

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT OF
MIDDLESBROUGH SPORT AND LEISURE WITH
CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

**BARRY COPPINGER – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND LEISURE**

**JOHN RICHARDSON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT**

21st April 2005

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To raise members awareness of the opportunities that currently exist and may be further developed to enable young people in care to access sport and physical activity opportunities.

BACKGROUND

2. The Sport and Leisure Service sits in Environment and Neighbourhood Services, within Community Protection. The service delivers sport and physical activity opportunities to the people of Middlesbrough. The service operates across the following facilities and service areas:-

Rainbow Leisure Centre, Southlands Centre, The Neptune Centre, Municipal Golf Centre, Clairville Stadium, Acklam Sports Centre, Ormesby School Sports Complex and the Sports Development Team.

3. Historically the service included parks (Albert Park, Stewart Park, Hemlington Lake and Recreation Centre, Pallister Park Centre) and grass sports pitches throughout the town, though these are now housed within Streetscene, their value in terms of physical activity opportunity is recognised.

4. Sport and Leisure is one of the few local authority services that operates in a commercial environment. Users must choose to engage with physical activity opportunities then elect to use our services as oppose to those of private providers in the town.
5. The service carries an income target in excess of £3million for the coming financial year. This obviously creates a need to balance social objectives with income generation. The service must continue to compete and to provide the quality and diversity of opportunity that customers have come to expect. Good service is recognised by both customers and external agencies, the service is a Charter Mark organisation and holds Investors in People Status.

AIMS OF THE SERVICE

6. The Sport and Leisure Service has a single over riding aim which is to **'make more people more active'**. Every element of our service contributes to this mission, through casual recreational activity to the provision of sports coaching and fitness sessions. In addition our facilities provide a base for many sports clubs in the town whose performers are striving for excellence in their own field.
7. The service tries to give those who don't currently participate the opportunity, support and incentive to take some physical activity. For those already engaging with physical activity we seek to raise the frequency, volume or quality of experience that they have. In making more people more active the service extols and embraces the benefits that involvement in Physical Activity can bring to communities and individuals.
8. The overriding mission is intrinsic to the delivery of 'Active Middlesbrough, a sport and physical activity strategy for Middlesbrough'. This five year strategy contributes to our priorities for delivery and feeds the annual service plan, from which specific service area plans and subsequently work programmes are generated. The service, through the delivery of physical activity opportunities seeks to support the two key corporate priorities of improving health and reducing incidence and fear of crime. There is also significant capacity to support the mayor's reduction agendas.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND YOUNG PEOPLE - THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT

Health Implications

9. Whilst young people are less likely, than adults, to be at risk through inactivity related ill health, this scenario is far from unprecedented. Furthermore, young people that engage in physically active lifestyles are more likely to continue with higher levels of participation into adult life. The health benefits associated with physical activity are well-documented (The Case for Sport 1999, Health Records for Tees Valley 2002), as are

the dangers of physical inactivity. Physical inactivity is ranked as the fourth risk factor in coronary disease and some cancers. Raising Physical Activity levels is one of six themes in the Government's White Paper 'Choosing Health' released in 2004 and is important to the Mayor's Reduction Agenda. Involvement in physical activity can improve the cardiovascular system, aid weight control and increase mobility.

10. Engaging in physical activity is known to have positive impact upon physical and mental health. It can raise an individual's confidence, can develop self-esteem and pride and helps to develop co-operative and interactive skills. Many of the opportunities this service offers provide social interaction as well as physical exercise. By engaging young people in physical activity we give them positive recreational opportunities and arm them with the information to make informed lifestyle choices.

Reducing Crime and Creating Safer Communities

11. The relatively high local crime rates and even higher perception of crime levels are a key concern in Middlesbrough. Many initiatives and resources have been employed over recent years to address this worrying statistic. As with all young people, those in care situations make choices about the use of their leisure time that may lead to positive or negative outcomes. Exposing young people to physical activity opportunities and settings can arm them to make educated choices regarding how they spend their leisure time. It can also equip them with the skills to engage positively in the future. The positioning of Sport and Leisure in the Community Protection service is indicative of the corporate recognition of the value that sport and activity provision can have in addressing crime and antisocial behaviour.
12. Sports programmes and projects and the development of informal facilities are viewed to have a positive impact in reducing crime. Sport provides a diversionary opportunity for young people and can create community cohesiveness (Government Policy Action Team 10 Reports 1999). For most programmes sports provision has not been the sole intervention so it's impact on the community cannot be measured in isolation.
13. Involvement in sport and physical activity can have a strong role in personal development, enhancing self-discipline, co-operative and team working skills. Progression, development and reaching goals give an individual sense of achievement. Sport can draw together communities giving a shared pride and sense of belonging.
14. The benefits of sport and physical activity can be fundamental to achieving the aim of a socially inclusive community. It brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds and can tackle not only the symptoms of social exclusion, but also the causes. Documentation suggests that Physical Activity provision is most effective when used as one of a range of intervention measures to support a community.

15. Educational attainment has been demonstrated to correlate positively with involvement in organised Sport and Physical Activity. In addition attendance figures have been demonstrated to improve when physical activity opportunity is regular and is viewed as a positive reward. Research by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) indicate that schools with a good record in Physical Education reported higher achievement across the curriculum. Schools with high participation in sports also tended to have lower truancy rates and reported better behaviour amongst pupils.

SPORT AND LEISURE SERVICE WORKING WITH LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE

16. Work has been undertaken across the service to support the involvement of young people in care in sport and physical activity. Whilst this has not been unsuccessful it has been somewhat ad-hoc. Common to all the schemes is that little has been done to measure the benefits of participation by these young people, similarly little quantitative or qualitative monitoring has been undertaken by the Sport and Leisure Service. It is also not clear what proportion of the service's current junior users are young people from care settings. It is assumed that this may be an area of some sensitivity and would not be requested on membership or course application forms. It is unlikely (given current limited technologies available to the service) that, even if the information were presented, participation levels could be tracked.
17. The following are examples of activity or schemes adopted in recent years that have enabled greater levels of participation by young people in care:
 - The Sports Development Team deliver sports based holiday activity programmes through Champion Sports and Sports Camps. In the past Social Services have purchased a number of places for young people in their care to participate in activities. In some cases this has worked extremely well in others there have been issues around non-attendance.
 - Distribution of Leisure Link Cards to Foster Families enabling reduced cost access to activities. The Leisure Link Card is a 'membership card' for the Sport and Leisure Service. The card is usually purchased by frequent users as it enables a reduction in price at each visit and for every activity. The family card was issued at no charge to some Foster Families to afford them cheaper access to facilities and activities. The reduced fee would apply to adults and children, enabling family participation.
 - Social Services usually buy an allocation of places for Children's summer activity programmes at Clairville Stadium.

- Throughout the summer holidays in 2004 each of Middlesbrough three swimming pools was in a position to offer free swimming to young people. This venture was funded by Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust. It is hoped that the action will be repeated in 2005.
- The Sports Development Team and Southland Leisure Centre undertake a considerable volume of work with Middlesbrough's schools. Any young people in care accessing these schools will be able to participate in the activities on offer.

CAPACITY TO FURTHER DEVELOP WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER

18. The service is keen to further support the corporate care of 'Children Looked After' through provision of further opportunities to participate in sport and physical activities. As well as enable more recreational use, the service would be keen to develop more structured programmes that are specific to the needs of particular young people.
19. The service must remain mindful of the need to meet income targets as well as support corporate objectives, thus any initiative must be appropriately funded, should not unduly displace or disadvantage other customers and should not be detrimental to overall service.
20. The following are suggestions of areas of work that may be developed to enable greater levels of participation by young people in care. At this stage ideas are still to be developed so final costs are not suggested. Booking and consent forms may be requisite for many of the activities.

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITY DEVELOPMENT

21. The following ideas are under consideration:
 - Purchase and distribution, to relevant young people, of a junior 'Healthy Habit Card' that would enable unlimited access to swimming and 'Teen Tone Zone' Gym sessions for a four week period. A similar card could be tailored for younger children to give access to various activity sessions and 'Kidz Power' gym sessions.
 - Pre purchased allocation of places on coaching courses at venues (e.g trampolining, swimming lessons, soccer coaching) or on holiday activity courses (Sports Camps and Champion Activities) delivered through Sports Development. With these activities only a proportion of course places can be allocated to any one group to enable some open access.
 - Vouchers for free or discounted access to recreational swimming sessions.

- The previously employed scheme whereby Family Leisure Link Cards are allocated to families fostering young people can be re-visited. This scheme reduces the cost of access to facilities and activities.
 - Provision of activity courses that could be delivered specifically for young people in care, these may be delivered at a community venue or, space permitted, in a care setting.
 - Information made available regarding sports opportunities available at locally based sports clubs that cater effectively for young people.
 - For older young people skill based courses can be developed such as life saving and first aid skills or junior sports leaders awards.
 - Promotion and induction to Junior fitness sessions such as Teen Tone Zone or Kids Power.
22. As well as the areas suggested above the Sport and Leisure Service would seek to be responsive to client and customer need. The service will also seek to involve partners in Streetscene in terms of provision of activity in parks and countryside spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive that:
- a. Opportunities are currently available to young people in care and the capacity to increase delivery does exist.
 - b. Members should advocate the uptake of opportunities, with respect to the benefits available through participation, to the relevant partners through council structures.

REASONS

24. The recommendation is supported by the following reason:

The Council is responsible for ensuring that the best possible outcomes are achieved in relation to the health of Children Looked After by the local authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in writing this report.

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