



State of the Voluntary Youth Sector in Staffordshire 2013

SCVYS is the only specialist youth infrastructure organisation based in the County, working alongside other specialists in the rural, faith and BME communities, as well as the generic CVS providers.



Why did we put this report together and who is it for?

This report is about the current state of the voluntary youth sector in Staffordshire, recognising the journey undertaken so far, the challenges of the current climate, as well as outlining opportunities for the future. The report is enhanced by short case studies from across the County, designed to give tangible examples of what is being discussed. It will also briefly explore the national context to see how Staffordshire compares. It draws on existing national and local reports, as well as data and intelligence compiled by Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) through our day to day performance management.

This report is intended to be read by frontline volunteers and youth leaders as well as commissioners, strategic leaders and decision-makers. The aim is to keep the language as plain and straightforward as possible, whilst attempting to present the reality of the environment we are all working in and seeking to improve. It is hoped that readers recognise the description of the current environment, that it provokes discussion, and influences the future direction of youth services in Staffordshire.

It has been written by SCVYS who are contracted by Staffordshire Youth and Community Service, formerly Staffordshire Young People's Service (SYPS), to support the local voluntary youth sector across the county. SCVYS also supports some voluntary youth groups based in Stoke on Trent, although not under contract. A representative editorial group have acted as a sounding board, to ensure that the report is truly reflective of the sector at this moment in time, whilst recognising that it is impossible to capture the total diversity within the report.

What do we mean by Voluntary Youth Sector?

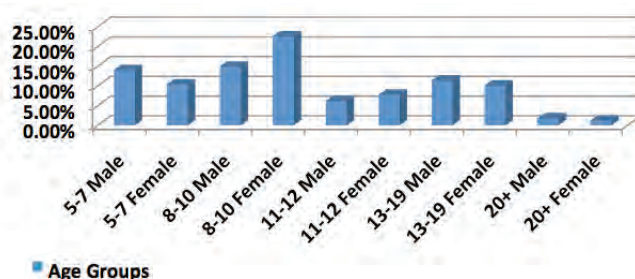
As in many areas, Staffordshire has a diverse voluntary youth sector made up of a wide range of providers. This includes a number of large organisations with turnovers in excess of £1m, for example, Burton YMCA and Carers Association Southern Staffordshire. Many of these organisations also deliver services to adults. There are many small to medium sized organisations employing a small number of staff, but who are heavily reliant on

volunteers for delivery of programmes. These include Staffordshire Buddies, North Staffordshire Carers Association, Harvey Girls, The Right Stuff and Stafford Elim Christian Centre amongst others.

County-wide there are a number of traditional voluntary youth groups, almost entirely volunteer run, who have enormous reach such as Staffordshire Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and nationally recognised uniformed organisations including various cadet forces, Girlguiding and Scouts. Finally, there are the myriad of small, often independent, local groups. These may be faith-based, theme based (i.e. music, drama, dance, sport, etc.) or simply focused on a local community, and who fill the inevitable gaps with vital youth provision.

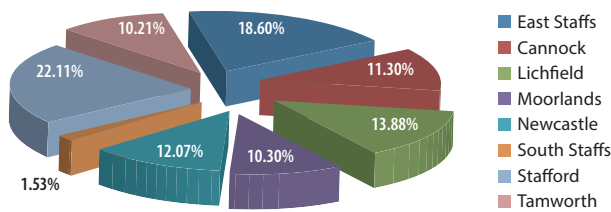
Many of the groups focus on providing open-access positive activities, however within SCVYS membership there are also organisations who undertake targeted work. These targeted services are usually focused around specific issues young people face such as teen pregnancy, housing support or mental health challenges. They might also be about engaging a minority group within society such as, for example, young carers or a particular ethnic group of young people.

Demographic by Age Group



These charts have been compiled from the 2012 census data collected by SCVYS. Above is the age range data for children and young people participating in SCVYS member groups. The chart below details the average attendance at voluntary youth groups across Staffordshire. Although the South Staffordshire district figures look low there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration. Girlguiding and Scouting delivery is captured by the West Mercia region, not Staffordshire, and although there are large bordering towns there are no larger conurbations within the District.

Participation by District



According to “The Ripple Effect” report (National Children’s Bureau 2011) the voluntary youth sector is particularly vulnerable in the current climate, more so than the wider voluntary sector. This is due to a higher reliance on public sector funding and low levels of corporate funding. This is certainly true in Staffordshire where the former Community and Learning Partnerships (the amalgamation of Extended Schools and Children Centre funding streams locally managed) were instrumental in developing the delivery capacity of a number of children and youth organisations across the County, which are now struggling to maintain delivery levels.

What do we mean by Infrastructure?

Another key finding of “The Ripple Effect Report” is the importance of infrastructure organisations. At their best these umbrella organisations are able to represent the diverse needs of the sector; which should aid the commissioning cycle by providing an important channel of information both ways, as they seek to directly support the sector through a period of unprecedented public spending cuts. They are also able to promote the value of the sectors contribution and facilitate training, networking, consultation and collaborative working.

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With the move from outputs (numbers who have benefitted) to outcomes (how have they benefitted) it is important that infrastructure organisations are able to demonstrate the impact of their work in tangible terms. A national model has been developed through Lottery funding to do just this, called The Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP). The following functions map explains the types of support activities which infrastructure provides for Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs).

LOCAL IMPACT OF FUNDING CHANGES

Burton YFC significantly expanded their after school club provision in East Staffordshire benefitting from extended schools funding, as well as developing new parenting support services targeting parents of teenagers through children centre funding. Since the demise of Community & Learning Partnerships, funding has had to be secured from other sources, meaning that in some areas provision has continued whilst in others it has stopped. A significant number of member organisations from across the County have been adversely impacted in very similar ways.



INFRASTRUCTURE FUNCTIONS MAP



This functions map has been developed by National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) for the Value of Infrastructure Programme.

It is based on PERFORM: the Outcomes Framework for Infrastructure. Also influenced by the 'Engage, Develop, Influence' Model of Infrastructure Function as developed by growing up in the West Midlands (G:Up)

The above functions are aligned to a performance database which uses an outcomes-based star approach to measure eight areas of organisational life to determine the health of any voluntary youth sector group. The activities delivered under any of the functions can then be tracked back to demonstrate how the supporting infrastructure organisation has improved the health of the local group. For example, in the last two years the average group score for intensively supported organisations has risen from 6.7 to 7.2 out of a possible score of eight, due to support measures and regular reviews SCVYS has provided for member groups.

SCVYS has set the goal of getting the maximum level of resource through to benefit front line delivery groups. Presently 45% of resource allocated by Staffordshire Youth and Community Service goes to front line groups, and in addition SCVYS provides the direct support of a local Development Worker across all eight districts.

National context

The Government's Positive for Youth Strategy (2011) has significantly placed responsibility for youth services into the hands of Local Authorities. With little statutory requirement around universal youth provision, and certainly no inspections to undergo, many authorities under pressure from reduced funding have disproportionately cut youth services. This picture varies enormously across the country from 100% cuts to the rarity of increased investment in local youth services. There appears to be a tension at Government level between releasing Local Authorities to do what they feel best locally, whilst holding onto the central reins tightly enough to appear to be in control. At times this approach brings contradictions which can cause local confusion.

When the current Government was elected in 2010 a number of youth related initiatives were disbanded, around information, advice and guidance, school sport, volunteering and participation. As time has gone on, and often in light of media highlighted need, a number of "new" initiatives have been announced to reactively address issues as they arise, some of these are similar to previously curtailed projects.

The flagship National Citizen Service project has had mixed reviews, and as it rapidly expands faces huge challenges to keep the individual young person at the heart of the programme, and avoid the danger of them becoming widgets in a production line. This danger increases with the involvement of large private sector led consortia managing and sub contracting national contracts who have profit rather than youth work values as primary drivers.

No coherent national youth work strategy, no obvious commitment to invest in universal services and under-developed links to formal education are certainly causes for concern. It is clear that without a broad base of positive activities providing significant levels of prevention and early intervention, the challenges facing the targeted and complex need services would be even greater than the current predicament. As Patrick Butler states in a recent article,

"As the government has ensured councils have little or no money for youth services, it seems inevitable that the state will only have a minimal role in youth provision, which in future will be something that local charities, businesses and community groups do instead.

It's a big society future for youth services, then. Which means many local services will be precariously dependent on the ability, goodwill and resources of local volunteers and funders to step into the breach."¹

The Young Foundation report on a framework of outcomes for young people states,

“It is well recognised that not supporting young people to thrive and achieve longer-term positive life outcomes has a significant cost implication for the public purse – research from the University of York, for example, identified the 'lifetime costs of being NEET' (Not in Employment, Education or Training) as £12 billion for the 16-18 year old cohort. If the case can be made that cost savings can be achieved through developing the social and emotional capabilities of young people, it will be easier to make the argument for a range of investment into services for young people... **”**



¹<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/apr/30/cuts-youth-services-fantasy>

The fact that youth work is on its way out of the Department for Education and presently looking for a new Government department home does not breed confidence for a sector which has already taken a financial hammering. Employers suggest that they are looking for young people with key capabilities such as confidence, emotional intelligence, communication skills, problem solving, creativity, relationship building and determination. These capabilities are the tangible outcomes of personal and social development programmes that the voluntary youth sector delivers as core business. The critical need to invest in these activities to enhance and compliment formal education has never been higher. However cross party commitment to the new Early Intervention Foundation is encouraging. The Foundation, chaired by Graham Allen MP, champions and supports early intervention measures to tackle the root causes of social problems amongst children and young people through personal and social development programmes.

In an environment reeling from the ongoing Jimmy Saville saga, amongst other headline grabbing safeguarding cases, Working Together 2013 sets out an expectation on voluntary youth groups to comply with the Section 11 requirements for public sector partners. Very few voluntary sector groups have the resources to complete a Section 11 audit, however by utilising tools such as the Safe Network online self assessment process, groups are able to demonstrate they are legally compliant and as a bonus, an automatically generated action plan will point them towards best practice in this complex field. Acting as one of a network of champions across England, SCVYS is working closely with its members to ensure that this toolkit is adopted county-wide.

The sector has been asking for simple straightforward common sense messages regarding safeguarding. Any bureaucracy needs to be kept to a minimum to ensure that volunteer leaders are able to spend most of their time with young people engaged in positive, developmental activities and not get disillusioned or burdened by excessive paperwork.

STAFFORDSHIRE'S SAFE CHAMPION
SCVYS is Safe Champion for Staffordshire. In collaboration with Children England, the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Staffordshire Youth and Community Service, the aim is to strengthen existing policies and procedures to ensure safety for young people and volunteers alike. Encouraging and supporting groups to use the online Safe Network support tools, Disclosure and Barring Service administration, delivering safer recruitment training for volunteers and developing a range of local safeguarding tools are just a few ways in which SCVYS is supporting front line groups.

The debate on the future of youth services is growing: reports suggest one third of youth organisations are at risk of closure, indicating the future of the sector is on a knife edge. SCVYS welcomes this debate, as it will increase awareness of the value and contribution of both youth services and the voluntary youth sector.¹

For a more in depth view of the national picture, Perfect Storms (Children England – August 2012) provides an analysis of the operating conditions for the children, young people and families' voluntary sector.

¹ <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/analysis/1076920/youth-sector-knife-edge-organisations-risk>



The present local reality in Staffordshire

Staffordshire County, excluding the City of Stoke on Trent, has 193,000 children and young people aged 0-19, however this report is mainly concerned with the 5-19 age group, including those up to the age of 25 with additional support needs. This cohort numbers about 147,000 according to Staffordshire Observatory population estimates. Around one hundred member organisations of SCVYS report through an annual census, a membership of approximately 35,000 children and young people who participate in personal and social development programmes on a regular basis, or almost 24% of the cohort. This is done via 850 weekly delivery units supported by over 6,000 adult volunteers and around 100 paid staff. (SCVYS, 2012 Census Data)

“EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR LOCAL GROUPS

In 2011, prompted by a request from the County Council, SCVYS revamped our member grant scheme. Historically a handful of the larger more established groups benefitted from the Management Grant, as well as enjoying free use of school facilities or if required accommodation grants. The smaller groups benefited in other ways, such as start up grants, free CRB processing, minibus medical grants, etc. but a more equitable system was long overdue. The new Local Support Grant utilises data collected from the annual census to divide up the pot on a more equitable basis. Any group receiving free use of schools funding is unable to access both funding pots in the same financial year. There was a negative financial impact on a few larger organisations, although all have substantial reserves and the ability to raise funds more easily than the smaller groups. For the smaller groups accessing the grant funding has been a lifeline for survival, paying insurance or accommodation costs, whilst others have been able to use the funds to enhance their programme, buy new resources, advertise the group activities or develop staff and volunteers through accessing training. The overall feedback on the changes has been extremely positive. //

Staffordshire has undoubtedly benefited from the consistent investment in the voluntary youth sector through SCVYS and the free use of school facilities budget, although each segment of the sector identified during the introduction has been affected by the current environment to differing degrees. A strong strategic partnership between statutory and voluntary youth services exists, and there is growing evidence of good operational collaboration too.

// STATUTORY TO VOLUNTARY!

In 2010 Armitage Youth Club was a highly successful voluntarily run, statutorily managed provision with three well attended weekly sessions. With a key volunteer retiring and management support from the County Council ceasing, the club's future was hanging in the balance. SCVYS supported local people to set up a management group, recruit new volunteers and develop best practice policies and procedures, so that they were able to continue to offer high quality provision for local young people. In 2013, a spokesperson for the group said "Had it not been for the support and guidance of SCVYS, I can say with full certainty we would have closed down" //

Currently a review of the Staffordshire Compact, signed up to in 2009 by members of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership and setting out principles by which partnerships between public sector bodies and voluntary sector organisations will operate, is underway. The result of this review will help determine the direction of travel for cross-sector partnership working in the County as we move forward.



The strengths of Staffordshire's voluntary youth sector organisations are consistently seen as (both by those in the sector and partner agencies) the following:

- Flexibility;
- Innovation;
- Responsive to needs, particularly those of children and young people;
- Effective programmes;
- Person-centred in approach over and above any category of need;
- Embedded in a local community and therefore here for the long haul, not purely for the money;
- Trusted as independent and non-stigmatising even for so called hard-to-reach;
- Specialist in local knowledge and/or in meeting specific need;
- Good value for money, providing more for less and increasing local social capital;
- Ability to mobilise, develop and up-skill dedicated local volunteers; and
- Helping the voice of young people to be heard.

The current top ten challenges for those voluntary groups who employ staff are reported to be:

- Short term security in terms of funding contracts. The impact on staff job security is clear;
- The inability to negotiate suitable, financially viable sub contracts with the large so-called "Prime" contractors who have been successful with national or regional contracts;
One recent example would be the National Citizen Service scheme where local providers were faced with a 25% cut in funding to deliver the same programme as the previous year, because the contract was coming from a national prime contractor via a consortium to a local service provider;
- More competition – private sector, voluntary sector diversification, public sector mutual / social enterprises moving in to deliver services, often outside of their core or primary purpose;
- The high level of risk involved in Payment by Results contracts. i.e. cash flow crises, organisational bankruptcy, trustee liability;
- Reduced overall levels of available funding;

- More call for their services – need increasing, especially around Welfare reforms, the impact of austerity measures. For example, one voluntary youth organisation has seen a 50% increase in demand for their emergency food parcels to the unprecedented level of over 100 parcels per month;
- Less effective partnership working, especially around referrals – for example, public sector bodies previously referring to the voluntary sector now expanding their own portfolio of services;
- Evidencing outcomes (how young people have benefited) alongside outputs (numbers who benefit) – particularly in universal / preventative provision where outcomes are generally long term, or difficult to credit to one particular organisation;
- The move from grants to contracts – increased bureaucracy, system tilted in favour of new provider. It is similar to the difference between being in Government and in Opposition; it is much easier to make claims about what you would do, and the difference it would make when you don't actually have to make it happen; and
- The tension of accessing funding for universal services, prevention and early intervention but having to deliver services in a targeted way.

The small volunteer run groups, including individual units of larger County organisations, identify their main challenges as:

- Less local small grant availability;
- The need to recruit new adult volunteers aged 25-55 – Nationally, The Scout Association have a waiting list of 40,000 young people and are actively seeking to recruit 10,000 new adult volunteers;
- Evidencing outcomes alongside outputs;
- Being able to access local, free or at low cost basic practical training;
- Increased venue accommodation costs and reduced availability;
- A need for jargon free information, advice and guidance especially around safeguarding;
- Wanting their voice heard at a strategic level; and
- Getting past the necessary bureaucracy in order to focus on supporting young people.

“ RESPONDING INVENTIVELY TO HARD TIMES

In response to the current financial environment, early in 2013 SCVYS set up the only Endowment Fund in the County focused on supporting youth work and young people. SCVYS has attracted over £73,000 worth of initial investment, and hopes to build on this positive start. In June 2013 a brand new Hardship Fund was opened to use the investment growth to support voluntary youth groups in financial difficulties, alongside providing support from a development worker to ensure longer term group sustainability. This model was successful when in 2012 a small accommodation grant to Moreton Youth Club, backed up by the support of a development worker, enabled the group to overcome a short term funding crisis and plan for a sustainable future. ”

Many of these challenges come back to reduced levels of available resource, whether that is finance or people. There is much talk of “investing upstream”, i.e. moving money from the expensive targeted and complex need support to universal and preventative provision. To actually do this, at a time when demand appears to be rising, takes courage and confidence in the early intervention model. However, to not do it, and allow universal provision and early help and prevention services to decrease would only store up greater problems for the future. National programmes such as Building Resilient Families (Troubled Families) will hopefully assist in helping the families who currently cost society the most to help themselves, but there will always be a need for accessible universal provision for young people to attend both during and after any specific additional support is provided.

“ MAKING TRAINING ACCESSIBLE AND EFFECTIVE

In 2012, in response to identified member group training needs SCVYS decided to provide core training locally, free of charge to member groups and as bespoke as possible. Many of our members simply cannot afford to pay for training courses. Since then 31 people have been trained in Food Safety, 114 are now Emergency First Aid qualified, including around 30 young people. 11 young people have achieved their Community Sports Leader Award with 2 more courses in the pipeline. Approximately 70 people have attended fundraising workshops (SCVYS data April 2013) ”



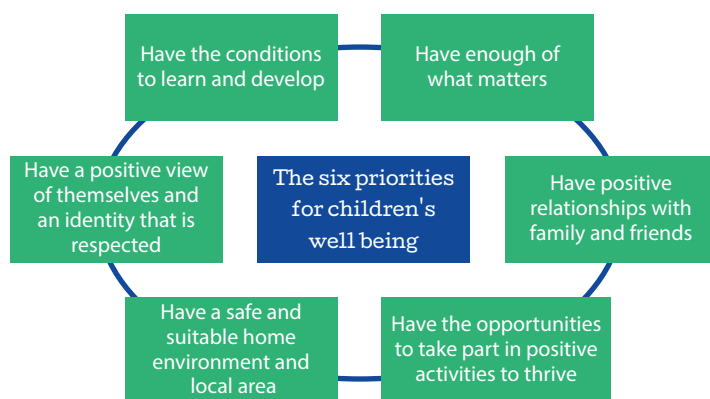
What do young people actually want?

Historically, what young people tell us they want has not changed much - somewhere local to go, free choice around something positive to do, and someone safe and friendly to talk to – which sums up the baseline expectation of a young person from a universal youth service perspective. But to bring about significant change, we need to look at more than simply services, we need to seek to influence the environment in which children and young people grow up, and ensure that it has the factors to enable them to thrive.

The Children's Society report A Good Childhood (2012) found six key things were important for a good childhood:

1. The quality of children's relationships and in particular achieving the balance between nurturing aspects of relationships – care, support and safety – and aspects relating to autonomy, respect and choice.
2. Children's feelings about themselves, including their physical and mental health, and how they feel about the way that they look.
3. Children's use of time – achieving the right balance of time between school work and leisure, and spending enough time in key social relationships with friends and family.
4. Where children live – including issues of safety at home, at school and in the local area, the facilities available to them and the relationship with adults in their community.
5. Having enough but not too much money and possessions, and the particular importance for children of having items and experiences which put them on a par with their peers.
6. Learning and development, and the close link between children's well-being in the present and their hopes and aspirations for the future.

The Children's Society believes that promoting positive well-being requires a fundamentally new approach using the six priorities, to make decisions which work for children. They challenge us to think about how our policies and approaches support creating these conditions.



What Do Children Need?

How Can They Get It?

1) The conditions to learn and develop

- Have opportunities for free play
- Get high quality and appropriate education and care
- Have positive relationships with adults

2) A positive view of themselves and an identity that is respected

- Be comfortable with their appearance
- Be physically and mentally healthy
- Are respected and valued for who they are

3) Enough of what matters

- Have the items and experiences that matter
- Have some financial autonomy through pocket money
- Live in a household which is economically stable

4) Positive relationships with their family and friends

- Be active participants in decisions that affect them
- Have caring, loving relationships
- Spend time with their family and with friends

5) A safe and suitable home environment and local area

- Be, and feel, safe at home and in their local area
- Live in good quality housing
- Have space at home that is theirs for privacy

6) Opportunity to take part in positive activities to thrive

- Have a say in how they use their time
- Have affordable activities in their local area
- Have access to outdoor spaces for play

SCVYS, alongside strategic partners, needs to consider how we can work together to create the right conditions for children and young people to develop to their full potential.

For local insight here are a few relevant highlights from Staffordshire's Young People Survey 2013.

- When asked about how safe they felt in a variety of settings, young people were most likely to feel safe 'at home' (99%) but less likely to feel safe 'when out and about in the local area' (85%).
- Nine out of ten survey respondents said that their local area was a good place to live for young people.
- Almost nine out of ten felt 'very healthy' or 'healthy'.
- The top three important things for a healthy lifestyle were believed to be: 'getting a good nights' sleep', 'having a good diet' and 'living in a warm, dry home'.

- Almost 70% were confident that they would be able to achieve their aspirations for their 18 year old self.
- Nearly half volunteered to help their family, friends and/or neighbours, at least monthly.
- More than one third volunteered to help with groups and activities, at least monthly.
- 'Exams', 'future career' and 'school work' were the three things young people were most worried about.
- Bullying was ranked seventh out of a list of twelve worries; however, 65% went on to say they had seen bullying at school.

There are some very positive outcomes from the survey, such as indicative levels of youth volunteering which fundamentally challenge the negative media stereotype of the average British teenager. This is backed up by our experiences of young people in recent years. Here are just a few examples:

“ SCVYS first contact with Sophie (16) was when she expressed an interest to take part in the National Citizen Scheme in 2012. Sophie’s confidence grew throughout the 6 week programme and she soon became an asset within her team, supporting and mentoring other young people her own age. After the successful completion of a Social Action Project in the Chase district, Sophie continued to volunteer with SCVYS and took up an opportunity to visit London for the first time ever to attend an All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, even being brave enough to ask a question of Cabinet Minister Ed Timson. In June Sophie will travel to Ukraine with seven other Staffordshire young people for a European Union sponsored Youth in Action exchange programme looking at how sport can be used to engage young people. This will be her first ever overseas visit, and caps an amazing twelve month journey for Sophie which has seen horizons significantly broadened due to a willingness to grasp the opportunities presented to her. ”

“ Michael has volunteered regularly on local holiday schemes and at after school clubs since he was 15. He has also volunteered at sports based summer camps in Scotland and France, and recently achieved his Sports Leader qualification. He completed a shadowing programme with Borough Councillor Liz Staples seeing all aspects of her work over a 6 week period. Michael was Master of Ceremonies at the SCVYS Live! event in March 2013, holding the programme together with a confidence belying his years. Now 18, Michael is taking a gap year out to do sports based youth work across the U.K. before deciding on a future career direction. ”

“ Jenny (18) first got involved with SCVYS through the National Citizen Scheme in 2012. She was already heavily involved in St John Ambulance as a first aider. One of six children, she grabbed a last minute opportunity to join a small group of young people from England to go to Kiev for a youth exchange in October 2012, and has since signed up for the Ghana Exchange programme which involves both hosting and visiting the country during the next 3 years. Jenny recently volunteered to be part of a delegation from Staffordshire attending an All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, at the Houses of Parliament. ”

The challenges identified by the report include ensuring that young people know about and can access local positive activities. We know there are a diverse range of opportunities from our census of SCVYS groups, the existing statutory provision, not to mention the myriad of sports and community groups not yet in membership but who provide regular programmes for young people. Attempts to promote these opportunities to young people require ongoing resource to ensure the activities are safe, legal and positively developmental, and that whatever marketing tools are deemed most appropriate are up to date and accurate.



How SCVYS & its member groups contribute to positive local outcomes

SCVYS is working towards an overall outcome of a safe, yet dynamic, local voluntary youth sector demonstrated by strong, sustainable local organisations, run by capable people making the most of effective partnerships, committed to meaningful engagement, and helping to maximise the potential of young people in all areas of life.

“ SUMMER OF A LIFETIME!

SCVYS ran two National Citizen Service teams in Cannock and South Staffordshire. Twenty seven young people started and completed the programme, and two excellent social action projects were delivered at West Chadsmoor Family Centre and Naden House in Huntington. Both projects involved revamping gardens as well as a bit of internal decoration, and both recipient organisations were delighted with the outcome. The young people continue to engage and several individuals have graduated to overseas exchanges to Ukraine, visits to Parliament and volunteering at SCVYS events. Due to a change in the overall ethos of the project and the way it was funded, SCVYS declined to deliver in 2013, preferring instead to run our own local Social Action Summer scheme with more programme flexibility and freedom to ensure young people are at the heart of the project.”

The table on the inside back cover of the report shows how the work we do with local voluntary youth groups contributes to the outcomes set by Staffordshire County Council and assists in creating an environment in which children and young people can thrive. From the table it is clear that, for a relatively small investment, the voluntary youth sector in Staffordshire is making a significant contribution to County Council outcomes, to the environment that young people grow up in and to the long term prosperity of Staffordshire.

“ CELEBRATING THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR

The SCVYS Live! event in March 2013 was attended by over 300 people from the voluntary youth sector who came together to demonstrate and display their work, hear about funding and other support, network and

share good practice. Participants came from across the County, representing a diverse range of member groups including large uniformed organisations right through to local independent youth clubs serving their local community. Feedback from members, young people, VIPs, and support organisations was extremely positive, and the demand for more similar events was high.”

“ MAKING INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACCESSIBLE

In April 2011, SCVYS was invited by the County Council to lead on a youth work and volunteering theme as part of the overall Staffordshire – Ivanovo Partnership. SCVYS connected with colleagues in YMCA Ivanovo to assist in creating a local Centre of co-ordination of Volunteering, supporting their bid to be 2015 European Youth Capital and bring young people and youth organisations together. The involvement of Burton and District YMCA enhanced the partnership further with staff and young resident involved in virtual and actual exchanges. Plans are well underway for a small delegation of young people from across Staffordshire to travel to Ivanovo in October 2013 to meet with Russian young people and together they will influence future partnership developments. Other outcomes include 6 young residents of Burton YMCA travelling to Belarus for an EU Youth in Action exchange programme around employability skills in May 2013.”

Conclusions & recommendations

Based on the findings of this report the critical factors to create the right environment to enable these shared outcomes to be achieved in future include:

- Improved commissioning through more meaningful consultation with small local organisations embedded in communities;
- Meaningful engagement with children and young people, ensuring their needs, including an environment to thrive are at the heart of service delivery;
- Recognition of the value of universal, preventative and early intervention programmes which protect statutory services from higher demand and complexity further down the line;

- Ensure new strategic bodies such as Health and Wellbeing Board, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Safeguarding Children Board, Local Enterprise Partnerships, schools and academies, understand the value and importance of engaging with the voluntary youth sector and the contribution it makes;
- Ongoing investment in infrastructure support to front line voluntary youth groups in these challenging economic times and to continue to capture the contribution of the sector in tangible ways;
- Availability of small grant funding to support the flexible, innovative and responsive services that the voluntary youth sector has traditionally provided, as well as the local independent groups who are struggling to survive financially;
- Positive press around young people and their contribution to local communities;
- Sustaining and extending the diverse range of positive activities available to young people by investing in universal youth provision and getting the right information to young people and parents; and
- Ensuring access for all young people to aspirational programmes - such as overseas experiences, leadership development schemes, etc.

There is a need to ensure that personal and social development through informal education by the voluntary youth sector is recognised and valued alongside the formal education process provided by schools. There are real opportunities for the shared use of school facilities, particularly in rural areas, and to work together to ensure young people enjoy and benefit from holistic development which prepares them for all aspects of adult life including employment. The softer capability skills of communication, team work, person confidence, emotional resilience, reliability and therefore employability are requirements of many employers. The overall health benefits of an active and engaged young citizen are significant and are likely to provide many cost savings to health services now and later in their life. Young people who



are actively participating in positive activities are much less likely to come into contact with the Youth Justice system saving Police Commissioners time and money.

Staffordshire's universal youth provision appears to be faring slightly better than many other local authority areas, due in part to strong strategic collaboration between statutory and voluntary sectors. If commissioners ignore its unique qualities and contribution, the impact on local individuals, families and communities will be significant. The recruitment of young adult volunteers is a key challenge, as this group often have the biggest time pressures of family and work. As some of the longer serving volunteers begin to retire, this need to recruit more volunteer will only become greater if activities for young people are to be maintained and developed. SCVYS has been involved in developing the recently launched Staffordshire Volunteer Strategy which seeks to address some of these challenges.¹

There is a good overall offer in place, including statutory and voluntary sector youth provision, grass roots sports clubs, faith, interest and issue based groups which needs to be communicated more effectively to potential participants. Developing new partnerships across the sectors particularly with schools, police, health and the private sector will maximise the ongoing impact and potential of the voluntary youth sector. The environment for groups is extremely tough, therefore every available resource needs to support the sustainability of effective front line groups who provide vital youth services and SCVYS has an important role as an infrastructure organisation to continue to influence, develop and connect the voluntary youth sector to all relevant partners.

¹ (<http://www.staffordshirepartnership.org.uk/thirdsector/>)



The following table shows how the work we do with local voluntary youth groups contributes to the outcomes set by Staffordshire County Council and assists in creating an environment in which children and young people can thrive.

SCVYS Outcomes	SCVYS Activities	Children's Society Outcomes	Contributes to SCC Outcome(s)
Safe voluntary youth groups	Safe Champion for Staffordshire – promoting and supporting groups to use online self assessment tool through Safe Network, and local safeguarding tools. CRB / DBS administration and support Safer Recruitment training First Aid training	Be, and feel, safe at home and in their local area Get high quality and appropriate education and care Be physically and mentally healthy	Staffordshire is a place where people can live safely - increasingly free from crime, the causes of crime and the fear of crime. Staffordshire's people and communities can access, enjoy and benefit from a range of learning, recreational and cultural activities.
Strong organisations	Capacity building Development work Information, advice and guidance Access to funding, funding advice & other brokered support Core and bespoke Training	Have affordable activities in their local area Spend time with friends Are respected and valued for who they are	Staffordshire's people and communities can access, enjoy and benefit from a range of learning, recreational and cultural activities.
Capable People – adults	Free or very low cost Training for members – First Aid, Food Hygiene, Safeguarding and Youth work Level 1 Bespoke bite size units	Have positive relationships with adults Get high quality and appropriate education	Staffordshire's economy prospers and grows, together with the jobs, skills, qualifications and aspirations to support it.
Capable People – Maximising potential of young people	Community Sports Leaders Award Social Action Summer Scheme Parliamentary visits Overseas opportunities through Youth In Action (EU) Staffordshire – Ianovo Partnership Member organisation programmes	Have positive relationships with adults Have a say in how they use their time Be active participants in decisions that affect them. Are respected and valued for who they are. Spend time with friends Get high quality and appropriate education Have opportunities for free play Have access to outdoor spaces for play Have the experiences that matter	Staffordshire's children and young people can get the best start in life and receive a good education so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities. Staffordshire's people and communities can access, enjoy and benefit from a range of learning, recreational and cultural activities.
Effective partnerships	Local and Countywide network events Representation at strategic partnerships, including SSCB, Children's Partnership, Education & Skills partnership, Multi-agency development partnership, Children's University, Staffordshire Hundred, VCS, etc.	Be active participants in decisions that affect them.	Staffordshire's people are involved in shaping the delivery of public services.
Meaningful engagement	Inclusive and relevant consultation Advocacy Lobbying Influencing Promotion of contribution of voluntary youth sector	Be active participants in decisions that affect them. Have positive relationships with adults. Are respected and valued for who they are. Have a say in how they use their time	Staffordshire's children and young people can get the best start in life and receive a good education so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities. Staffordshire's people are involved in shaping the delivery of public services.
Dynamic sector	Promotion of positive images and examples of young people Nominations for awards – Staffordshire, District, Regional, Queen's and MBE success.	Are respected and valued for who they are. Have affordable activities in their local area Have opportunities for free play Have access to outdoor spaces for play Have the experiences that matter	Staffordshire's children and young people can get the best start in life and receive a good education so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities. Staffordshire's people and communities can access, enjoy and benefit from a range of learning, recreational and cultural activities.

From this table it is clear that, for a relatively small investment, the voluntary youth sector in Staffordshire is making a significant contribution to County Council outcomes, to the environment that young people grow up in and to the long term prosperity of Staffordshire.



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