving over 40 young people. However, numbers dropped as the development became delayed, although a core group remained involved. In the final year of the project, the trust decided to recruit a 12 person youth consultancy team, offering each member a defined role which would develop their skills and experience in specific areas including support from business mentors.

4.2.2. Review and evaluation

Young people are also involved in evaluating provision, including setting minimum standards for local provision. Bristol Youth Support and Development Services is supporting a 'Centre for Youth' project, through which organisations (both youth specific and generic) are asked to meet a two-level quality standard devised by a young consultants' team. Shropshire Youth Support Services is developing a minimum specification which youth provision must meet in order to be designated a 'first stop shop' facility. Young people have been involved in developing this specification, and much of the evidence required will be provided by young people using the facilities.

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The Pump



Crew Club

Young people in Hackney are already involved in assessing youth service provision through a youth inspection team, which forms an integral part of the service's quality assurance processes and this will be the model used to assess customer satisfaction with the planned new facilities. The Flux project in Swindon is being independently evaluated, including a role for young people as 'peer documenters' gathering creative documentary evidence.

4.2.3. Day to day decision-making and ongoing management

Young people were reported to be involved in ongoing decision-making through membership of management groups alongside adults with, in some cases, the stipulation of minimum numbers of young people. Bristol Young People's Services, for instance, is exploring options for ensuring that young people make up the majority of the management group for its planned new centre. In Shropshire, the proposed new centres will have management boards comprising young people and adults, which will link in to broader arrangements for devolving a proportion of budgets to young people.

A variety of young people's groups was also reported, such as youth forums and members committees, usually with links to formal management structures. Young people are also involved in recruiting staff; young users of EC1 Music Project in Islington, for instance, received training from the authority-wide participation project in job descriptions, weighting criteria and interview skills.

What young people said:

'Being involved at the heart of the project from the beginning, we are involved in decisions such as design and layout of the venue.'

'We have been consulted, we told them what we wanted and we got it!'

'We put the effort in to get the grant, because it was something we knew everyone really wanted.'

'I attended public meetings, the architects showed us the plans and asked us what we wanted.'

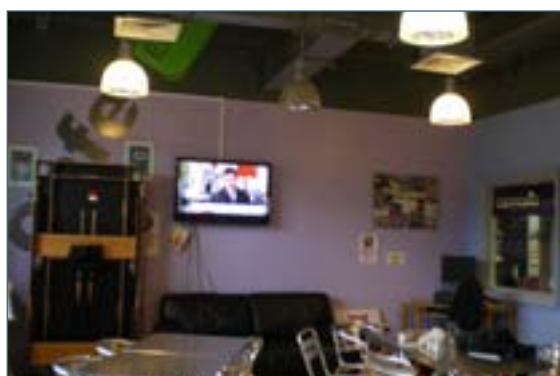
'We tell the trustees what girls want.'

'Staff come round and ask us what we want to do, put ideas up on a flipchart. They then look at what everyone's said and adjust the programme.'

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Open Youth Venue



Young Dewsbury

4.3. *myplace* principle: accessibility

Responding to local needs and overcoming local barriers, to ensure that all young people have access to positive activities and support services. This includes tackling both practical barriers and young people's readiness to participate, including through:

- the provision of an attractive diverse range of activities and opportunities that local young people want, available at times that suit them and at an affordable cost;
- consideration of how young people will get to and from the facility, including on public transport;
- arrangements to ensure that disabled, looked after and other disadvantaged young people are able to access the facility;
- arrangements to smooth the transition of younger children into youth provision;
- co-location and cross-agency working arrangements to improve access to more targeted and specialist youth support services;
- arrangements for community outreach – for example to dispersed or rural areas; and
- the relationship with other local services, for example links to or co-location with schools, or support for and links to other local youth provision.

4.3.1. *Range and quality of provision*

As the case studies were compiled, it became clear that the new or refurbished facilities share some common features which are seen as key to engaging young people and improving outcomes. These include:

- A welcoming **reception** area, with immediate evidence of activities on offer and young people's achievements.
- **Café and/or kitchen** areas were seen as important for a number of reasons. Cafés or coffee bars resembling high street commercial provision offer young people an important social space, and provide nutritious and affordable food. Kitchens offer young people opportunities to cook for themselves and others and, in some cases, training for careers in catering using industry standard equipment. At some centres, young people cooked a meal which was then eaten with other young people and staff with no distractions such as TV. This was seen as offering a valuable social experience as well as providing opportunities for informal discussion about the centre, its programme and issues concerning young people. Food was also seen to offer a useful starting point for exploring different cultures.
- **Chill out areas:** young people consistently wanted a stylish space with a contemporary feel, quality furnishings such as leather sofas, and high-tech equipment such as flat screen TVs, Wii's, Xboxes etc.
- **Creative arts:** music, video, radio, dance etc. appear to be consistently identified as high priorities for young people, providing opportunities to enjoy themselves, express emotions and concerns, explore issues, develop skills and recognition of these skills through public performance, and gain experience and qualifications

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Bolton Lads and Girls Club



Mill Adventure Base

equipping them for careers in the creative industries. Music and media activities were identified as being particularly successful in engaging 'disaffected' young people who might not otherwise use provision. Most projects stressed the importance of offering industry standard equipment.

- **IT provision:** in addition to media projects, most facilities provided computers for general use, including internet access. Young people used these for various purposes, including school or college homework, researching non-formal education projects and specific training programmes. Young people also used the internet to develop ideas and check prices for new equipment and furnishings for their facility. In many cases the computers were in a public area, so that the internet sites being used were visible to staff.
- Facilities offer a mix of **large (often multi-purpose spaces) and smaller spaces** for individual and small group work and specialist activities. Some designs stressed the importance of spaces being visible and flowing into each other, in order to encourage different groups of young people to join in activities. Some facilities built a few years ago were thought to have under-estimated the need for small rooms, particularly since the need for these is increasing with co-location of services and targeted youth support.
- Virtually all the facilities offered a mix of **open access and specialist provision**, either targeting specific groups or working in partnership with other agencies to offer specialist services.
- **Sports** provision, including multi-purpose sports halls, fitness suites (with commercial quality equipment), climbing walls and boxing, was central to some facilities, but not to others. In some instances this was because of lack of space, but in others, research into local provision had revealed that high quality sports facilities were already available – or were being developed – in the area. It was therefore seen as more important to ensure that young people had access to this provision, for instance by negotiating dedicated times for young people, addressing transport issues, developing 'passport to activities' arrangements, or seeking free passes for young volunteers.
- **Outdoor space**, although sometimes difficult to secure in urban areas, was valued both as offering opportunities for sports and activities, and as appealing to young people who might not otherwise use the facility, providing a bridge between less structured and structured provision. The range of provision included skateparks and BMX tracks, play areas, sports pitches and courts, youth shelters, multi activity games areas (MUGAs) and archery ranges. At some centres, outdoor space was also used for environmental activities, such as growing (and then cooking) organic produce, reclaiming derelict land, and creating community gardens. Where facilities were based in or near local parks this offered additional opportunities for outdoor activities, sometimes explicitly intended to develop relationships with other members of the community.
- The importance of having adequate **storage** space and secure storage was often stressed – particularly where buildings were used by different groups – and in some cases it was felt that not enough attention had been paid to this aspect of design.

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EC1 Music Project

What young people said:

'When you walk past this building it puts a smile on your face.'

'The centre's got everything I want, everything teenagers want.'

'The facilities here are great and it's the perfect place for us to all get together.'

'I didn't go to the old club but friends say this is a lot better. The old club had crumbling walls.'

'Before, there was nothing we could do when we got here.'

'The new centre's much better, the old one was tatty and dark.'

'This building is a benchmark for other youth clubs, they need to step up to provide facilities and relationships with staff.'



Beacon Young People's Resource Centre

Extended opening hours – including weekend provision – were seen to be important, but in some cases this was an incremental ambition, as those responsible for new facilities developed partnerships and revenue streams. The capital strategies developed by some local authorities include commitments to minimum opening hours. Shropshire's strategy, for instance, specifies that evening and weekend opening should be seen as 'normal' and facilities used for more than 12 sessions a week, while Leeds aims to provide services in hubs located across the city on seven days a week. The Open Trust's ultimate ambition for its new venue is that it should be open 24 hours a day for seven days a week.

Of the existing facilities featured in the case studies, the longest opening hours were reported by Bolton Lads and Girls Club and Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre. Bolton is open seven evenings a week and from 8am to 10pm at weekends and school holidays, while Woodhouse Park opens from 9am to 10pm on Mondays to Saturdays, and until 6pm on Sundays. These extended opening hours obviously have implications for staffing and running costs; Bolton and Woodhouse Park reported annual costs of around £2 million and £550,000 respectively. It is notable that both these facilities have a high level of involvement of volunteers in running activities, and accompanying commitment to investing in the development of their volunteers.

Most of the facilities featured in the case studies were open for at least four or five evenings a week, usually until 9 or 10pm. Several offer some weekend provision, particularly on Saturdays. Pennywell Youth Project runs sessions on Friday and Saturday evenings, which are intended to offer an alternative to hanging around on streets with its associated alcohol and drug use. Other weekend provision includes sports activities on Saturday mornings, for instance at the Maypole and Salmon centres; a Saturday morning club for young people with special needs at Gillingham Youth and Community Centre; and a range

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Devon Mobiles



Maypole Centre

of provision including a dance group, junior youth group and a youth church at Woking Ypod.

Some seasonal provision was also reported: Ebury Bridge Centre opens on Sundays during the winter, when members eat lunch together, while the Lighthouse Centre organises barbecues on Friday evenings in the summer. Improvements to outdoor provision had also extended the potential hours of use; the installation of lighting and CCTV at Tipkinder Park meant that the BMX track could safely be used on winter evenings, while Richmond's KCafé is open during park opening hours. Larger-scale music events such as gigs or 'battle of the bands' were also organised at weekends on a regular or occasional basis, often intended to attract new young people to the facilities.

Most facilities also run holiday programmes, particularly during the summer. In some cases these are organised through Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) or Youth Inclusion Programmes, while in others they are stand alone projects. Castle Hill Youth Centre, for instance, runs a PAYP programme including provision for young people with severe disabilities. Music and creative arts provide a focus for many of these holiday programmes; SCart's summer programme includes a 'Musical in a Week' project, while summer 2008 provision at the Stowe Centre included hip hop, dance and fitness projects. The Stowe Centre also takes part in the London-wide Summer University programme. Summer programmes also commonly include a range of activities and visits to broaden young people's experiences.

4.3.2. Tackling barriers

Many of the case studies highlight the need to overcome a range of barriers to increase young people's access to high quality provision. In some areas, staff undertake preparatory outreach work to develop relationships with young people (and their families) so that they feel confident in leaving their neighbourhoods to access larger provision offering more opportunities for learning and achievement. In Bolton, youth workers undertook a successful outreach project with housing and community safety staff to encourage young people who had not previously accessed provision to use the new Castle Hill Young People's Centre. Hackney's strategic approach recognises the importance of addressing the territorial issues that prevent young people feeling able to travel and access provision, through providing pathways between local estate-based activities, neighbourhood and central provision.

Bristol's Centre for Youth (C4Y) initiative was devised following research which found that young people did not feel safe in the city centre. Organisations taking part in the initiative are asked to meet a quality standard developed by young people. This has two levels, with the higher level including a requirement for organisations to commit themselves to providing a crisis safe space for young people, and an annual offer, managed through youth workers, to vulnerable groups

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Crew Club



Carnforth Hub

such as young people in care and young offenders. The initiative includes plans for a city centre facility, and it is intended that locality-based staff would spend some time at this new venue to provide a bridge between locality, targeted and city centre work.

4.3.3. Transport

Several case studies address the issue of transport. The strategic approaches developed by Kirklees and Birmingham services are intended to ensure that all young people are within a given distance of major new facilities. In Kirklees, young people should not have to travel for more than ten minutes by bus to get to a hub, while in Birmingham the vision is for 90 per cent of young people to live within two miles of a centre of excellence. Leeds has developed plans for eight youth facilities across the city, including two recently developed facilities; analysis of attendance at these two centres indicates that young people will travel to locations which offer quality services and activities.

Some local authorities are in discussions with local bus providers; in Bristol, a pilot programme was run over the summer to link the costs of bus travel and entrance to the ice rink. Other local authorities and facilities have developed their own transport provision. Bolton Lads and Girls Club, Leeds IYSS and Shropshire Youth Support Service, for instance, all operate minibuses to take young people to and from the facilities, with Leeds and Shropshire complementing this with mobile provision in villages and neighbourhoods.

Both Nottinghamshire and Devon youth services have recently made significant investment in mobile provision in order to increase young people's access to activities and services, particularly those living in rural areas. This includes targeted work with vulnerable groups of young people – often in conjunction with other services such as Connexions and community safety teams – including young Travellers, young people not in education, employment or training, and young people at risk of offending. Both authorities' mobile fleets are fully accessible to disabled young people, and are regularly used to support a range of community events and activities.

4.3.4. Access by specific groups

All facilities offer provision to increase access by specific groups of young people. Provision at Bolton Lads and Girls Club, for example, includes an Independence Group for young people with physical and learning disabilities, a variety of mentoring provision, and a Just for Girls group – Sunday afternoon gym and activity sessions for young Muslim women and their female family members. The club also runs time-limited projects to meet the needs of specific groups, such as sessions for Somali young people to familiarise them with the club and give them confidence to take part in mainstream provision.

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Lighthouse Youth and Community Centre

Young Dewsbury runs a range of educational provision, including the DCSF Activity Agreement pilot programme for 16 to 17-year-olds not in education, employment or training, an active citizenship project for young Asian men, and a collegiate project working with young people on the verge of exclusion from school. Maypole Youth Centre in Birmingham operates a Tenancy Advice Support Service for up to 35 tenants aged 16 to 25, while in Lancashire, Heysham Youth and Community Centre is undertaking outreach work with targeted groups including young Irish Travellers and the area's growing Polish community.

Virtually all facilities make some specific provision for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties, as well as seeking to integrate them into mainstream provision. Dedicated provision includes a weekly group for young people with Asberger Syndrome and autism at Pennywell Youth Project; the 'Manchester Marvels' project, a citywide initiative to encourage disabled young people to stay physically active and develop their own sporting ability, meets at Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre each weekend.

Facilities have developed a range of provision and adaptations to meet the needs of disabled young people and adults. In addition to the more common features such as lifts, ramps and induction loops, specific equipment and initiatives included:

- A drop-down shelf for changing babies' nappies in the toilet for disabled users.
- Kitchens with moveable work surfaces and sinks to accommodate wheelchair users.
- All toilets in a youth centre, including those for disabled young people, having a rack with leaflets and other information on sexual health issues.
- A 'welcome pack' for young people with disabilities, designed by young people.
- Making outdoor and adventurous activities accessible to disabled young people, for instance by adapting boats or incorporating a tilt into a climbing wall.
- Consulting a disabled young people's group on plans for a new centre, to be followed by an audit to see how good access is in practice.
- Signing some theatre performances.
- Evacuation chairs for wheelchair users.
- Drumkits which can be fixed to wheelchairs.
- A youth centre's young people's steering group meeting at the local Mind office.
- Non-bleeding hearing loops throughout the centre, providing separate systems for each room.
- Toilets for disabled users including showers and an adult-size changing table.

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Rollercoaster Youth Centre



Richmond Youth Partnership KCafé project

4.3.5. Younger children's transition

The case studies demonstrate various approaches to smoothing the transition of younger children. Many of the voluntary sector facilities have a broad age range, for instance from 8 or 11 to 21, although separate sessions are usually run for children and for young people. In this way, children become familiar with the centre (making them more likely to access the centre as a teenager), and the older young people are often involved with the younger ones through volunteering or peer mentoring programmes.

In the statutory sector, a small number of authorities have co-located children's centres and youth provision. Mobile provision also provided opportunities for engaging younger children; in Devon, it was reported that young people often bring younger siblings with them, and the youth service is responding to this by working with play rangers. Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre hosts a 'Greenzone' study support centre in partnership with Sale Harriers Manchester Athletic Club and local schools. This provides opportunities for children aged nine to 13 to take part in after-school athletics activities, intended to improve their literacy, numeracy and IT skills, supported by a young adult mentor.

4.3.6. Co-location and cross agency working

Much targeted provision is provided through youth services working with other partners, including Connexions and other youth provision; schools; health provision; the police and community safety groups; local authority departments including cultural services, libraries, leisure services and parks and open spaces; housing providers; commercial providers; voluntary, community and faith groups; and, for two-tier authorities, district, town and parish councils. Examples include:

- The Rollercoaster Youth Centre works closely with local schools providing activities ranging from anger management to sexual health; provides a base for community organisations working with 'disaffected' and disabled young people, and for the adjacent community college's extra-curricular activities; and works with social services to offer specialist provision for care leavers and young carers.
- Nottinghamshire County Youth Arts Team runs a County Youth Arts Showcase, delivered through The Old Library arts and media centre, which culminates with a two-night show at the Palace Theatre, Mansfield.
- Several facilities reported partnerships with local professional football or other sports teams. The Crew Club's holiday programme includes sports sessions in partnership with Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club and Sussex County Cricket Club, while Castle Hill Youth Centre works in partnership with Bolton Wanderers' Football in the Community 'Kikz' project.

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Mill Adventure Base

- Lancashire Young People's Service is working in partnership with the Libraries and Museums Service in the village of Crawshawbooth to convert three terrace buildings to provide discrete space for young people, an extension to the existing library, and facilities for young people and the wider community.
- The Beacon Young People's Resource Centre: voluntary projects based at the centre support young people on issues relating to mental health; housing, homelessness and independent living; and drugs and alcohol; while the Primary Care Trust (PCT) offers smoking cessation and sexual health sessions.

Even where services are co-located, further brokering may be needed to encourage young people to access them. The Open Youth Venue in Norwich, for instance, has three clinics where the PCT will offer a range of services, but the reception area will be staffed by youth workers. The need to ensure that young people can access more sensitive services discreetly has also been addressed, for instance by designating rooms as multi-purpose, or providing separate access. The design for Heysham Youth and Community Centre, for instance, includes locating one of the interview rooms next to the main entrance, so that young people do not have to enter the main centre areas.

Some concerns were also expressed about the potential disadvantages of co-locating services across age groups, where young people's needs and behaviour were seen to be at odds with those of adults or younger children, and this issue will be discussed further in the final section of this report.

What young people said

'The new centre will make a big difference, it will definitely be used. It will be easier to use the different services if they are all here, it will be more friendly.'

'It's good that a nurse comes here, it's easier to talk.'

'At school I couldn't talk to teachers because it was too formal. It's a relaxed atmosphere here.'

'As a young volunteer, the younger children know I've been there, they can come and talk to me. I've dealt with similar situations.'

4.4. myplace principle: community cohesion

Providing opportunities for young people to build relationships and learn alongside those of different ages and from different socio-economic, cultural and faith backgrounds and adults from the wider community, thereby encouraging and improving intergenerational relationships and building stronger communities, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Avenues Youth Project

The programmes in many facilities included activities explicitly intended to promote community cohesion. Arts and sports projects, in particular, appear to be a popular vehicle to bring together young people from different backgrounds. Young people in Wigan organised a 'Love Music, Hate Racism' fundraising event at Lowton Town Hall after the earthquake in Pakistan, while young people at Brian Jackson House in Kirklees have organised events for Black History Month in partnership with the local Carnival Committee. Nottinghamshire Youth Service runs an annual themed arts project. Its 2007 project, focusing on emotional health and wellbeing brought together over 50 young people from across the county including young people with disabilities and young homeless people. The project culminated in a multi-media event at the Old Library centre.



The Pump

Woking Ypod works closely with a sports project involving around 200 young men, mostly Asian but including some white young men, supported by the local mosque. Young people also play an active part in local cultural festivals, such as carnivals or Melas. Work was also taking place to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) young people and challenge heterosexism; a Samba drum group from a Wigan youth centre performed at the opening ceremony of Manchester's LGBT Pride Youth Games in September 2008, which attracts young people from across the country and provides a high profile platform for their achievements.

In Nelson (Lancashire), the campaign for a new facility to replace an existing run-down centre has provided a focus for young people to work together across differences. 'It's bringing together white and Asian, girls and boys', said youth worker Mohammed Arshad. 'Young people don't mix in town but they do at the centre.'

The location of facilities was also seen as critical, since young people in some areas were believed to be more likely to go to central, neutral venues with good bus links than to travel shorter distances to unfamiliar neighbourhoods or those they perceived as threatening. Where territorialism is acknowledged as a problem, this had been addressed in approaches to developing new facilities. In Kirklees, the Young People's Service was described as 'orchestrating' the mixing of groups through offering programmes that young people want and will leave their localities to access. It sees this approach as essential to ensure that its larger centres (hubs) do not become the province of small or specific groups of young people – a situation that does occur in some neighbourhood provision. Hackney is also adopting a hub approach to developing provision, but with each hub having a specialism, such as music or sport, to encourage young people from across the borough who want to benefit from the higher quality provision.

New facilities were also seen to create safer spaces for young people. In Tower Hamlets, the redevelopment of St Andrew's park was described as having transformed the area. Situated in the middle of four housing estates, the park was traditionally predominantly used by

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Salmon Youth Centre

Bangladeshi young people, but the new skateboard park has attracted young people from a wider area and brought together a diverse range of communities, particularly in the summer. This is reflected in higher use of the refurbished youth centre.

Some facilities place a high priority on promoting intergenerational activity. This is particularly the case where youth provision has traditionally been developed within or alongside community provision. Examples of intergenerational activities include a genealogy project; an eco-garden project providing opportunities for young and old people to grow flowers and vegetables together; parties and meals for local older people; and popular joint activity sessions including bowling and Bingo. In one area, these joint activities were described as having transformed previously poor relationships between youth centre members and a nearby organisation for older people.

Mobile provision is also seen to have an important role in promoting community cohesion. In both Devon and Nottinghamshire, youth service investment in mobile provision is seen by other agencies and politicians as a successful approach to helping solve community problems and promote positive relationships across the generations.

International and residential projects were also seen as contributing to community cohesion, both through bringing together different groups of young people, and encouraging young people to apply the experiences and understandings of different cultures gained through these projects to their everyday lives. The Salmon Youth Centre, for instance, had taken a group of young people from different youth clubs across the borough on a visit to Poland to learn about the Second World War. On their return, they were encouraged to reflect on issues relating to power and on how they could be a positive influence within their peer groups.

What young people said

'If it weren't for the club, we'd be in our little groups, drinking on the streets and winding other people up.'

'It's good that it brings together different cultures, bonding together.'

'The prize bingo is really good, young people and old people sit at the same table and it's dead relaxed.'

'Because it's not school it's better to mix.'

'The club brings together people of different races, faiths, sexualities. It's like a family, we look out for each other.'

'We put on an old people's party which I think is really good.'

'I didn't think we would all get on coming from different areas, but we all got on well.'

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Dukeries Young People's Centre



Lighthouse Youth and Community Centre

4.5. *myplace* principle: community leadership

Communities actively engaged in improving places for their young people to go. This may include plans for community ownership of assets as well as parents and the wider community actively supporting local projects, including through their active participation in decision making and governance, and in working directly with young people.

Organisations featured in the case studies support young people's involvement in a wide range of festivals and community events in their areas, including music and cultural events; county shows; national initiatives such as Volunteers' Week, International Women's Day, Black History Month and Youth Work Week, fundraising activities; and fun days. The benefits of this include a higher profile for the organisations and a greater awareness of their work and contribution to local communities. Celebration and public events are also a popular way of promoting facilities and activities to parents, families and wider community members, as well as offering a showcase for young people's achievements. Some projects also encourage parents to visit facilities or provide regular newsletters and updates on their activities.

4.5.1. *Neighbourhood involvement*

Some of the facilities featured in case studies have been developed specifically as neighbourhood provision, often with regeneration money, which has encouraged involvement of local residents. Where these are voluntary organisations, they normally involve local residents as members of their management committees and in delivering services. From a local authority perspective, Birmingham Youth Support Service intends that some of its proposed centres of excellence will be run as a trust and company limited by guarantee in partnership with the service.

Some of the facilities featured were set up by local volunteers and the local community remains strongly involved in their operation and management. The Crew Club, located in a housing estate on the outskirts of Brighton and Hove, was set up by local parents in 1999 following a fatal stabbing on the estate and concerns about the behaviour of a large group of young men. Some of these original volunteers have undertaken professional training and are now employed in paid roles, one of them as centre manager.

Other case studies also demonstrate the importance of investing in volunteers. Bolton Lads and Girls Club involves over local 300 people as volunteers, and employs a member of staff specifically to recruit, train and support volunteers. It offers a variety of volunteering roles, including mentoring, youth work in junior, senior or girls' sessions, sports development and events and fundraising. It stresses the value of volunteering to volunteers and young people alike. Volunteers have opportunities to gain accreditation and qualifications, and for some

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Bolton Lads and Girls Club

it has been a route to paid employment. For young people on its mentoring projects, it is important that these adults choose to spend time with them, rather than being paid to do so.

Woodhouse Park Lifestyle Centre also stresses the importance of community volunteers. It has a team of 75 volunteers, known as Team 110%, who lead and support a range of activities. Volunteers are offered opportunities to gain qualifications in youth work, training on specific issues such as child protection and health and safety, and 'lead volunteers' are encouraged to undertake leadership management training. The centre's managing organisation, Willow Park Housing Trust, was awarded a gold award for empowering communities by the Housing Corporation in 2007.



EC1 Music Project

In Crewe, Tipkinder Park skatepark and BMX track was redeveloped to transform an under-used space offering a focus for anti-social behaviour into a high quality facility attracting a variety of young people. The BMX track was developed as a collaboration between the district council, Groundwork and a local community group, Cheshire Ghostriders BMX Club. The club is largely made up of parents of current or former users of the facility, some of whom have gained coaching qualifications and undertaken child safety training.

The redevelopment of St Andrews Wharf was also prompted by concerns among local residents and others about anti-social behaviour. Local residents were actively involved in the improvements, and now have regular contact with the young people using the facility. Shropshire Youth Support Service carried out a survey with local adults about its proposals to develop new facilities in two towns, which were strongly supported.

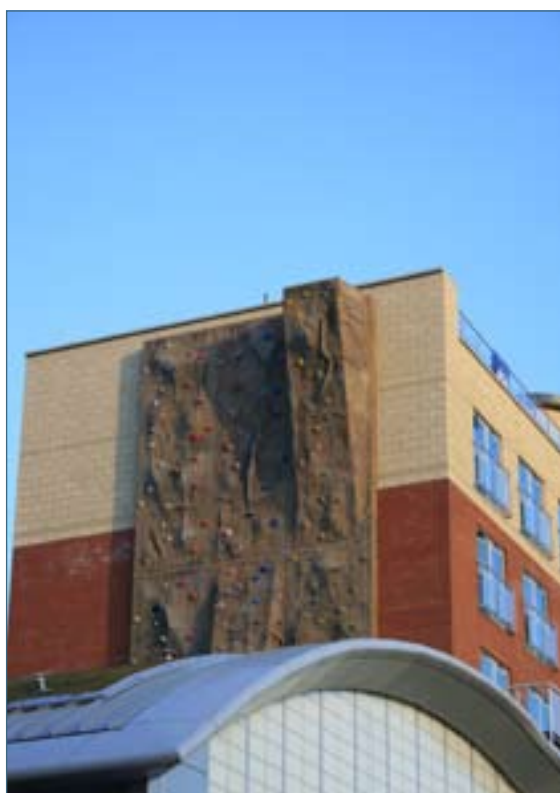
Local authority youth services also recognise the need to work with local communities in developing youth provision and to anticipate and deal with any concerns about plans for new facilities. In one area of Nottinghamshire, local residents had expressed concerns about proposals for a youth centre, and the service organised a public meeting bringing together county and district council elected members and officers, the architects, local residents and young people. This revealed that many concerns would be met by fencing off the site, which was done. The design of the service's new builds has also taken account of concerns about noise, access and so on. In Salford, provision at the Beacon Centre includes an enclosed youth shelter that is acoustically designed to project sound back towards the building so as not to disturb local residents.

Some facilities featured in the case studies are long established, with generations of local people having used the provision. While this promotes a strong sense of ownership, it can mean that proposals for change need to be managed carefully, as people retain an emotional attachment to what they experienced when they were young – however limited or unsuitable the provision. However, reactions to new facilities, once in place, were always described as being positive.

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



Crew Club



Salmon Youth Centre

4.5.2. Bringing in the local community

Some facilities have an explicit focus on opening provision to local communities. Richmond Youth Partnership's KCafé project was developed to provide dedicated provision for young people as well as a facility for all park users. It is now managed by a committee including young people, local residents, Parks and Open Spaces, the community police team and elected members.

The Pump in Birmingham and Pennywell Youth Project both include cafés open to other members of the community, intended to break down barriers with local adults and improve understanding of youth work. The Pump also has plans to sublet its hair salon to a school, which would run it as a training salon open to the public. Pennywell is developing an environmental education project on derelict land and a woodland project for recreation and outdoor activities for young people, residents and community groups. Its Eco-garden community project received Big Lottery Funding through the 'People's Millions' initiative, which invites the general public to vote for projects in their region. The location of the Castle Hill Youth Centre within a community learning hub has increased interaction between young people and other members of the community, particularly through the library and café, while the centre's football pitch meets Football Association standards and is used by local teams at weekends.

What young people said

'You can show your parents what you do in the music room.'

'We wanted the centre to be in community ownership, to give something back to the community.'

'My parents are glad I'm here and not on the streets.'

4.6. myplace principle: partnership

Developing and delivering youth facilities through partnerships between local authorities, the third sector and the private sector. Local authorities have strategic responsibility for young people's outcomes; the third sector often has greater ambition, reach and access to co-financing; and the private sector has much needed resources and expertise.

A range of approaches to developing partnerships have been used in different areas. They include:

- **Securing support from local authority departments** other than or in addition to youth services/youth support services. Richmond's KCafé project was developed in collaboration with the council's Parks and Open Spaces department. Bolton Council, in its role of

Investing in Youth Facilities: Findings from Recent Experience



St Andrews Wharf



Stowe Centre

corporate parent, encourages employees to become volunteers at Bolton Lads and Girls Club's mentoring project for looked after children and young people.

- **Successful collaboration between county, district and parish councils.** Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Services is working in partnership with district councils to develop dedicated youth centres and discrete youth provision in community hubs. This includes direct contribution to costs and support through land transfer.
- **Partnerships with the voluntary and community sector.** When the Kirklees Youth Hub strategy meets its target of 11 centres, three will be owned and managed by the voluntary sector, with substantial Young People's Services (YPS) involvement. Conversely, those managed by YPS will provide a base for voluntary sector organisations, whose programmes will be promoted as part of the overall area 'youth offer'.
- **Securing support and sponsorship from the private sector.** Leeds and Birmingham have both targeted local businesses in their approaches to capital development. In Birmingham, the council worked with South Birmingham and construction industries to develop a training programme for young people, who undertook much of the building work. In Norwich, the Open Trust's motor project and SOS Bus are supported by the trade and professional motor bodies and the local entertainment trade respectively, while the work of the trust as a whole is strongly supported and promoted by the local press. Bolton, again, has a well-established business support programme offering the local private sector a range of ways to support the club. Woking Ypod operates a corporate sponsorship scheme, with sponsors including a local housing association, Woking's shopping centre, local businesses and GlaxoSmithKline.

4.7. *myplace* principle: long term viability

Long-term viability and financial sustainability, including:

- robust management and governance arrangements;
- diverse and secure sources of ongoing revenue backing, whether from grant funding, private funding, or income generation through social enterprise; and
- excellent relations with young people and the local community, providing confidence there will be ongoing demand for the activities and services to be offered and a supply of local volunteers to work with young people in the new facility.

4.7.1. *Management structures*

Third sector organisations featured in the case studies have recognised the importance of securing a mix of professional expertise and representation of different sectors on their board of trustees or management committee. Some organisations such as the Salmon Youth Centre and The Open Youth Venue, have developed dual

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St John's Youth Centre

structures, combining a board of trustees with a wider advisory group, to gain a wider range of experience and support.

Areas of expertise represented on management structures included financial management; the law; youth work; human resources; media relationships; business; and construction. In addition to young people and youth services, boards and committees were reported to include representation from a range of sectors and interests, including local residents; other third sector organisations; disability forums; regeneration bodies; faith groups; schools, further and higher education; public services such as the police and community safety, neighbourhood management, housing, libraries, arts and sports development; health services including primary care trusts, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol services; elected members; and funders.



EC1 Music Project

Where statutory sector youth provision was being developed in partnership with other organisations, the need to set out clear roles and responsibilities was recognised. Lancashire Youth Support Service's shared use buildings all have a designated lead service, and detailed partnership agreements are being developed with the other agencies involved.

4.7.2. Income generation

Most new facilities have included some opportunities for generating income through rental and room hire in their revenue plans. For some this has been a particularly high priority. The Open Youth Venue built income generation into its plans from the start, and the first of its three phases focused on setting up companies to provide a revenue stream for the centre. This was made easier by the nature of the facility, a former bank with underground vaults suitable for setting up a secure storage business. The trust is confident that when fully operational, it will be able to generate income to cover its costs. The Stowe Centre in London also identified the importance of income generation; the top floor of the building is rented as office space to various organisations, while the health authority and local FE colleges use the centre during the day. Co-locating services also provides revenue in some areas; Kirklees Young People's Service includes premises management costs in all Connexions and Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) contracts.

In other areas, income generation has been lower key. For some facilities, it has been important to find ways of generating income that will add value to the work with young people. Pennywell Youth Project has set up a community interest company, including a community café, a cycle shop, a 'parks and pet supplies' shop and a community garden. This not only provides opportunities for generating income, but offers training to young people and embeds the project in the local community. In Nelson, Lancashire, a proposed new centre has a strong focus on community use, for instance for parties and weddings. As well as generating income for the centre, this would develop a sense of ownership of the centre among the local Asian community, increasing

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Salmon Youth Centre

parents' understanding of how their children benefit from their involvement, and making them more likely to support their attendance.

Facilities have also secured funding to deliver a range of services. Bolton Lads and Girls Club, for instance, is working in partnership with Children's Services to provide intensive support and activity for young people whose families are in crisis. The Mill Adventure Centre in Nottinghamshire has contracts with 26 schools and the Nottinghamshire Learning Centre for its alternative education work.

A range of approaches to charging young people for activities was reported. In some facilities, it was seen to be important to have a small membership and/or entry fee, not only to make a minor contribution to revenue, but also to encourage young people to value the provision. In others, most on site activity was free of charge, but young people had to pay towards visits and activities away from the facility – although in some cases they could apply for grants to meet these costs. Where music and creative arts projects charged young people, this normally included professional and technical support, and was said to be a fraction of the cost of hiring commercial provision.

It was stressed that those managing facilities require vision and business acumen to exploit the potential of buildings offering co-located services and income generation was stressed. This includes making more accurate calculations of the real costs of running facilities, taking into account costs, such as heating and lighting, which may be hidden as they are currently met from central budgets.

4.8. *myplace* principle: co-financing

Capital co-financing and ongoing revenue co-financing as an indicator of the depth of genuine partnership behind a project, and of a facility's long term viability.

Facilities reported capital finance from a range of sources. The Open Youth Venue reported that just over half of its funding was from the charitable sector, a quarter from the public sector, 17 per cent from the corporate sector and the rest from a mix of sources. Key funders for the £4m Pump initiative included Advantage West Midlands (£1.9m), The European Regional Development Fund (£1.43m) and Birmingham City Council (£300,000). Other funders included the local strategic partnership, the Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Prince of Wales's charitable trust and Birmingham International Airport.

Some facilities were developed as part of larger scale developments, such as Private Finance Initiative (PFI) or regeneration programmes. The Stowe Centre was rebuilt as a result of extensive negotiation as part of a regeneration programme which included building a new secondary school. The rebuild of St John's Youth Centre in Worcester

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Pennywell Youth Project



Mill Adventure Base

was funded by Sainsbury's as part of 'planning gain' negotiations. In Ashford North, where a youth centre was located on a school site being rebuilt through a PFI initiative, young people made a successful case to Kent County Council to allocate funding for a new youth centre.

The need for dedicated youth provision in Pennywell was identified following the allocation of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) money and the development of an area youth strategy. SRB funding of £500,000 was secured, and the new-build went ahead despite the remainder of funding not being in place; this was subsequently gained from a mixture of sources. Both the Beacon Centre and the Crew Club secured New Deal for Communities money, with their local authority also contributing to costs. A number of facilities were also eligible for European funding.

Some significant sources of funding can be identified, particularly those related to Sport England, which provided major funding for a number of projects including Bolton Lads and Girls Club (80 per cent of total funding), The Salmon Youth Centre, where it was the largest single funder, and Woodhouse Park, which also received money from the city council, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the housing trust. Other sources of funding included Barclays Active Spaces for Sport, various other trusts, Section 106 planning gain and the Youth Capital Fund (YCF). The YCF has clearly been used to support strategic capital development in some local authorities. In Lancashire, for instance, the award of large YCF grants levered in significant local authority funding, while in Hackney, the YOF/YCF panel is said to be committed to using capital funds (including YCF Plus) to help implement the borough's capital strategy.

4.9. *myplace* principle: sustainable development

Commitment to outstanding quality building design to meet social, economic and environmental goals in an integrated way so that people can enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life for future generations, including:

- **socially** – creating a lasting sense of belonging and wellbeing across the community and tackling factors that contribute to young people feeling isolated;
- **economically** – developing links to local employment, training and enterprise opportunities for young people; supporting youth entrepreneurship; increasing take up of volunteering opportunities and community work; and using materials or services that have been sourced locally; and
- **environmentally** – choosing, using, reusing and recycling materials during design, manufacture, construction and maintenance; using alternative technology; and producing less toxicity, water, noise and spatial pollution.

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Crew Club

4.9.1. Social goals

The design of new facilities in some areas has stressed the importance of creating a higher profile for youth provision and making their activities visible to others – both adults and young people – to create a greater sense of community ownership. Nottinghamshire’s fleet of mobile facilities has a standard livery, intended to promote a positive image of young people and greater awareness of the work of the youth service. Hackney’s plans for developing a network of youth centres across the borough include branding each centre to offer a visible, high profile facility. All new or refurbished youth service buildings in Shropshire will have a common architectural signature, with friezes created by young people depicting young people and the activities offered at the site.



Benham Sports Arena

In Worcester, the rebuilt St John’s Centre is now located on a main walkway, and its design is intended to make youth club activities visible from outside: much of the ground floor has glazing from floor to ceiling, and equipment includes a plasma screen which faces outside to showcase the centre and young people’s activities. At the Stowe Centre, the reception area, the Connexions One-Stop Shop and the chill-out area are almost fully glazed and visible from the Harrow Road.

4.9.2. Economic goals

Some facilities have a clear focus on increasing young people’s employability. Birmingham City Council set up a construction training programme offering future employment opportunities as part of the Pump project. Each young trainee had a four-week initial individual placement on the site with trade specific sub-contractors, and they then worked together to fit out the first and second floors of the centre. The three-month project generated a significant saving for the project, as well as preparing young people for employment in the construction industry, where there is a regional skills shortage. Some music projects also highlighted their role in preparing young people for future employment as sound engineers and other areas where there is currently a skills shortage. The SCart project in Derbyshire offers a range of accredited courses in areas such as sound engineering and producing events. Facilities with industry standard kitchens also offer vocational programmes, sometimes in partnership with local further education colleges or businesses.

Some facilities also support youth enterprise initiatives. Young Dewsbury’s daytime provision includes a cooking project for young people – many of whom are care leavers – living in single homeless accommodation. This aims to train them to develop the café as a community enterprise project for other local young people. The Stowe Centre has invested in a T-shirt printer and mannequins to help young people create small business opportunities in the fashion industry, while Castle Hill Young People’s Centre provides a base for Tonge Bikes, a young people’s social enterprise constituted as a voluntary organisation.

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Salmon Youth Centre



Nottinghamshire Mobiles

Many projects promote the involvement of older young people as volunteers, often with younger members. Some stress that these volunteers are seen as part of the staff team. Young volunteers at Ashford North Youth Centre attend staff meetings, while the Crew Club includes details of youth forum members on 'The Team' pages of its website. At the Avenue Youth Project in London, young people staff a junior club, working as volunteers for six weeks then as paid junior leaders for three months. The Salmon Youth Centre has a room set aside for use by its young volunteers' group.

The SCart project involves six volunteer arts leaders, five of whom are young people. Woking Ypod is introducing a volunteer programme for under-18s, offering a range of roles which do not involve supervising other young people to complement its existing youth work training programme for volunteers over 18. The Open Youth Venue in Norwich intends that its nightclub will be managed along the lines of a student union and is seeking to involve students from the University of East Anglia as mentors. A number of projects, including Benham Sports Arena and the Salmon Youth Centre, offer young people full-time volunteering opportunities.

Neighbourhood-based centres such as Pennywell Youth Project, the Maypole Project and the Crew Club have a strong emphasis on 'growing their own' staff, through offering introductory youth work training, supporting trainee youth worker schemes, or employing young people in admin roles while they are studying. Gillingham Youth and Community Centre has a youth development trainee programme, through which the trainees work alongside the staff team for up to a year gaining work experience, training and support, and receive accreditation from Dorset County Council.

In addition to volunteering opportunities within the projects, some facilities also promote and support volunteering across a wider geographical area. Bolton Lads and Girls Club provides a base for a vteam (funded by the national youth volunteering organisation 'v') to support volunteering by young people from across Bolton.

4.9.3. Environmental goals

Projects identified various energy saving features including high levels of insulation; installing solar panels; using ground source heat pumps; automatic lighting; installing zoned heating systems; and a wood burning heating system with locally sourced wood. Other environment features highlighted include the use of Kalwall glazing which allows heat in without glare, is shatterproof, highly insulating and self-cleaning; the use of high quality hand dryers such as Dyson air blades which use less energy than traditional ones and require minimum maintenance; and an all-weather pitch filled with recycled rubber and sand. The manager at the Beacon Centre stressed the importance of over-engineering systems such as air-conditioning, hot water and heating, which can then run comfortably at 75 per cent capacity rather than lesser systems struggling to run at full capacity.

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Lighthouse Youth and Community Centre

The Open Trust had investigated some environmental options, such as alternative fuel, but had rejected them because of costs. However it stressed that all equipment would be modern and energy efficient, and recycling facilities are included in the plans.

In addition, some centres operated specific environmental projects. These include environmental education and community woodlands projects at Pennywell Youth Project, organic gardening at Ebury Bridge Youth Centre, and Ashford North Youth Centre, which is creating a wild flower meadow with a pond and an aviary to house a barn owl breed and release programme.

4.9.4. Other design features

In general, young people wanted vibrant and ‘funky’ designs which made bold statements often drawing on contemporary urban styles, including the use of contrasting materials such as metal and wood, exposed pipework, good use of space and light, and bold use of colours. Incorporating curves into designs also appears to be popular.

Some facilities have had to conform to specific criteria because of their location. The new centre planned for Shrewsbury town centre is in a conservation area, so the focus has been on creating an internal design with a similar feel to that offered by the surrounding bars and cafés in order to appeal to older young people. Other centres occupy listed buildings and therefore have to conform to strict regulations, including the Open in Norwich and, on a smaller scale, the Lighthouse Centre in Christchurch. Young Dewsbury is based in a former town hall with the original police cells, while the new youth space at Crawshawbooth Youth and Community Centre, based in the roof space of three 19th century terraced buildings, will retain the timber beams but develop a contemporary feel through the use of steel and glass. In a more rural setting, the Crew Club has a roof made of grass to enable it to blend into its chalk land hill surroundings.

Considerable attention has been paid to how to design in safety, efficiency and the effective use of resources. Issues highlighted include being able to control access to different areas; avoiding space that is not overlooked and improving visual connections between spaces; and the importance of being able to use space as flexibly as possible. Specific safety measures included installing CCTV systems, external lighting, electric shutters, high level steel fencing, shatterproof glass, and incorporating portholes in doors (to allow staff to check what is going on while reassuring young people taking part in one-to-one sessions with youth workers they may not know well.)

Another major issue emerging was the importance of recognising that high quality design offers value for money in the long term. Providing good quality fittings and equipment attracts young people and sends a clear message that they are valued. They are also more robust and



Pennywell Youth Project

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Pennywell Youth Project

less likely to be damaged (accidentally or otherwise). Analysis of costs should therefore take into account issues such as energy use and maintenance as well as the initial outlay. Examples of quality design and fit-out identified in the case studies include:

- Use of tread plate on corridor walls (offering a robust and stylish finish).
- Internal metallic walls allowing the creation of instant displays through colourful magnets.
- Touch-sensitive tiles for turning showers on and off.
- Fully tiled toilets, which are more hygienic and discourage graffiti.
- Kitchen and other wet floor surfaces using 'roll up' vinyl floors, which prevents debris getting trapped at floor edges.
- An acoustic floating ceiling designed by a specialist.

Some staff in centres that have been built a few years ago were also able to identify areas where they thought the design could have been better. These included more robust fixtures and fittings, greater standardisation of light fittings, more storage space, changing the layout of changing room and shower areas to offer greater privacy, and more attention being paid to energy saving, for instance installing solar panels.

What young people said

'If you buy dingy things, they just break and young people don't respect them.'

'I like the way that the walls curve.'

'It's quite cool, I've never seen quality like this.'

'People here can help you get a job.'

'The club's done good things for me. I make money DJing at weekends – I learnt that here.'



Mill Adventure Base

4.10. myplace principle: strategic context

Responding to local needs and priorities as identified in the Local Area Agreement, Children and Young People's Plan and other relevant service and asset management strategies and funding plans.

The NYA/DCSF survey on capital spending between 2005-08 also asked for information about local authorities' progress on developing an integrated capital strategy to improve youth facilities in their area. It is clear from the responses to this, and the follow-up detailed case studies on local authorities, that authorities are at very different stages to developing strategic approaches to youth provision.

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EC1 Music Project



St John's Youth Centre

4.10.1. Developing strategic approaches

As might be expected, most survey respondents said that their local authority was currently developing an integrated capital strategy for improving youth provision. In most cases, *Aiming High for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*³, **myplace** and Youth Capital Plus appear to have been the catalyst for bringing partners together to develop capital strategies, but a number of respondents identify other starting points. These include *Transforming Youth Work*, negative Ofsted report and the Quirk Review on transferring assets to the community.

A small number of local authorities had introduced posts with specific responsibility for capital or asset management – sometimes as part of restructuring which brought together the youth service with other services to create youth support or young people's services.

Only five local authorities said that they had already developed an integrated capital strategy; of these, four were using an approach based on 'hubs' or centres of excellence. These focused on developing a number of major centres throughout their areas, linked into other provision including smaller youth or community centres, specialist provision and mobile, outreach and detached work. This hub model has also been adopted by most of the local authorities featured in the strategic case studies, often prompted by the recognition that young people living in their area had very uneven access to good quality youth provision.

In rural areas, hub approaches were generally adopted because widely dispersed youth populations and poor public transport links meant that it was more effective to support smaller facilities in different towns, rather than a single large building. However, hub approaches were also common in urban areas, where residents' sense of place was identified as an important factor. Several urban local authorities – of different sizes – described themselves as a collection of villages or towns each with its own identity and pride. This had consequences for young people's willingness to move out of their own locality as well as the patterns of public transport. In some urban areas territorialism related to crime levels and gang involvement (actual or perceived) is a major factor limited young people's mobility, and these authorities had adopted explicit strategies to develop bridges between local, neighbourhood and authority-wide provision including outreach work and partnerships with housing providers.

Many local authorities have undertaken or are planning reviews of existing provision to identify gaps and areas of duplication and assess the condition of facilities. In some cases this includes the recognition that this might lead to closing provision as well as developing new facilities. Some discussions highlighted the sensitivity of this, particularly among elected members, given the generally high level of political and community support for youth provision. Where provision was likely to be closed, it was important that these decisions were

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Pennywell Youth Project



Rollercoaster Youth Centre

seen to emerge from authority-wide strategies based on rigorous and transparent needs assessment processes, and full discussion with young people and their communities. The ability to make alternative provision, for instance through mobiles or the deployment of detached youth workers, was also important.

4.10.2. Partnership approaches

Local authorities are developing partnerships with a wide range of third sector partners and, to a lesser extent, the private sector, with the development of a **myplace** bid frequently forming the framework for this partnership working. Some respondents also highlighted the convergence of youth service and Primary Centre Trust (PCT) provision, with one reporting that the local authority and PCT's children and young people's services were now fully integrated, supported by additional partnership commitments with the police and third sector organisations.

In several local authorities, youth services have developed effective relationships with property/asset management services. One youth support service reported that its staff and property service staff held regular meetings and that property services staff were fully engaged with the process for endorsing **myplace** bids. Property services staff had also mapped all existing community centres and other public buildings to help identify possible opportunities for integrated use of assets, and had ensured that youth support assets were identified and retained on school sites which were exploring Trust status.

4.10.3. Involving young people

Most authorities identified the arrangements for distributing the Youth Capital Fund (YCF) as forming the basis for young people's further involvement in developing capital strategies. In one local authority, the capital strategy had originated with the YCF panel, and was being further developed to link into strategies on sports and PE, BSF and anti-social behaviour. Local authorities also reported the use of a range of other methods to involve wider groups of young people, including consultations, peer research, website-based activities and events.

4.10.4. Linking to other capital strategies

Most authorities were developing strategies specifically for improving youth provision, either through youth capital or broader integrated youth support services strategies, which would link to their authorities' broader capital strategies. In addition to overarching capital strategies, they were linked to a range of specific strategies or programmes, including Building Schools for the Future, extended schools, play, regeneration, sports and libraries.

Several youth services are developing strategies in response to their authority's specific circumstances. In one authority, where there are

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Tipkinder Park

plans for major housing development, negotiations are underway with housing developers and relevant district or city councils for Section 106 ('planning gain') funding to provide the infrastructure for sustainable communities, including youth provision. Project groups, including youth service representation, have been set up to secure suitable and sufficient provision.

One local authority highlighted the need for greater rigour in youth provision strategies, and is developing a property management information system including benchmarks and minimum requirements on size, content and location of facilities, similar to Schools Building Bulletin guidelines.

5. Issues and challenges

Some major areas of debate and difference emerged from the visits and discussions, some of which pose questions about the **myplace** principles, both in theory and in practice. These are: the advantages and disadvantages of co-location of services and shared use buildings; the balance between large-scale and smaller facilities; establishing positive relationships with contractors; developing effective partnership provision; sustainability; lessons from other countries; and the nature of effective youth participation.

5.1. Dedicated youth provision or shared use buildings

There were differing views about whether facilities should be dedicated specifically for young people, or should include provision for other groups in the community. While most facilities in the case studies provide solely for young people, some invite community groups to use the facilities. Staff at these projects stress, however, that young people's needs took priority, and other groups were invited on young people's terms.

Some local authorities have a history of making provision for young people within the community. One local authority was described as increasingly seeking to secure distinct space for young people within buildings serving a range of user groups, rather than supporting dedicated youth centres. Youth service assets are described as contributing to the authority's 'access point strategy'; as in the development of a youth centre alongside a school, library and children's centre. This is seen as a way of extending young people's access to other services and improving relationships between young people and other groups. However, there are also pragmatic grounds for this approach, since it is more economical to extend the footprint of a new build than to develop a separate building.

In some discussions concerns emerged about the effect of co-locating

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Salmon Youth Centre



Bolton High Street Library

youth services with those for other age groups. In facilities where income generation is a priority, hiring out office space to other users (or indeed providing a base for staff teams) can mean that there is a shift towards the premises feeling dominated by adults. Young people's ownership of provision can also be limited. In one centre, for instance, young people have created an extensive range of displays recording their activities, but these are kept in a store room rather than displayed in the central hall to retain a more neutral feel to the room. However, other facilities have consciously been marketed to other youth and educational bodies as an example of modern youth provision.

Other services are co-locating children's centres and youth centres, each with discrete areas, but concerns remain that this may also compromise young people's space – for instance limiting displays and information on issues such as sexual health or drug use. This has emerged as an issue in the USA; a study visit looking at provision offered by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America highlights the difficulties these clubs are experiencing with their wide age range of six to 18. As a result, many are now developing purpose built 'teen spaces.'^{1 2}

In some areas, there has been considerable capital investment in major leisure and cultural developments and regeneration initiatives. In these instances, youth services are seeking to ensure that young people gain affordable and appropriate access to this provision. This is seen as not only benefiting young people, but as ensuring that the best use is made of significant capital investment.

Where provision is shared between young people and other groups, some practical issues have been identified. These include ensuring that young people can access the facility when the other services are closed, negotiating timetables and protocols for shared use, and developing appropriate facility management arrangements to represent the interests of all groups.

Other local authorities have moved away from joint youth and community provision. In one such authority, which is seeking to develop a network of centres evenly distributed across the city, there is a concurrent move towards community hubs (bringing together sectors such as community, health, leisure and neighbourhood warden provision) in some areas of the city. The service has needed to influence thinking to gain recognition that these community hubs may exclude young people, and youth support service staff have worked with senior officers in other services to get them to understand the need for discrete provision, possibly on the same 'campus.'

It may be that the key issue here is ensuring that the role and purpose of young people's services among political leaders, local authority officers, local positive activities providers and the wider community is fully understood, so that services are well positioned to take advantage of local developments and initiatives in ways that promote, rather than undermine, their key principles.

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Ashford North Youth Centre

5.2. Balance between large scale and smaller facilities

While some strongly support *myplace*'s focus on investment in large scale facilities, others argue that it was possible to secure transformational change in the facilities available through more modest investment in a greater number of facilities, often described as a portfolio approach. This view was common in rural services, which argued that there were few localities in their area which could afford to run large centres, and in areas where dispersed populations and poor public transport meant that only relatively small numbers of young people could access individual facilities.

However, some urban authorities are also focusing on developing centres across the borough, rather than individual large centres. This was often in response to concerns about territorialism and fear of crime which meant that young people were reluctant to travel far to provision. In some cities it was also said to be difficult to secure land for a large facility in an appropriate location. These authorities were often developing provision based on a 'hub' approach, through which services for young people would provide pathways encouraging young people to progress from using very local provision to neighbourhood or city-based facilities.

The importance of fairness was also stressed in some areas where youth services have allocated funds to improve existing provision, for instance through redecoration, new contemporary furnishings and wide-screen and multi-media systems. This is based on the belief that it is important not to neglect the needs of young people where no major capital investment is planned, and to ensure they have access to similar quality furnishings and equipment as those in areas with new facilities.

Some of the discussions about the scale of provision needed to bring real improvements in the provision available to young people seems to have stemmed from an inaccurate perception of *myplace* – with its focus on multi-million pound grants – as the only vehicle for delivering the government's *Aiming high* ambition that over the next ten years, there will be new and improved places for young people to go in every community. It would be worth considering how this misconception could be addressed in future promotion of the programme.

5.3. Relationships with architects and contractors

The relationships between architects/contractors and young people and adults supporting them have emerged as an important factor. A number of case studies highlighted the need to improve understandings between the two groupings. Architects and builders, for instance, need to improve their understanding of youth work, the practicalities of managing buildings and facilities, and the importance of taking young people's ideas seriously and working with them to develop them. Young



Ebury Bridge Youth Club

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Dukeries Young People's Centre



The Pump

people and youth workers/other adults supporting them need to develop an understanding of design processes and timescales, for instance the level of detail needed in specifications, the points at which change is possible without costing too much, and learning to interpret architectural drawings and plans. The importance of both parties not losing sight of the fundamental purpose of the facility – as a place promoting effective youth work and positive activities – was also stressed.

Many case studies reported some initial difficulties and hesitation from architects and contractors about working directly with young people, but that it had developed into a positive process for both groups – particularly where the same contractors had been involved in more than one project. Architects had been willing to meet young people in the evenings to talk over designs and ideas, and have visited existing facilities to increase their understanding of youth work. Builders had allowed young people and youth workers to visit sites during the construction of facilities (subject to health and safety requirements), and young people had felt that they were taken seriously as clients.

5.4. Developing effective partnerships

In developing partnerships between public, private and third sector bodies, it was important to identify what each sector would gain from partnerships, as well as what they could contribute. The importance of nurturing new opportunities for partnership work was also noted, since individual partnerships may have a natural lifespan.

Facilities were often described as seeking to provide 'seamless services', based on the belief that young people do not care who delivers services and activities, as long as they respond to their needs and interests. However, in some cases, partnership work was acknowledged as bringing with it potential conflicts of interest. In one local authority, the youth service had merged with education welfare, and youth work staff had to be open to young people that they were working with a service that they or their families might perceive negatively. In this instance, youth workers clearly identified their own role as supporting young people through any education welfare processes. In some facilities, the local police were involved in direct work with young people, and it has been important to ensure that police officers, youth workers and young people are clear about the nature of their involvement and how it relates to their formal law enforcement roles.

Some discussions highlighted difficulties in engaging particular sectors. Developments such as extended services and Building Schools for the Future offer significant opportunities for developing partnerships between youth facilities and schools. However, relationships are often dependent on support from individual head teachers, and in some areas work is underway to embed provision more strategically. Some facilities are located on school sites, bringing benefits in terms of access to

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Springwell Community Arts



St Andrews Wharf

facilities such as school sports facilities. However, in these instances, it was stressed that they need to have a separate identity from the school in order to attract harder to reach young people, including those not attending or excluded from school.

The importance of finding appropriate ways to engage small, local community based organisations, as well as larger or infrastructure third sector organisations was also noted. While some neighbourhood based facilities were clearly seen as playing a critical role in youth provision in their local authority area, others had found it more difficult to secure recognition of their contribution at a strategic level, although they reported good relationships with other local youth agencies.

Several projects had emerged as a partnership between different tiers of local authorities; in such cases clarity about which tier was responsible for different elements was particularly important. One project, in particular, had experienced difficulties with commitments to maintaining the facility not being met.

Issues also emerged in relation to management committees. These included balancing young people's real involvement in decision-making with securing the right mix of adult expertise and influence, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining people with the relevant skills, commitment and time to serve on committees.

5.5. Sustainability

In addition to the central issue of securing revenue income for the facility in the medium and long term and avoiding the creation of unsustainable 'white elephants', case studies noted several specific issues related to sustainability. The importance of securing understanding and awareness of the role of youth provision at all levels – from elected members to local residents – emerged as an underpinning theme. More specifically, while most new facilities had built in opportunities for generating income, discussions noted the importance (and sometimes difficulty) of getting the balance right between income generation and retaining the integrity of work with young people.

Some discussions highlighted the importance of being prepared to take risks. In some cases, facilities were dependent on different strands of funding, and development had begun before total funding was secured. This was felt to be necessary to take advantage of opportunities that existed at the time, but it was important that the risks were understood, and support secured from all those involved in the project. In other instances, the cost of projects increased and additional funding had to be secured.

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The Old Library



Crew Club

5.6. *Learning from other countries*

As indicated above, there is scope to learn from the experience of other countries. The experience of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) informed the development of Bolton Lads and Girls Club, whose director returned from a visit to the USA and, together with young people and parents, 'designed a youth centre to work in a very different way to schools or sports centres. The aim was to help all young people enter, feel safe and welcome, and then move on to an activity they didn't particularly know they were going to do.'

More recently, Mark Blundell, chief executive of The Salmon Youth Centre, received funding from The Churchill Fellowship for two study visits to the USA. His report on his experiences highlights the distinctive features of club work in the USA: some of these include:

- The scale and quality of many buildings, underpinned by an expectation of 'building wonderful facilities' and a determination to make best use of resources.
- A culture with expectations of philanthropy and giving to the community (encouraged by the tax system) among individuals, families and business.
- Membership of the BGCA bringing with it a powerful sense of belonging and identity, despite each club or centre responding to local need.
- A focus on structured programmes intended to promote personal development and growth for young people, operating alongside leisure recreational activities.
- Clear staffing structures with a focus on 'grow your own' encouraging the development and progression of existing staff.⁴

The scale of resources that BGCA is able to offer to its members is significant, including its own architects and website-based resources to help those planning new facilities – <http://www.kidbuilding.org/flash.html>. In this country, concerns have been expressed about developing a 'pizza hut' approach to youth facilities, but a balance needs to be secured between constantly 're-inventing the wheel' and making it easier to draw on learning from other practice and experiences to develop provision appropriate to local needs and circumstances.

5.7. *Young people's active participation*

Some discussions raised issues about what exactly is meant by putting young people 'in the lead' on projects. One chief executive argued that it was not appropriate to have young people on the organisation's board of trustees, since it was not possible to involve them meaningfully in discussions on complex issues – for instance the planning, legal and financial legal issues surrounding the development of new facilities. However, youth empowerment and giving young people responsibility lies at the heart of this organisation's ethos, as demonstrated, for

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Salmon Youth Centre



Beacon Young People's Resource Centre

example, through its young volunteer programme.

Other discussions have highlighted the limitations of simply asking young people what they would want in a facility; young people may simply identify 'more of the same' rather than a more varied or challenging programme. They may also be defensive about their space and reluctant to welcome new young people to 'their' centre. This is not a new issue: youth workers consistently use their skills to extend young people's horizons, increase their confidence and motivate them to undertake new activities or develop a broader range of relationships.

In supporting young people's involvement in capital provision, adults working with young people need to use their skills to stretch young people's aspirations and engage them fully through the processes of planning and delivery, listening and responding to them all the way. This includes acknowledging that young people may have valid reasons for wanting to decrease rather than increase their levels of involvement, but ensuring that these reasons do not stem from a lack of confidence, appropriate opportunities or support.

This suggests that both policy makers and practitioners need to continue to explore what is really meant by phrases such as 'putting young people in the lead', or 'projects being driven by young people' – not least to identify the characteristics of appropriate and effective adult support in helping young people secure provision which meets their needs, promotes their personal and social development, and improves their outcomes into adulthood.

Notes:

- 1 *Ofsted, Nottinghamshire Youth Support Service*, 2008. Available at http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list_by_la
- 2 *Programmes in Youth Centres: Churchill Travelling Fellowship MMVII*, Mark Blundell, 2008. Available at http://www.wcmt.org.uk/public/reports/209_1.pdf
- 3 *Aiming high for young people*, DSCF 2007. Available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy>
- 4 *Programmes in Youth Centres* – as above

'The facilities here are great and it's the perfect place for us to all get together.'

'This is where you gain key skills like teamwork and communication, not from school.'

'We tell the trustees what girls want.'

'There's so much to do, you don't get bored. The staff encourage you to do some activities, you're guaranteed to learn different things each day.'

'We have been consulted, we told them what we wanted and we got it!'

'People here can help you get a job.'

'As a young volunteer, the younger children know I've been there, they can come and talk to me. I've dealt with similar situations.'

'You never regret anything you do at the club.'

'The centre's got everything I want, everything teenagers want.'

'The new centre will make a big difference, it will definitely be used. It will be easier to use the different services if they are all here, it will be more friendly.'

'It's a good place that helps people behave.'

'It's good that it brings together different cultures, bonding together.'

'When you walk past this building it puts a smile on your face.'

