**Sheffield Hallam University** | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

# Evaluation
## *of myplace*

# *myplace Evaluation*
# Final Report

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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) and the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR), both at Sheffield Hallam University, have carried out an evaluation of the *myplace* programme on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and the Department for Education (DfE).

The *myplace* programme has provided capital funds for the development of new and improved youth centres. Projects have been developed in partnership across the public and voluntary and community sectors (and in minority of cases also with private sector investors) working with young people to develop centres which aim to meet the needs of young people in a financially sustainable way. Grants range between £1 million and £5 million and the first awards were made in 2008. By the time central Government funding for the programme comes to an end in March 2013, approximately £240 million programme funding will have been awarded to 63 projects across England. At the time of reporting 53 centres are open to young people.

The programme has four outcomes:

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

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

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

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

## Context

*myplace* is a product of the policy priorities of a previous administration and recent changes in the political and fiscal climate have affected the development and implementation of the programme. Youth services are in a period of transition, in which there is service reorganisation driven by the current Government's Positive for Youth priorities but also by cuts in public sector budgets. The centres are opening in a time of overall reductions in the funding of youth services, and of open access provision in particular, and this creates particular challenges in relation to generating revenue income.

There is a lack of recent reliable evidence on the impact of youth centres. Current evidence suggests that participation in positive activities is linked to a range of positive outcomes but much of the evidence fails to link these outcomes to specific interventions.

## The Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out between November 2011 and March 2013 and has addressed three main questions:

- what are *myplace* centres and other youth centres/ facilities in which capital funding has been invested achieving and what is best practice in measuring impact?

- what are the on-going costs of provision and how should this inform future investment decisions by local authorities and others considering establishing youth centres

- how are *myplace* centres and other youth centres/facilities in which capital funding has been invested generating income and what are the lessons for revenue planning in the future by local authorities and others considering investment in youth centres/ facilities?

The evaluation has adopted a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with Big Lottery Fund staff and analysis of programme data held by BIG; two surveys of *myplace* centres, conducted in March and December 2012; longitudinal surveys of young people attending *myplace* provision and a sample of young people living in areas that have not had *myplace* investment - carried out in two waves over the periods March to July 2012 and December 2012 to January 2013; case studies of ten *myplace* centres each involving interviews with staff, volunteers, trustees, funders and partner agency representatives as well as interviews and focus groups with young people, and collection of diary and photographic evidence; and focus groups with young people not attending *myplace* centres.

## Findings

Findings are presented under the three main research questions.

> **What are myplace centres and other youth centres/facilities in which capital funding has been invested achieving and what is best practice in measuring impact?**

**The buildings developed under the *myplace* capital programme are universally well received and facilities are generally of higher quality than those available to young people elsewhere**

The centres are an important symbol of commitment to youth provision at a time when there is widespread disinvestment in youth services. Young people participating in interviews and focus groups for this evaluation consistently praised the quality of facilities, often remarking surprise that they were 'allowed' to use them. Staff and partner agency representatives suggest that the buildings provide good environments in which to engage young people.

Young people were involved extensively in project planning and development and this has ensured that buildings are appealing to young people. There was widespread consultation at the planning stages, often involving surveys of large numbers of young people, which identified the need for new facilities for young people. Small groups of young people typically worked with architects to influence all aspects of centre design and fittings, ensuring that elements which are important to young people, such as space to relax and socialise, were included in the centres.

Applicants were encouraged by the Big Lottery Fund to consider the sustainability of centres from the outset but in some cases the desire to respond to the priorities of young people has taken precedence over other considerations such as functionality or the need to use the buildings for commercial activities which generate income. It is important that these competing priorities are given equal consideration at the outset of any future capital programmes.

**myplace centres are delivering a range of activities which are valued by young people, and which have attracted large numbers of young people, many of whom have not previously attended youth centres**

Investment in high quality youth facilities and activities attracts more young people to provision and they attend more often.  It is estimated that at the time of reporting somewhere between 14,716 and 26,000 young people each week are attending the 53 centres that are open. Eighty one per cent of the young people surveyed at *myplace* centres had not been to a youth centre offering structured activities before attending *myplace* and between 85 per cent (at baseline) and 86 per cent (at follow-up) of those in the *myplace* sample attended at least once or twice a week, compared to 55 per cent (baseline) and 57 per cent (follow-up) of those in the comparator group.

Young people particularly value flexibility in activities: the ability for young people to drop in and out of activities was an important factor in centres which had been successful in attracting high numbers of young people, and over-programming of activities was a criticism raised by young people who did not attend *myplace* provision, or who went infrequently. The ability to respond quickly and positively to young people's suggestions for new, or different, activities (within the constraints of the buildings) was also a factor of successful provision.

Young people are prepared to travel to access high quality youth provision. Forty two per cent of young people in the *myplace* baseline sample travelled for more than 20 minutes walking distance to get to the centre, compared to 28 per cent of those in the comparator group. Access to cheap public transport and safe routes of passage are important in assisting young people to get to provision; some centres had been able to negotiate reduced rates on local public transport networks, and another had co-ordinated volunteers to give lifts to young people on darker winter nights.

**Centres offer information, advice and guidance services but these are not accessed by the majority of young people attending *myplace* centres**

There is substantial variation across the *myplace* programme in the approach to structured information, advice and guidance (IAG) services. Case studies have included examples of centres where a range of services are co-located within *myplace* centres to provide a one-stop shop facility. There are also centres where there are no formal IAG services on-site. The majority of providers reported at the baseline survey stage that they provide a range of services including careers advice/ mentoring (91 per cent), vocational training (90 per cent), health services (90 per cent), alternative education (70 per cent), further education (61 per cent), counselling (58 per cent) and financial advice (51 per cent). However the interim report also highlighted the withdrawal or reduction of services from some centres in the context of reductions in public sector funding.

Detail on the use of services was gathered through the follow-up centre survey which identified the numbers of young people accessing these services on a weekly basis. This suggests that between two and eight per cent of the young people attending *myplace* provision are accessing IAG services on a formal basis, although the numbers receiving informal advice and guidance from youth workers may well be substantially higher.

This has important implications for assessing the impact of the programme. The evaluation has highlighted examples of individuals whose lives have been changed substantially by their engagement with youth provision, and it is likely that there are many more young people with life changing stories to tell and who will include some of the most disadvantaged young people such as those with disabilities or young people experiencing homelessness (*myplace* includes provision for both of these groups). The relatively low numbers of young people (as a proportion of overall attendees) accessing formal support such as IAG means that there are currently not enough of them to impact on outcomes at the programme level.

However, the numbers of young people accessing services are likely to increase as the numbers of young people attending the centres continues to rise.

**Young people would like to be more involved in decisions about their youth centres**

There was extensive involvement of young people in the planning and development stages of the *myplace* programme and the majority of *myplace* providers responding to the baseline centre survey reported that they involved young people in decision making across all aspects of the centres. However, only 38 per cent of young people participating in the *myplace* follow-up survey said that they had been involved in decisions about their centre and 66 per cent said that they would like to be more involved in decisions that affect how their centre looks or works.

Strategies which engage young people in a range of ways, including informal discussions, and formal structures such as boards and management groups, are successful in ensuring that young people have influence on decision making. Where young people had been involved in decisions they were confident that their opinions had been taken seriously: 91 per cent of those who had been involved in decision making at *myplace* centres reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that their views or opinions about how their centres looks or works have been taken seriously.

**myplace is associated with a range of positive outcomes for young people, and in two areas the evaluation has been able to identify a positive programme impact: exercise and enjoyment of school**

Statistically significant difference in outcome change between young people in the *myplace* and comparator samples is the best available measure of the impact of the programme. There was a statistically significant[2] change of 7.5 percentage points between the *myplace* and comparator samples on the proportion of young people reporting that their enjoyment of school had increased, indicating that the *myplace* programme has had a positive impact on this outcome.

The numbers of young people in the *myplace* sample reporting that they exercised at least once a week stayed constant between the baseline and follow-up surveys in the *myplace* sample, whereas numbers fell between the two waves in the comparator sample. There was a statistically significant change of 6.3 percentage points between the two samples, indicating that the *myplace* programme has also had a positive impact on this outcome.

These differences were greater for some sub-groups within the *myplace* sample indicating that these groups have experienced greater levels of improvement. On the enjoyment of school measure the differences were greater for young people involved in decision making (compared to the comparator sample), males (compared to males in the comparator sample), young people attending centres that are predominantly open access (compared to those attending centres with a higher proportion of targeted provision), and young people attending larger centres (more than 500 attendees per week) (when compared to smaller centres). There was a particularly large difference in the change between young people in the *myplace* sample who identified themselves has having a disability when compared to those without a disability but the low number of disabled respondents in the sample (18) means that this finding needs to be treated with caution.

On the exercise measure young people who attended predominantly open access centres (compared to those with more targeted provision) and young people who attended centres

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[2] 95 per cent confidence levels were applied. The Mcnemar test was applied to identify statistically significant change between baseline and follow-up questionnaires within the *myplace* and comparator samples. The statistical significance of the difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples was estimated using the z-test for proportions.

with more than 500 attendees per week experienced greater change. There was also a moderate difference in change between young people with a disability when compared to those without a disability, but again the small numbers in the sample mean that this finding needs to be treated with caution.

There are explanations for the positive impact of the programme on these outcomes. For enjoyment of school, there is an emphasis in supporting young people's engagement with school and learning through alternative curriculum provision, and supporting those young people disengaged or excluded from mainstream school. This focus has contributed to lower scores for the *myplace* group at the baseline stage and greater opportunity for positive change. For exercise, the provision of high quality sport, leisure and recreation opportunities is a key objective of many centres and it seems logical that young people attending these centres would use these opportunities to exercise more regularly.

There were a range of other positive outcomes for young people attending *myplace* provision including less engagement in anti-social behaviour, and improved attitudes to the local community and peer relationships but the differences between the *myplace* and comparator samples in changes in these outcomes were not large enough to be statistically significant and so cannot be attributed to the programme.

Young people also reported a range of benefits from attending a centre. They identified benefits associated with their attitudes to education and learning and frequency of exercise, but also suggested that attending a *myplace* centre had improved the way they felt about their communities, relationships with their peers, their confidence about the future and their overall life satisfaction.

**The evaluation has not been able to identify impact in relation to aspirations and confidence and well-being; this is because young people scored highly on these measures at the baseline stage and so capacity for change is low**

Questions used in this evaluation to assess outcome change in relation to aspirations and confidence are based on the assumption of 'deficit' – i.e. that young people attending youth centres may be lacking in aspiration or confidence and score lower than other young people on these measures. It is also assumed that the benefits associated with attending youth centres will result in improvements in these measures. This has not proved to be the case in this evaluation. Young people in the *myplace* sample scored highly on these measures at the baseline stage, and for some indicators in these themes young people in the *myplace* sample had higher scores at the baseline stage than those in the comparator sample. Thus the likelihood of centres delivering improvements in these outcomes is low.

There are a number of potential interpretations to this finding: it may be that young people in the *myplace* sample have already benefited from attending the centres and thus have higher levels of confidence and aspiration, or it may be that open access youth centres are more likely to attract young people who have high levels of aspiration, confidence and well-being, or that the young people who participated in the survey were more likely to have these attributes.

There are additional issues associated with the measures used to assess outcome change in the well-being theme (which include the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale). Although these are reliable and tested measures of well-being they appear not to have translated well in the context of this evaluation. Key issues include the different contexts in which the surveys have been administered in the *myplace* and comparator areas, and the fact that outcomes have only been measured at two points in time, and with a short interval between survey waves.

**There is insufficient evidence on the impact measurement practices of youth centres but it appears that practice is limited, and there is a need for capacity building in this area**

Some centres, particularly those engaging with very disadvantaged groups such as homeless young people, use tools such as Outcome Stars to measure the distance travelled of their clients. Other centres have used Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodologies to demonstrate the impact of their work. However, despite the plethora of tools available to centres, it seems that most are not undertaking impact assessment work. Barriers include capacity and confidence, and there is a need to share best practice in this area.

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**What are the on-going costs of provision and how should this inform future investment decisions by local authorities and others considering establishing youth centres**

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**Operating costs appear high and current values low, but the programme was not designed for economy and the assessment has been carried out at a very early stage**

The average *myplace* capital grant was £3.757 million, ranging from £1.189 million to £5.000 million. For every £1 of *myplace* funding an additional £0.24 came from other sources, with an average of additional funding at £0.916 million per centre[3].

Table 1 outlines income and operating costs[4] for *myplace* centres.

**Table 1: *myplace* centre income (2011/12) and operating costs (2012/13)**

|  | Average (mean) | Maximum | Minimum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income (2011/12) | £451,176 | £1,094,738 | £28,410 |
| Operating costs (2012/13) | £520,227 | £1,453,326 | £32,000 |

Source: *myplace* provider survey (December 2012)
Base: 22 (income); 28 (operating costs)

The current assessment of operating costs suggest that the annual cost per young person attending *myplace* provision is £1,340, with upper and lower estimates of £1,880 and £1,040 respectively. It should also be noted that this is the cost per individual young person, not per attendance, or per hour. Accurate data on the frequency or duration of attendance amongst young people attending *myplace* centres is not available. However, amongst respondents to the *myplace* baseline young people's survey, 85 per cent attended at least once a week.

Net additional impact has been identified in relation to two outcomes:

- enjoying/ have enjoyed school or college

- engaging in exercise at least once a week.

Based on estimates of the numbers of young people attending *myplace* provision (for 40 open centres) this equates to an additional 1,170 young people enjoying school or college,

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[3] Data correct as at 07/02/2013
[4] Operating costs are defined as the costs of running and maintaining the buildings and facilities, and the delivery of activities and services.

and an additional 990 young people engaging in exercise at least once a week, over the six months for which outcome change has been assessed.

The monetised value of the net additional impact is between £305,500 and £729,400. This comprises

- monetised net present values for enjoying school or college: based on assumptions that one per cent and ten per cent of young people who now enjoy school or college will go on to achieve higher attainment (giving values of £15,000 and £149,600 respectively)

- present value for the 990 additional young people engaging in exercise at least once a week: £257,600 (based on annualised unit value of £270, derived from the cost of a weekly exercise class)

- cost savings to the NHS of £32,900 associated with a prevention of one per cent of young people taking weekly exercise becoming obese; if 10 per cent of young people taking weekly exercise were prevented from becoming obese this increases to £322,100.

This estimate of costs and values has been carried out very early in the programme. Many centres are newly open and it can be anticipated that if the numbers of young people accessing provision continue to rise, unit costs will fall. It may also be that additional outcomes are observed over time, and as such the assessment of values is conservative.

These findings need to be taken in the context of the programme's objectives. The ambition to provide 'world class' youth facilities has produced large, high quality buildings with facilities which are unparalleled elsewhere in their localities. The emphasis too on engaging young people in the design of centres may have contributed increased costs at the start-up stage. The investments have contributed to improved facilities, and have encouraged more young people to attend youth centres more often. There is also some evidence that the high quality specifications are important in attracting investors, and leverage ratios may also improve if centres develop strategies for building new revenue streams.

**Investing in high quality centres means that more young people benefit from increased opportunities to access positive activities**

This suggests that in the context of meeting Positive for Youth priorities, which include supporting young people to be healthy, achieve in education, and have access to personal and social development opportunities, investment in high quality open access provision offers the potential to provide these opportunities to much larger numbers of young people than is currently the case.

There are potential opportunities for increased economy in new capital projects. In some cases building running costs have been much higher than anticipated and ensuring that buildings afford flexibility, and that fixtures and fittings are selected for their cost and ability to withstand the wear and tear associated with everyday use, as well as for their appeal to young people, should be considered in any new projects.

**How are *myplace* centres and other youth centres/facilities in which capital funding has been invested generating income and what are the lessons for revenue planning in the future by local authorities and others considering investment in youth centres/ facilities?**

**Strategies for income generation are context specific and depend on the nature of youth centres, what else is available locally, and the priorities of the public and business sectors**

*myplace* centres are pursuing a range of income generation strategies. The evaluation has identified four funding models which are used by centres to generate income:

- *charging people to use the centre*, including charging young people to use the facilities available and charging the general public (including businesses) to hire space and use facilities

- *local authority funding* - a minority of centres are embedded in statutory budgets and receive most of the income they need from the local authority

- *reliant on non-commercial income*, which includes generating income from public sector grants and contracts, and grants from charitable trusts and foundations; and

- *sponsorship from business*, a minority of centres have been able to attract major investment from business to supplement other income sources.

**Centres which are reliant on public sector and non-commercial income are most vulnerable financially in the long term**

Analysis of financial sustainability by type of funding model suggests that survey respondents in those centres which rely on local authority and non-commercial income are less likely to report that they have secured sufficient income to cover their operating costs for two years or more, and less likely to be confident in their ability to generate sufficient income in the next five years. In contrast, respondents in centres which have more control over their income sources - i.e. those that generate substantial proportions of income from charging for services or business sponsorship - are more likely to report confidence in their financial sustainability.  Examples include the four *myplace* centres developed by Onside, which have generated up to 50 per cent of their income through business sponsorship, and the OPEN centre in Norwich which has developed commercial activities including conferencing facilities; secure storage space and a venue for live music performance.

This suggests that local authorities and others investing in youth facilities need to consider the potential for commercial activity and private sector investment. Evidence suggests that there is scope for charging people to access activities and facilities, although subsidies remain vital to attracting young people and income from charges to young people makes up only a small proportion of total income in centres. Similarly, there is scope for letting out rooms and facilities, or for using centres to host events, although the nature of these will depend on local circumstances and the opportunities afforded by the buildings.  The evaluation did not uncover any evidence to suggest that commercial activities acted as a barrier to youth engagement, although there were tensions sometimes when young people did not understand why they could not access buildings at certain times. Involving young people in discussions around commercial activities offers a way to address these tensions. But clearly the balance between meeting the needs of young people and commercial activity needs to be maintained, and centres which fall at either end of the spectrum may either be unsustainable financially or will not be acting as youth centres in the generally understood sense.

A small number of centres in the *myplace* programme have been successful in attracting substantial investment from business, and the lessons learnt from these centres have been applied to the development of capital provision elsewhere in non-*myplace* local authority districts. Lessons include engaging investors early, having a local business champion, and using public sector investment to lever in additional monies.

**Centres are reliant on local authority funding**

Centres are unlikely to be sustainable without long term financial commitment from local authorities. This message emerges strongly from the case studies and is reinforced by responses to the provider survey. In 2011-12 almost two fifths of the centres were dependent on the local authority for at least 40 per cent of their income, with an average contribution from local authorities of 48 per cent of overall income. It is unlikely that centres will be able to replace this income entirely with other funding sources and the long term sustainability of youth centres is therefore linked to local public sector funding priorities.

## Recommendations

### *Delivering provision*

- Open access provision offers the potential to deliver targeted support to young people, and providers and commissioners need to consider the balance in youth centres between social activities, which attract young people to provision, and access to services, which may help young people to achieve improved outcomes. At the Culture Fusion centre in Bradford, delivering services in an environment in which young people are comfortable and in which there is a wide range of activities has been important in improving access to mental health services for young people.

- Centres need to develop marketing strategies which promote their activities to young people and provide opportunities for them to engage informally in activities and events. These might include engagement with local schools and other youth centres (for instance, offering open days or taster sessions), use of social media to promote and review activities; and involving young people in promotion events and activities. The Parkfield centre in Torbay has involved young people in promoting the centre through schools.

- Centres need to be able to respond flexibly to the priorities of young people. This will sometimes mean changing activities, or varying opening hours according to the needs of young people. The Blackburn Youth Zone offers up to 25 different activities at each of its open sessions, allowing young people to choose which activities they are involved in, and to maintain interest by participating in a range of different pursuits.

- Centres need to have in place a range of skills which include not only working with young people, but also skills in partnership working, enterprise activity and facilities management. It is inappropriate for youth workers to take on all of these tasks and the scale of *myplace* provision demands that specialist skills and resources be in place.

- Centres need to review their strategies for involving young people in decision making, with a view towards sustained and meaningful engagement of young people in decision making across all aspects of provision, including potential commercial activity. At the Parkfield centre in Torbay, young people have been given training to help them undertake their role as Youth Management Board members and young people are involved in discussions about when the centre is open for young people, and when it is used for other activities which generate revenue income. Examples of youth-led centres include those which offer a range of opportunities for young people to be involved and supported in decision making through informal discussions as well as formal representation on management groups and boards. The Pegasus Theatre Trust in Oxford has a members committee which is open to all young people involved in activities at the centre. Young people involved in the committee are involved in staff recruitment, marketing of the centre, planning and programming of activities and shows, and produce an annual magazine. There are two seats for young people on the Board of Trustees (with full voting rights) and an adult Trustee has responsibility for young people's governance.

- Young people report that the relationships they develop with adults at *myplace* centres are important in creating positive and welcoming environments in which they feel respected, and they value the support they get from *myplace* centre staff. The role of youth workers in these centres is vital. However, some centres are not fully staffed, and there is a need for centres (and their funders and commissioners) to ensure that their staffing strategies support continuity and stability in these relationships.

- Volunteers are vital for project viability but should not been seen as a cheap option. Strategies for attracting, and managing, volunteers need to be in place and resourced to ensure that volunteers are supported to deliver positive experiences for young people.

### The costs of provision

- Local authorities should recognise the potential for open access provision to offer positive activities to large numbers of young people and maintain a commitment to contributing towards the costs of open access youth centres as part of wider strategies to deliver the Positive for Youth agenda.

- Centres need to be able to demonstrate the on-going costs of provision to potential investors; this requires that they collect robust data on the numbers of young people engaging in activities.

- Close scrutiny of the on-going costs of maintaining the provision would be beneficial, in particular in determining the impacts of increases in user numbers, the costs associated with maintaining the buildings, and the unit costs associated with centres when they run at full capacity.

### Revenue Funding

- Centres need to develop innovative and robust strategies for generating revenue and diversifying income; charging policies offer some scope for raising revenue but are dependent on the nature of facilities and activities on offer, and subsidies are crucial in attracting young people to provision.

- Centres need to further explore the prospects for engaging private sector investors; some centres have developed skills in this area and there is potential for sharing best practice across the *myplace* centre network and beyond. Blackburn Youth Zone has been developed on the basis of the Onside funding model. The typical model is 40 per cent from public sector funding (local authority), 10 per cent from young people (membership and fees), 25 per cent from the private sector and 25 per cent through grants and trusts. Blackburn Youth Zone has exceeded expectations in relation to private sector funding and now aims to generate 50 per cent of its revenue through private sector contributions.

- Local authorities need to consider maintaining a contribution to open access youth centres, in the context of an overall mixed portfolio of funding; and local strategies for youth provision should support *myplace* centres in their efforts to generate revenue income by brokering engagement with schools and other statutory providers.

## Measuring Impact

- There is a need for policy makers to continue to develop the evidence base on the impact of youth centres, particularly in relation to the longer term impacts of engagement. A longer term longitudinal study would be valuable in increasing understanding of the relationships between short term attendance at youth centres and longer term benefits such as improved attainment. We would caution against assuming these longer term benefits accrue for all young people attending youth centres as on the basis of the evidence presented here the numbers benefitting are likely to be small. There is also a need to understand better the factors affecting a young person's life

beyond their engagement with youth provision, including engagement with other statutory and voluntary services; and there is a need for more robust evidence on the monetary values associated with the outcomes of open-access provision, one option may be to explore the contribution of these outcomes to social well-being.

- Youth centres need to develop systems for gathering accurate data on the numbers and characteristics of young people attending, and on the activities and interventions that they are exposed to. Understanding more clearly the types of intervention a young person receives in youth centres (outputs), and the link with desired outcomes is vital to robust impact assessment. There are a range of frameworks and tools available, which are relevant to the impact of youth centres, and which will help centres understand the impact of their work[5]. Centres need to consider which are relevant to their needs and take account of the starting points for the young people they are working with.

- Centres should consider looking at the relationships between particular interventions taking place in youth centres and a smaller number of specific outcomes. It may be preferable to make a robust case to investors for contributing to some Positive for Youth outcomes than to present less reliable evidence across a wide range of outcomes.

- A baseline needs to be established as soon as possible following a young person's engagement with youth provision. This might involve embedding standard data collection procedures into registration processes for all young people accessing youth centres.

- Outcome change should be measured at regular intervals and over longer time periods. Improving outcomes for young people is not a linear process, and young people's views and experiences may alter at different points in time. It is important to look at trends in outcomes, particularly in relation to issues such as confidence and well-being.

- On-going sharing of best-practice would help centres to develop impact measurement. This might include examples of the application of particular tools and frameworks, and examples of innovative ways to collect data, particularly those which involve young people in determining (and evaluating) approaches.

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[5]   These include the Young Foundation framework of outcomes for young people (http://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people/), and New Philanthropy Capital well-being measure for young people (http://www.well-beingmeasure.com/) and Impact Measurment in the NEET's sector (http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/impact-measurement-in-the-neets-sector-2/)

# Introduction

1.1. This is the final report of an impact evaluation of the *myplace* programme, carried out on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and Department for Education (DfE) by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) and the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR) at Sheffield Hallam University.

1.2. The evaluation makes a contribution to the evidence base on the impact of youth centres and is intended to help *myplace* centres, and those involved in funding and commissioning services for young people, understand and demonstrate the impacts and costs of their work.

1.3. *myplace* aims to deliver 'world class' youth centres which offer young people access to a wide range of positive out of school activities and support services. The programme emphasises the involvement of young people in project planning and delivery, and supports working in partnership across sectors to develop financially sustainable centres which respond to local needs and priorities. BIG is administering the *myplace* programme, on behalf of DfE. It has awarded 63 grants, with an even split between grants awarded for bids led by voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations (31) and those led by local authorities (32). Awards range between £1 million and £5 million, and were made over two funding rounds. The first round of applications opened on 6 May 2008. Round one included a fast track, which supported investment in 21 projects that were already well developed, and a standard track which supported 35 projects with awards in February 2009. A further seven awards were made through round two, which opened for applications in June 2009. Central government funding for the programme ends in March 2013, by which time approximately £240 million of capital investment will have been awarded to projects across England.

1.4. The programme has four outcomes:

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

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

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

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

1.5. Further information on the programme is available on the DfE website http://education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/b00213818/myplace-

1.6.     The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- chapter two outlines the context for the *myplace* programme, in terms of recent policy and practice developments, and the evidence base in relation to the impact of youth facilities

- chapter three outlines briefly the evaluation methodology

- chapters four to eight look at key aspects of programme delivery: planning and developing capital projects; the *myplace* centres; the offer to young people; involving young people; working in partnership

- chapter nine assesses the impact of *myplace*

- chapter ten considers questions of costs and value for money

- chapter eleven looks at income generation and sustainability

- chapter twelve contains the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

1.7.     Throughout the report evidence is drawn from a range of sources: *myplace* centre surveys, young people's surveys, case studies, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and young people.

1.8.     Emphasis is placed on drawing out learning from the programme's delivery, with a view to informing future investment and commissioning decisions. Case studies, highlighting learning to be drawn from the implementation of the programme, are available in a separate report: http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/children-and-young-people/learning-from-myplace

# Context

<div style="text-align: right; font-size: large;">2</div>

2.1.   This chapter outlines the context for the *myplace* programme. It looks at recent policy and practice developments in relation to provision for young people, and the existing evidence base around the impact of youth centres.

## Policy and practice context

2.2.   *myplace* is a capital programme which was launched by the (then) Labour Government in April 2008. It has funded new and improved youth facilities and has its origins in the 'Aiming High' (HM Treasury, 2007) policy framework. It reflects a strategy for youth provision that focuses on helping teenagers to develop social and communication skills, build their self-esteem and self-confidence, improve their attitudes to school and help them avoid risks such as experimenting with drugs, or being involved with crime or anti-social behaviour.

2.3.   The programme illustrates the potential for place-based interventions in promoting joined-up services and improving outcomes for young people. The Every Child Matters (DfE, 2004) and Youth Matters (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2005) policy frameworks made commitments to outcomes standards for children and young people and the Children Act 2004 created a duty on all local authorities to promote co-operation between sectors to achieve these outcomes. Youth Matters, as a policy for place-based delivery of targeted personal and social development for young people, proposed that young people should have increased choice of local activities and facilities, and more influence over what is available; more opportunities to volunteer and to make a difference to their local communities; improved information, advice and guidance and more options around how and where it is available; and better support to deal with problems.

2.4.   The Coalition Government has set outs its priorities for young people in the Positive for Youth statement (DfE, 2011). This sets an agenda for providers, commissioners and wider society to enable young people to have:

- *supportive relationships* - with parents and families, in strong communities and with early access to help for those who are disadvantaged or at risk

- *strong ambitions* - to achieve in education and at work, to be healthy and safe and to be active in society

- *good opportunities* - including access to high quality education and training, personal and social development opportunities, and support to become active citizens.

2.5.   Local authorities have retained the duty to secure services to promote the well-being of young people and are doing so in partnership with agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They are also involving local communities and young people in

determining local needs and priorities. Principles governing local arrangements include:

- young people's influence on decision making - and an increased role for young people in the design and commissioning of services

- a focus on whole-family support and on the community's responsibility to support young people

- integration across professions, providers and commissioning bodies

- an evidence-based approach to early intervention and support for disadvantaged young people

- a mixed market for service delivery which includes an enterprising voluntary and community sector, greater involvement of the private sector, and in which there is an increased use of strategic commissioning by local authorities

- greater emphasis on impact and value for money in services.

2.6.    Within this context the Coalition Government has upheld the funding for the *myplace* programme and anticipates that the capital investment will be used to drive the on-going reform of youth provision, including a greater role for the VCS, a strong focus on evidence-based early interventions for vulnerable young people, collaboration across sectors (including the increased involvement of the private sector) and levering in additional resources.

2.7.    Youth services are in a period of transition. Changes are being driven by the Positive for Youth Agenda, but also by cuts in public sector budgets. Although there is a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide access to educational and leisure time activities for young people, funding for youth services is not mandatory. The abolition, in the 2010 Spending Review, of ring-fenced grants for youth provision, and their replacement from April 2011 with the Early Intervention Grant (EIG) has reduced the overall settlement for local government and authorities have cut discretionary spending (House of Commons Education Committee, 2011). Recent evidence from local authority outturn figures published by the DfE in January 2012 indicates a 26 per cent reduction on outturn spend on youth services for 2011/12 when compared to the previous year.

2.8.    These cuts have impacted disproportionately on open access provision, including youth centres. The Education Committee reported on the results of a survey of local authorities carried out in February 2011 by the Confederation of Heads of Young People's Services (CHYPS, 2011), which suggested that budget cuts for youth provision in 2010/11 averaged at 28 per cent, with some authorities cutting 100 per cent of services, and that the services that were most likely to be affected were open-access youth clubs and centres. Ninety six per cent of the 41 heads of youth services responding to the survey suggested that open access provision would be reduced or stopped completely by April 2012.

2.9.    A brief online survey of local authorities conducted at the outset of this evaluation (in late 2011) and aimed at Lead Officers for Children's Services asked, amongst other things, what the key challenges for youth provision would be over the next two years. Ten responses were received which suggested that, as might be anticipated, key concerns involved the need to respond to reductions in funding whilst also maintaining high quality services. Challenges also included the reconfiguration and modernisation of services, involving young people and communities, building the role of voluntary and community sector (VCS) agencies and diversifying funding streams. These challenges have been reflected across *myplace* areas. Local reviews of services were taking place over the timescale for the evaluation, with varying

degrees of progress and results, but often concerned with clarifying the 'youth offer' and agreeing arrangements for delivery. Relationships between local authorities and voluntary and community sector providers are being re-negotiated, sometimes around complex arrangements for commissioning through social enterprise vehicles or consortia arrangements. In interviews conducted for this evaluation, youth workers, service providers and commissioners reflected on the impact of local reviews of youth provision, which aimed to address 'Positive for Youth' priorities but which have also involved decommissioning and reconfiguration of services, with attendant uncertainties and reductions in relation to roles, staffing, buildings and resources. The impacts of these developments on *myplace*, and other youth facilities, are discussed in later sections of this report.

### The evidence base on the impact of youth centres

2.10.   A youth centre can be defined as an 'open access, or universal space, for all young people as opposed to a targeted service or programme for a few young people. At a minimum a youth centre will have a fixed geographic location that youth can use' (Ministry of Youth Development, 2010, Youth centres: attributes of effectiveness). All *myplace* centres meet this criterion, providing a youth centre and facilities that provide activities and services with the aim of achieving a range of positive outcomes for young people, although as discussed in Chapters Five to Eight, there are substantial differences between the centres - including their approaches to open access and targeted provision. This evaluation makes a contribution to the evidence-base on the impact of youth centres and it is useful in this context to review briefly the available evidence on how similar provision can contribute to positive outcomes for young people.

2.11.   There is an acknowledged lack of existing robust evidence on the impact of other youth centres. In its review of services for young people the Education Committee (2011) highlighted a dearth of recent evidence which looks across youth provision. Notable examples include two studies carried out for the (then) Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). Merton et al (2004), in a study of 630 service users responding to a single wave survey, reported that youth work had made a considerable difference to their lives, including increasing confidence and learning new skills, and making decisions for themselves; the study also reported that the most effective forms of youth work were those that sustained contact with young people over time (Merton et al, 2004, An evaluation of the impact of youth work in England). In a separate study, Feinstein et al (2005) conducted a cohort study to examine the impact of participation in positive activities on outcomes in later life (Feinstein et al, 2005, Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes). The study found that attendance at a youth centre can be linked to negative outcomes in later life, even when controlling for prior life circumstances, but was criticised for suggesting causal links, and a re-working of the team's original data, published in 2007, suggested that 'unstructured youth clubs were particularly likely to attract at risk young people'.

2.12.   Evidence from the US suggests that youth centres which bring together anti-social peers are likely to promote anti-social behaviour for new attendees: and this is made worse when the youth centres lack structured activities or skill development programmes (Eccles, JS. and Gootman, J (2002) Community Programs to promote youth development, National Academy Press, Washington DC;  Mahoney, JL., Stattin, H and Lerd, H. (2004) Unstructured youth recreation centre participation and anti-social behaviour development: selection influences and the moderating role of anti-social peers, International Journal of Behavioural Development, 28(6): 553-560).

2.13.   Two studies of youth provision have suggested that engagement in positive activities brings benefits for young people. For instance, the Positive Activities for Young

People (PAYP) programme was launched in 2003 as a three year programme to offer all year round structured provision for young people. Key objectives were to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour and offending and offer developmental opportunities that would improve their life outcomes. The final evaluation report (Department for Education and Skills, 2006, Positive Activities for Young People national evaluation, final report) found that young people's engagement in the programme led to a range of positive outcomes: reduced crime and fear of crime; improved education, training and employment; social cohesion; civic participation; personal development. A formative evaluation of the *myplace* programme (DfE, 2011, *myplace* evaluation final report) highlights the value that young people place on flexible provision, and on access to facilities that are warm and welcoming and in which they feel comfortable. The evaluators suggest that increased usage of these places amongst young people is reducing their use of the streets, and contributing to reductions in anti-social behaviour and improved perceptions of young people.

2.14. However it was not possible, in either of these studies to attribute these impacts wholly to the programme interventions, as the evaluations did not include control areas or groups. This evaluation uses a comparator group to identify the impact of the *myplace* programme and is an important step forward in understanding the impact of open access youth centres. More recent evaluations of government programmes have also sought to address shortcomings in the evidence base by using comparator, or control groups, to isolate the impact of other aspects of youth work. An example is the evaluation of the National Citizens Service (NCS) which is comparing outcomes for young people participating in the programme with those for a comparator group of non-participants drawn from maintained schools. The study used a mixed methods approach, including a survey of approximately 1,600 of the programme's 8,500 participants. The Interim Report (NatCen, 2012) found that the programme had positive short-term impacts across four outcome areas: teamwork, communication and leadership; transition to adulthood; social mixing; community involvement.

2.15. This chapter has looked at the policy, practice and evidence context for the *myplace* programme. It has argued that *myplace* is being implemented within a climate of change for youth services, in which there is service reorganisation emerging from the priorities of the Government's Positive for Youth agenda, but also as a result of reductions in the funding for youth provision, which is likely to impact disproportionately on open access youth centres. The brief review of evidence on the impact of youth centres confirms that although there is evidence to suggest that positive activities are associated with improved outcomes, there is a dearth of evidence which can attribute these outcomes to particular interventions.

2.16. The next chapter outlines the evaluation approach taken to assessing the programme's impact.

# The evaluation

3.1. This chapter outlines the methods used to identify the impact of the *myplace* programme. More detailed discussion on the main aspects of the evaluation methodology, including survey response rates and links to the main evaluation tools, is included in an associated technical report, which can be found at http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/children-and-young-people/learning-from-myplace

3.2. The evaluation was conducted between November 2011 and March 2013 and has sought to address three main questions:

- what are *myplace* centres and other youth centres/facilities in which capital funding has been invested achieving and what is best practice in measuring impact?

- what are the on-going costs of provision and how should this inform future investment decisions by local authorities and others considering establishing youth centres?

- how are *myplace* centres and other youth centres/facilities in which capital funding has been invested generating income and what are the lessons for revenue planning in the future by local authorities and others considering investment in youth centres/facilities?

3.3. The evaluation has used a mixed-methods approach:

- analysis of programme data and documentation, collated by BIG

- interviews with BIG staff involved in programme and grants management

- a survey of *myplace* centres, conducted in two waves in March and December 2012

- longitudinal surveys of young people attending *myplace* centres, and a sample of young people living in areas that have not had *myplace* investment, conducted in two waves over the periods March to July 2012 and December 2012 to January 2013

- case studies of 10 *myplace* centres[6], each involving interviews with *myplace* staff, volunteers, trustees, funders and partner agency representatives; interviews and focus groups with young people; use of diaries and photographs to record evidence of young people's experiences of the centres; analysis of centre documentation, management and financial information

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[6] The 10 case studies were Culture Fusion in Bradford; CRMZ in Halton; Pegasus Theatre in Oxford; Youth Campus in Stoke on Trent; TAB Centre Plus in Enfield; Custom House in Middlesbrough; Blackburn Youth Zone in Blackburn with Darwen; Parkfield in Torbay; the OPEN Centre in Norwich; Fairplay and DCAS in Chesterfield.

- focus groups with young people not attending *myplace* centres.

3.4. The evaluation has also considered information on the impacts of other youth centres in which capital has been invested, reflecting the emphasis in the research questions on locating *myplace* within the context of other capital investments in youth provision. However, there has been little in the way of significant capital investment in youth facilities in recent years and, as Chapter Two highlights, the trend over the period in which the evaluation has been conducted has been one of disinvestment in open access youth centres. One exceptional example is the Youth Capital Fund (YCF)[7] which has provided for relatively minor capital investments to support the priorities of young people in the period between 2006 and 2011. The availability of data on the allocation and impacts of the YCF was explored in the case study areas, with limited results. Problems associated with (dis)continuities in services and staffing have meant that the ability of local authorities to provide consistent information on allocations, or insights into impact, was limited. Thus the evaluation is not able to comment authoritatively on the impacts of other capital investments and is reliant on other assessments of programmes such as the YCF (see for example, DCSF, 2008, Outcomes of the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF)/YCF) for contextual information.

3.5. The evaluation has sought to identify the impact of the programme by looking at what has happened to young people who have attended *myplace* centres and comparing this to the experiences of similar young people who have not attended *myplace* centres; this is often referred to as the counterfactual - assessing what might have happened in the absence of the *myplace* programme. This has been achieved by comparing self-reported change over a period of time for young people attending *myplace* centres (referred to in this report as the *myplace* sample) with that for a similar group of young people living in non-*myplace* areas (the comparator sample) over the same time period. Details of sampling, response rates and of the identification of comparator areas are contained in the technical report.

3.6. The evaluation is informed by the Young Foundation's Framework of Outcomes for Young People (Young Foundation, 2012) which highlights the importance of social and emotional capabilities to the achievement of all other outcomes for young people. This approach has the advantage of focusing on changes which may happen over short timescales and which can be measured using bespoke survey approaches to capture self-reported change amongst small groupings of research participants (unlike, for instance, changes in secondary and administrative data which would require substantial shifts in outcomes for large numbers of young people to be observable at the level of the local authority district, and where data are subject to considerable time lags). However, it is important to note that, although this evaluation has followed a robust, and recognised, methodology, and the quality of the evidence presented in this report compares favourably in the context of other evidence on the impact of youth services (see Chapter Two), there are aspects of the programme which present methodological challenges which affect the findings contained in this report. There are five issues:

- the evaluation has not been conducted in a true 'policy-on/policy-off' environment and as such the comparator group is not a control (as might be used in a randomised control trial) and we cannot account absolutely for young people's use of other youth facilities and services in contributing to outcome

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[7] The Youth Capital Fund (YCF) was announced in Youth Matters and launched as a two year scheme in April 2006, and extended for a further three years in July 2007. YCF was intended to provide a discrete capital budget to be spent on what young people wanted and needed, and decisions on spend were youth-led. The Fund was complemented by the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) which provided revenue monies to develop projects containing both a capital and revenue element. See DCSF, YOF and YCF Delivery Guidance, April 2008.

change. In addition as discussed in Chapter Two, wider changes in the policy and funding climate for youth services have affected variously the level and nature of youth provision in all *myplace* and non-*myplace* areas

- the limited evidence base on the impact of youth centres means that there is no reliable evidence on which make decisions about the ideal timescale over which to capture evidence of changed outcomes for young people. The surveys of young people in this evaluation have been carried out at intervals of between six and eight months, but this has been driven primarily by constraints associated with project timescales and resources and although this is a reasonable time frame in which to assume that some positive outcomes for young people might occur, it is likely that there will be other, longer-term changes which this evaluation has been unable to capture

- it has not been possible to establish a true 'baseline' for the evaluation. The evaluation has been conducted over a time period in which new *myplace* centres were opening, whilst others have been open to young people for some time; as such young people in the group have been exposed to the *myplace* activities provided by centres for different periods of time and it has not been possible to capture evidence on the young people's attitudes and behaviours 'before' engaging with the centres

- the evaluation has sought to capture evidence on a range of broad outcomes which are relevant across the *myplace* programme, and which have reflected evidence on the impacts of youth work (see Young Foundation, 2012). However, not all *myplace* centres are delivering the same activities and interventions, and some are focusing on the needs of very specific groups of young people; looking at outcomes across the programme inevitably results in the loss of some of the more nuanced impacts of particular aspects of service delivery. In addition, as is discussed further in Chapter Nine, some of these outcomes appear to be less amenable to measurement using the main methodology utilised in this evaluation: a paper-based questionnaire, administered at two points in time

- the samples of young people participating in the survey are self-selecting in that young people in both the participant and comparator samples were able to choose not to participate in the survey. In addition, the *myplace* programme has an explicit objective to target disadvantaged young people. Some young people with additional needs in the *myplace* sample were supported by *myplace* centre workers and volunteers to complete the questionnaire. These aspects may have introduced bias into the sample by focusing on young people who are comfortable participating in a written survey and it is possible that the answers of those who were assisted to complete the survey have been influenced by this process.

3.7. This chapter has outlined the approach taken to assessing impact of youth centres. The evaluation is using a mixed methods approach to look at the centres and their impact on outcomes for young people. The chapter has highlighted difficulties in identifying evidence on the impact of other facilities in which there has been capital investment, and some challenges in identifying the impact of *myplace* which include the lack of a true baseline for the programme, and the short timescales over which the evaluation has been conducted.

3.8. The next chapter provides details on the planning and development of the capital projects funded through the *myplace* programme.

# Planning and developing the capital projects

<div style="text-align: right; font-size: large;">**4**</div>

4.1. Chapters Four to 11 contain the empirical findings from the study. They draw on evidence from all data sources: centre surveys, young people's surveys, case studies, interviews and focus groups, to look at the impact of the *myplace* programme.

4.2. This chapter looks at aspects of the planning and development of *myplace* capital projects: developing project proposals; involving young people in project development; working with architects; working with BIG support team.

## Developing project proposals

4.3. Across the case study areas factors that had driven the development of *myplace* proposals included the need to renovate or replace existing buildings which were run down, or unfit for purpose, and consultation with young people which had revealed their desire for additional or new facilities. In many areas *myplace* provision was, at the outset at least, seen to be additional to existing provision, and the programme offered an opportunity to improve the range and quality of provision for young people.

4.4. In Torbay, for instance, the decision to apply for a *myplace* grant was driven by the elected Mayor and the Head of Children's Services, in response to a survey completed by 3,000 young people locally, expressing what they would like in the area. Evidence from questionnaires completed by young people highlighted a lack of places to go and not enough to do. There were also issues with existing youth provision being delivered in poor quality premises.

4.5. In Oxford, the Pegasus Theatre Trust, had been developing long-term plans to renovate the run-down building it occupied. A substantial amount of funding had already been raised, and the *myplace* grant made up a shortfall in the project's overall budget (of £7 million) to enable the building work to commence. Similarly, at the TAB Centre in Enfield, premises were in need of refurbishment, and some limited capital investment had already been obtained. The lead applicant for the *myplace* bid explains how the *myplace* grant enabled the TAB Centre to complete its development:

> " We got £100 thousand from the local authority to try and improve what we had and I think we were just going to start that work when we found out about [the *myplace* funding]…We did an initial two page proposal and we didn't really expect anything would come of it because we knew there was tremendous competition…and we were asked to do a full application…. we really did very well to get it. And it's made a tremendous difference" (Staff interview, TAB centre,                                                                                    Enfield).

4.6.     In Halton, the decision to apply for grant funding was driven by the need to replace existing youth facilities. Funding through Youth Capital Plus[8] (YCP) had initially to be used for 'doing up' existing youth provision buildings but when *myplace* funding became available a decision was made to develop a bid which pooled resources to allow for a bigger project: "*We already had £1.5 million to do that, it was a relatively small grant that we applied for from* **myplace** *but we thought it was worthwhile to do something more grand than refurbishing the existing provision*" (Local authority representative, CRMZ, Halton).

4.7.     Addressing the challenges and issues facing young people were also high on applicant's agendas: proposals were developed for *myplace* centres in the context of evidence on high levels of deprivation, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol issues, and high numbers of children at risk. The interim report highlighted that the *myplace* centres are most often in areas with lower than average child well-being and higher than average levels of deprivation, unemployment and truancy and lower than average educational attainment.

4.8.     The provision of facilities to provide young people with safe and welcoming places to go, and which encouraged them not to be out on the streets, was seen by applicants as key to successful early intervention strategies to address these challenges. Young people interviewed at the OPEN centre in Norwich explained that previously they had been "*hanging around on the streets causing trouble*", *"cold and wet"* and that the centre was valued as a place to be able to sit down in the warmth.

4.9.     Halton faced similar issues:

> "*We initially identified one of our 'hot spot' areas where we have a lot of anti-social behaviour, teenage conceptions, fire starting, and that didn't have a lot of provision as it's an isolated ward, but when we wanted something a bit bigger we looked again and Kingsway where it is we found there was a lot more deprivation in the whole area because it cuts across three wards so when you put it together, children in need plans, anti-social behaviour, lots of contributing factors pointed us to that area*" (Local authority representative, CRMZ, Halton).

4.10.    Finally, proposals for *myplace* grants were also integral to local regeneration plans in two case study areas. In Bradford, the *myplace* project was developed in response to consulations with young people which identified the need for young people's provision in the city centre as part of Bradford's regeneration strategy, and to compilment the Learning Quarter (Bradford College and the University of Bradford capital programme) which focussed on students. And in Blackburn, proposals for the Blackburn Youth Zone (BYZ) were key to the regenereation of the surrounding area, and developed in response to local concerns that young people were *"hanging around in the city centre with nothing to do"*. The site for the centre was chosen as part of a larger regneration site and the development of the Youth Zone has been crucial in attracting additional investment and development to the area. Planned additional developments in the area surrounding the Youth Zone include a hotel, car park and office space. According to the Youth Zone manager, the centre is seen as an important player in the regeneration of the area, representing civic pride and creating new opportunities for young people in the Blackburn with Darwen area.

4.11.    The development of partnership arrangements was a condition of grant funding, and in the case study areas, all the lead applicant organisations had worked in

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[8]In March 2008, the Youth Taskforce Action Plan introduced a new dimension to the Youth Capital Fund, by providing additional funding to improve youth facilities in areas where crime and anti-social behaviour were particular problems. This additional element was referred to as Youth Capital Plus (YCP).

collaboration with others to develop proposals. A typical example is that of developing the application for a grant to build the Parkfield centre in Torbay.

> **Parkfield Centre, Torbay - Developing the project proposal**
>
> A consultation exercise carried out by Torbay Council identified a need for new youth facilities in the area. Thirty local organisations were invited develop ideas for a new centre. Eight organisations responded and proposals were judged by a panel consisting of BAY6 (a group of six young people from local schools) alongside representatives of South Devon College, Councillors and local business people. The winning proposal from the local authority included the donation of the nine acre Parkfield site on which the new facility was eventually built.
>
> Torbay Youth Service led the grant application process. Young people were very involved from the outset and those interviewed for this evaluation reported that they now feel a sense of ownership and investment in the centre. Some of the young people involved at bid stage are now volunteers. The bid was written in partnership - others involved included Heads of local schools, Head of South Devon College, representatives of a local commercial radio station, elected members, a parent's forum, local residents and the YMCA partnership group.

4.12.  Scoping work was important, including options appraisals and visits to other successful youth centres. The opportunity to gather advice and evidence from other practitioners was seen by interviewees as especially helpful and some applicants in the later stages of the programme conducted visits to existing *myplace* centres or those that were in the advanced stages of development.

## Involving young people in project development

4.13.  Applications were required to demonstrate the involvement of young people in project development. As a consequence, young people have been involved extensively in the design and development of *myplace* centres. Decisions regarding colour schemes, the layout of the buildings, fixtures and fittings, open and outdoor spaces, and the activities available have often been led by young people. The example of engaging young people in the design of the Culture Fusion Centre in Bradford is illustrative:

> *"…staff from the YMCA and staff from the youth service worked together to have young people design, to look at the layout, to look at the colours, all the devil of the detail really, about what the building would look like, what services they wanted in there. We supported the consultation with young people across the district, so we had a working group of young people that staff teams worked together to work with, which drove through that youth consultation side of the development and they were able to tap in to all the other youth services provision to ensure a wider reach of young people were consulted and again what might be the barriers to stop young people going there, what might be the barriers to them using that provision. What would need to be in place for them to feel safe, things that are really important for young people, how big a bus journey would it be and things like that"* (Local authority representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

4.14.  Across the case study areas, a range of methods were employed to engage young people. Collaboration between existing youth groups and forums, VCS organisations, and public services working with young people (e.g. Connexions, schools, LA Children and Young People's Services, Probation Service and Youth Offending

Teams) was widespread, as was the use of surveys and questionnaires to elicit the views of young people.

4.15.   In Stoke on Trent, there was extensive involvement of young people in developing the Youth Campus *myplace* project, dating back to 2005 when a partnership between North Staffordshire YMCA, the local authority and young people identified a need for new provision. Young people led a four month consultation period, trained as peer researchers and carried out a planning for real exercise. Consultation involved youth groups, housing and community groups, schools, sports groups and scouts groups.

4.16.   Centres also made extensive efforts to engage disadvantaged young people in early consultation exercises. In Middlesbrough, consultation carried out in the planning stages of the Custom House *myplace* centre included events at various schools and the local football stadium. Young people from particular groups (such as black and minority ethnic and traveller communities) were specifically targeted, sometimes involving bussing young people in to consultation events to make sure their opinions were included.

4.17.   Once capital projects were underway, centres tended to engage extensively with smaller groups of young people, whose influence on the development of centres was wide-ranging. At the Fairplay centre in Chesterfield, for instance, there is a monthly youth forum called 'Vocal Point', which consists of young people, all of whom have learning disabilities, who use the centre.  They formed the basis of Fairplay's Capital Build Group.  And in Blackburn, a young people's development group was involved extensively in design and development of the Blackburn Youth Zone (BYZ):

> *"Everything in BYZ was chosen by young people - the rooms, the shape, the colour schemes, floors, football pitch on the roof - everything. Young people were involved in interviewing and recruiting centre staff"* (Staff interview, Blackburn Youth Zone, Blackburn with Darwen).

4.18.   An element in the design and development of the centres was the inclusion of visits by young people to other contemporary youth centres. For instance, a group of young people involved in the development of the Parkfield centre in Torbay undertook visits to youth facilities in London, and looked at approaches to marketing, design, and facilities such as sports centres and cafés.

4.19.   Centres typically reported that although engaging young people in project development required effort, and was not always easy, they welcomed young people's involvement and felt that young people had made a positive impact on project development. Culture Fusion in Bradford epitomised the process. The YMCA set up the Culture Fusion Advisors (CFAs) group of young people which operated in parallel to the Partners Working Group:

> *"where young people wanted to come that was facilitated, where young people wanted professionals to come and talk to them and see them that was facilitated…it was a messy process [the CFAs] would do work with other groups of young people…and that would go to the Partners Working Group and the working group would think about how they could deliver what was possible and then that would go back"* (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

with positive results:

> *"Absolutely [the young people made a difference], the vision was theirs and they approved and agreed the outcomes, and the outcomes were batted backwards and forwards a little bit…They had a lot of input into what the building might look*

*like, there were thousands of young people voting on the colour scheme, there were three different proposals about what the outside of the building could look like and there was a big consultation process that took place across the district to choose the design"* (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

## Working with Architects

4.20.    The involvement of architects that were sympathetic to the aims of *myplace* was in all the case study areas seen to be critical to developing appealing buildings. Architects that were able to involve young people, listen to their views and opinions and work with them closely, were particularly valued. The time spent by the architect with the young people at the Fairplay centre for young people with disabilities in Chesterfield was important, according to parents interviewed, as it encouraged a sense of *'ownership'* and young people *"think it's their place".*

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**Working with an Architect - Fairplay, Chesterfield**

Fairplay engaged an architect before securing the *myplace* funding, and was explicit in the need for support to get planning approval and that payment of the architect's fees was subject to funding.  Once funding had been secured, the architect helped with the design of the building.  He met the young people at Fairplay and was able to engage with them effectively.

The whole team got involved in the practical aspects of the building from the outset. During the initial selection process, some architects didn't understand how the building design could meet the needs of young people with disabilities, but the architect selected to work with Fairplay understood the requirements.  He spent some time at the project and met young people and he took the time to discuss the design with them.  He also had prior experience of meeting similar specifications such as wheelchair access, automatic door locking systems etc.

There are young people with various needs at the centre including some who are visually impaired, or have hearing difficulties.  Different sounds and visual stimuli have been introduced, and the sensory room, lights in the corridor, waterfall effects, and special tiles on the floors are all interesting for the young people.  However, whilst Fairplay was designed with the most profoundly disabled young people in mind, the attention was to achieve this without overtly disabled features.   A Private Funder of Fairplay reaffirmed, *"You walk in and you wouldn't know that it's a specialist centre, the signage is very discreet, everything is light and uplifting".* Consequently, business needs have also been met.  The hall can be used as a large or small space.  Parts of the building can be shut off when needed and rooms are sound proofed.  *"It's a very modern, friendly, nice, trendy building that people come to"* (Staff interview, Fairplay, Chesterfield).

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4.21.   Other stakeholders involved in building design proposals spoke positively about the involvement of architects:

> "We used our internal property service and we had architects the whole way through the project, the architects worked really closely with the young people, the young people designed it themselves. They were nominated through the cabinet on who should sit on the project board, we consistently had about 10 young people as a core group, we had lots of workshops with the architects, and we took some young people to Liverpool and Manchester to look at areas with similar aged buildings so they could look at the type of things that they wanted to see how we could treat it as sympathetically as possible" (Local authority representative, CRMZ, Halton).

> "The young people were involved in the planning [with the architect], there was a whole series of meetings…when it came to the decoration they [the young people] actually chose the colour scheme…it's bright blue and green, they worked out what they wanted and I think that the architect was quite accommodating in how he quite tastefully accommodated [their ideas]…it altered through the process and they were quite happy with it as well, everybody was happy" (Staff interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

## Working with the BIG support team

4.22.   As outlined in Chapter One, BIG has delivered the *myplace* programme on behalf of the DfE. BIG grants officers were responsible for the day to day oversight of capital project development, and for grant management arrangements. Projects were also supported through a separate support and development contract, supplied by a consortium of organisations[9], around three themes: capital support, viability support and youth engagement. Resources included Programme Guidance Notes and over 50 good practice guides produced by the support team, covering aspects such as planning and building a youth centre, involving young people, and creating a sustainable building. In addition, a small number of centres were supported by the Sorrell Foundation to develop provision in the area of creative industries.

4.23.   A minority of interviewees in the case study centres reported explicitly on these mechanisms but where reference was made, comments were favourable. A staff member in one centre commented positively on the support that the centre had received from the grant management team at BIG:

> "They were both excellent, when we were going through the building process we had to do reports and they paid the bills and I was weekly in contact asking for support and we couldn't have done it without their input, because we didn't know what to do and anything that cropped up I would send an email or speak to her on the phone. There was lots of teething problems I suppose so they were extremely helpful the support officers…It was all about the cost and how we altered things as we went on and I suppose that's where we had the most problems…We had technical people that came down to visit us once [as well], so we did have a fair amount of support through the process really, and I think a small voluntary organisation needs that sort of support and we actually did very well with the support that we got" (Staff interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

4.24.   Engagement with the support and development contractor varied according to the development stage of the project and the specific needs of the centres. Amongst the case study centres those that had been open for some time had had less

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[9] The consortium comprised Hall Aitken, Gleeds and YMCA England.

involvement. The support and development contractor has been involved extensively in helping North Staffordshire YMCA refine its business and financial planning in light of changes to the project. Specific areas of support included cash flow and business plan, management of capital project and building, revenue planning, private sector links and involving young people in project. Staff interviewed there were generally complimentary in relation to support received although highlight management information systems as an area of on-going support needs.

4.25.   This chapter has reviewed key aspects of the planning and development of the *myplace* capital projects. It has suggested that the *myplace* projects have been developed in response to the need to develop new and improved centres and the priorities of young people, and that the centres were intended to be additional to existing youth provision. The requirements for applicants have determined that there has been extensive involvement of young people in the development of centres, and partnership working has typified the development process. In relation to the role of architects in the design of the centres, the ability for architects to engage effectively with young people has been a key criterion for selection.

4.26.   The next chapter discusses the centres funded through the programme.

# The *myplace* centres

<span style="color:#b5176a; font-size:3em; float:right;">5</span>

5.1. The interim evaluation report (Chapters Four and Five) contained detailed information on the scope, structure and activities of centres which received capital funding through the *myplace* programme. In summary the report found that:

- *myplace* centres are most frequently located centrally in urban deprived areas, with lower than average scores on the child well-being index[10], higher than average levels of youth unemployment and truancy and lower than average educational attainment. Eighty three per cent are in areas with lower than average rates of young people who are NEET

- *myplace* centres typically bring together a wide-range of facilities, activities and services to provide a comprehensive offer to young people

- centres' objectives most frequently focus on provision of personal and social development opportunities for young people; provision of a safe and welcoming space for young people; and provision of high quality sport and leisure facilities for young people

- common outcomes include developing young people's social and emotional skills, improving engagement in education, employment and training, and reducing/preventing crime and anti-social behaviour

- the majority of activities are open-access: 78 per cent of centres responding to the wave 1 survey indicated that 50 per cent or more of the activities that they provide are open to all young people.

5.2. This chapter provides further information on the *myplace* buildings, their locations, and on the staff and volunteers who work in them. It also provides evidence on young people's views of the centres.

## The *myplace* buildings

5.3. The range of buildings in which *myplace* centres have been developed have included both new builds (70 per cent of respondents to the baseline centre survey) and refurbished existing centres (10 per cent), and young people have sometimes chosen to redevelop other buildings (17 per cent), including iconic and heritage buildings as youth centres. All *myplace* centres are seen to have the 'wow' factor - the programme's aim to develop 'world class youth facilities' has led to a portfolio of buildings which are universally praised for their visual appeal, making them attractive to young people, and highly visible symbols of investment in young people's provision.

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[10] See http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/childwellbeing2009

5.4.   Young people value the buildings, and many of those that were spoken to in the course of this evaluation expressed their surprise, and delight, at the quality of the facilities. One young person summed this up:
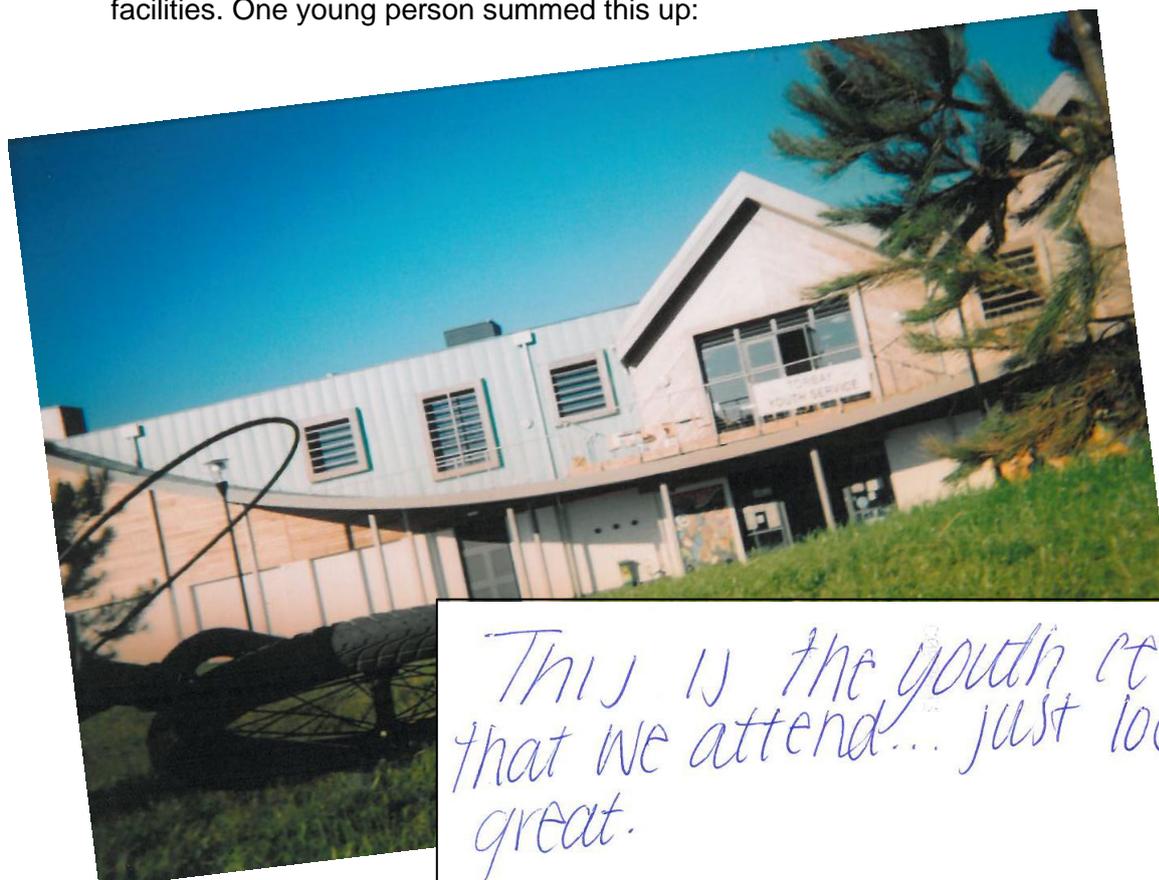


*"The building is smart and elegant. Didn't expect it to be so new, you expect it to be bare walls and tables like you get in class rooms. You wouldn't think a youth centre could afford this, the Apple computers are great. Use music suite most days, all the mics and all the gear helps us to enjoy ourselves. Love the music suite, it's like my bedroom we record albums, and doing a backing track, doing our own song and doing music mixing"* (Young person interview, Parkfield, Torbay).

5.5.   The emphasis on young people's engagement in project development (discussed in the previous chapter) has resulted in buildings in which young people feel comfortable. Across the case study areas young people explained that that they liked the *myplace* buildings:

*"it is colourful", "it has great seating areas", "relates to teenagers", "so different to other places"* (Young person focus group, The OPEN Centre, Norwich).

*"It's got my favourite colour all around". "It's brilliant. I can't say any more"* (Young people's focus group Blackburn Youth Zone, Blackburn).

*"Not a lot of people get to use this kind of space……… it makes you feel really privileged being able to use it"* (Young person focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

*"The DCAS facility is impressive ….. the bright colours are uplifting and the expectation from entering the building is always to have a good time"* (Young person interview, Donut Creative Arts Studio (DCAS), Chesterfield).

5.6. Young people particularly valued the aspects of the buildings which provided them space to relax, spend time interacting with their friends and with youth workers, and which offered oases of calm, away from the stresses of daily life.


*Today I spent all day in the youth rooms.. Dance Mats - thats how we use it!*
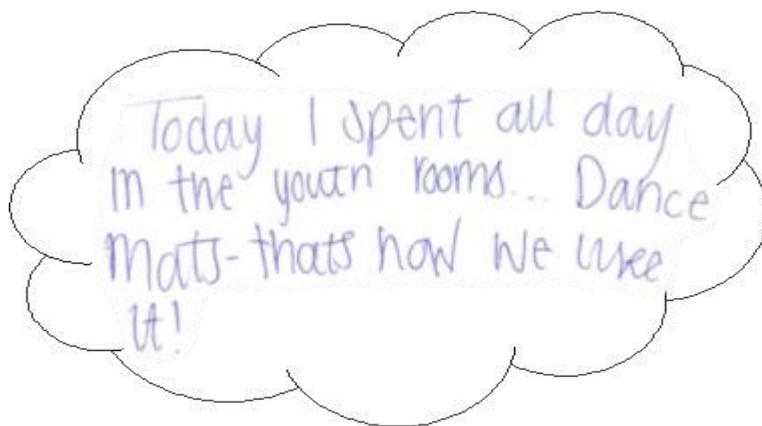


**Experiences**

What did you do at Parkfield today?

*Today. I went to Parkfield again + today I sat at the reception all day talking to the youth workers! One of them had made some cakes + gave some out! After that I brought myself into the sports hall to get involved in the volleyball competition - I enjoyed this.*

5.7. Space which provides some peace and quiet, like the sensory room, is particularly appreciated by young people with disabilities attending the Fairplay centre in Chesterfield: *"I like the sensory room where you can calm down when you feel stressed"* (Young person interview, Fairplay, Chesterfield).

5.8. After a settling in period, issues with the layout and functionality of the buildings have emerged, particularly in relation to meeting the needs of young people and generating income to ensure sustainability. Problems highlighted in the case studies included lack of space for commercial activities (such as meeting and conference rooms, or space for use by community groups), lack of sporting facilities (which have emerged as a priority for young people), lack of space to meet the needs of specific groups of young people; unsuitable fixtures and fittings; and problems ensuring safety when buildings do not offer flexible space which can be opened up, or closed down, according to use and staffing levels.



5.9. Staff at one case study centre highlighted the importance of effective planning in relation to the use of space. They said that the building in which they are working presents challenges for both running effective youth provision, and developing a sustainable

facility. A number of practical issues were highlighted, including safety and noise issues in an open-plan mezzanine area, and the location of the main doors in relation to the reception area, which makes it hard for them to manage the entry of young people and collect entry fees. A covered entrance outside the building provides a congregation point for young people in bad weather and when the centre is closed. This is proving problematic and there have been complaints from local residents. There is a lack of office space and smaller rooms are needed for hire by groups in the daytime to contribute to income generation.

5.10.  Staff in another case study organisation also reported that although initially the building provided everything young people asked for during the original consultation, there are now a lack of sports facilities, and room for young people to *"just run around"*. A climbing wall and recording studio are too small for commercial use and some parts of building are now not suited to its current use as a music venue.

5.11.  And in one case study, a representative of a partner organisation reported their reservations with the ***myplace*** building:

> *"The young people were involved [with the design]…at some point you have to say 'that idea's fantastic' or 'I don't think that's going to work', and my opinion is that's what's gone wrong there…If we want an organisation in here and we want them to do whatever, we've got to be able to operate. I can't teach a group of 30 kids in a space that's supposed to take 15…So somebody somewhere hasn't thought that through." (Partner agency representative).*

5.12.  These issues were beginning to emerge over the period of the evaluation (reflecting the fact that some case study centres were newly opened) and it should be stressed that for all case study centres, any problems with the design and functionality of buildings were far outweighed by the benefits of involving young people in the design process. As one interviewee remarked:

> *"The team of youth workers are amazing and would live with anything to get what the young people want, there is an ownership here, it is the young people's space" (Staff interview).*

5.13.  The Big Lottery Fund, through its grant management and support processes encouraged all grant recipients to consider the potential for buildings to be used to generate revenue. But it may be that in some ***myplace*** centres, the preferences of young people have taken precedence over practical issues such as wear and tear, and sustainability concerns such as the need for ***myplace*** centres to generate revenue funding.  These disparate, and sometimes competing, priorities need to be given equal consideration at the outset if buildings are to meet the needs of young people in a sustainable manner.

## Locations

5.14.  The locations of ***myplace*** centres are important, both in encouraging access for young people, and in addressing issues around cohesion. For these reasons, ***myplace*** centres are often located in town and city centres (47 per cent), (four per cent are in rural communities). The city centre location of the OPEN centre in Norwich, for instance, was considered by all stakeholders interviewed there to provide an excellent location, enabling OPEN to reach young people from across the city. Young people attending the centre reinforced this view and reported they liked the city centre location.

5.15.  At Fairplay and the Donut Creative Arts Studio (DCAS) which together comprise the ***myplace*** centre in Chesterfield, the town centre location allows easy access to

shops, transport, and other facilities and services for young people. A Specialist Children's Community Nurse who works with Fairplay remarked

*"they can also take kids into town, they can go to the park, they can do anything they want from here, it's so central…so it's kind of made everything so much easier for us, it's made it just so convenient and easy and the young people can go anywhere here, there's nowhere they can't go" (Partner agency representative, Fairplay, Chesterfield).*

5.16. However, it was reported that the centre is tucked away on a residential road and not easily seen. A volunteer at Fairplay reported "*not enough local people know what/where Fairplay is, so work is being done to raise its profile and make it more visible as an organisation".* The co-ordinator of an arts project, which bussed young people in to DCAS made similar comments:

*(the facility is) "tucked away, it's out of sight a bit, so I don't think they are going to get much footfall from people wandering round. DCAS could be a high profile venue, but people wouldn't know about it or come across it by chance" (Partner agency representative, DCAS, Chesterfield).*

5.17. In contrast, a high profile and visible location for the TAB centre in Enfield helped youth workers to attract young people to the centre:

*"The north circ is such a busy road…A lot of the young people that come to youth café, it's that they've been walking past and we've been able to grab them and say 'do you know about what we've got here? Come inside and have a look', and that is kind of the best way."* (Staff interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

5.18. In Blackburn, the central location of the Youth Zone, in the town centre and close to the bus and rail stations, was important in providing a location which could be accessed by young people from across the Blackburn with Darwen local authority area. And in Halton, the location of the CMRZ Rooms was chosen specifically to develop a youth village, which is accessible to young people from both Runcorn and Widnes:

*"We have lots of provision in one area and not in another…. lots of contributing factors pointed us to that area and also because you have the leisure centre there and the college we wanted to create a youth village, all youth services in one central location"* (Local authority representative, CRMZ, Halton).

5.19. Case study centres reported that overcoming issues associated with territoriality was an important issue in relation to location. In Middlesbrough, Chesterfield and Blackburn, for instance, central locations were seen to provide 'neutral' ground, on which young people from different areas and communities could meet.

5.20. In Enfield, local young people attend the TAB Centre, alongside young people from other boroughs who want to get away from the gang culture in their local areas. The Centre Manager reported that young people mix easily with each other at the centre, in contrast to what is happening in the 'outside world':

*"When they're in here it's like 'oh we're fine', and I think what they see is it's like a safe place where no-one really knows, they come here and they're not going to get in trouble. All the other stuff is happening out there, the guys in the gangs, the hardcore gang people ……., they're not really up here. So we get kids coming in from (another borough) because when they go to the youth clubs in (another borough), they walk in there and get a beating or something, but here they can walk in, especially from the basketball, the majority of the kids in the*

*basketball club are from (*another borough*). So they all travel in here and they love it here"* (Staff interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

5.21.    However, not all locations were thought to be appropriate and there were instances of locations which youth workers thought impacted negatively on local perceptions of the centres. In one case study area, for instance, although the location of the **myplace** centre, slightly outside of the city centre, was reported by staff to be 'neutral' and avoiding 'boundary issues' it was also acknowledged that there were local views that it's 'in the middle of nowhere' and 'out of the way'. The area is undergoing redevelopment and although seen to be 'up and coming' and close to the local college, a boarded up pub and housing in the vicinity is an "eyesore" which could act as a barrier to engagement. There had also been occasional letters in the local paper questioning the suitability of location because it used to be a red light district. However, the centre had no concrete evidence that these issues had put young people (or their parents) off the centre, and emphasis on good public transport connections was seen to be key to overcoming barriers.

## Staff and Volunteers

### Staff

**Figure 5.1: Staff and volunteers**
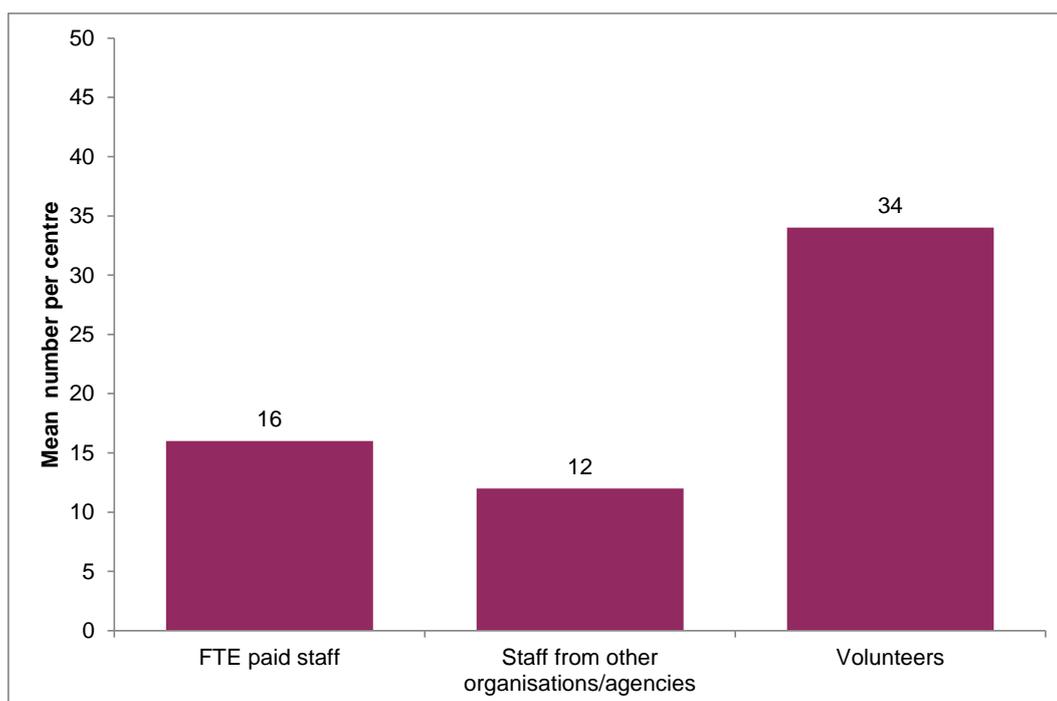


Source: **myplace** provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 30 respondents

5.22.    Analysis of costs outline in Chapter Ten suggests that on average **myplace** centres employ 27 (16 FTE) staff. Current staffing levels varied in the cased study centres from seven to 22.  Figure 5.1 illustrates that there are roughly equivalent numbers of paid staff (**myplace** and partner agency) and volunteers working in **myplace** centres.

5.23.    Just over half of the case study centres reported to be insufficiently staffed. These centres were getting by on the current staffing levels, but were unable to offer a full level of provision as often as they would like.  For example, one centre suggested that it would be able to deliver more sessions

> *"I always want more staff…ideally we could do with more staff delivering work with young people"* (Staff interview).

5.24. Another centre manager felt that not having sufficient staff numbers limited how often or how much the centre could be opened:

> *"(We have a) Fairly skeleton staff… Given the size of the foot print of the building and the amount of facilities on site, you would need an awful lot more staff to offer young people a full range of resource all the time"* (Staff interview).

5.25. Other centres were supplementing low staff numbers with partners, agency workers or volunteers, but this was said to be far from ideal, and in one centre staff were working over and above their hours in order to keep the centre running. In one case study in particular a lack of non-sessional staff to oversee the planning of activities was highlighted as a problem:

> *"…we've only got two sessional youth workers, so outside of their sessions, there's no-one really to plan and push"* (Staff interview).

5.26. The quality of relationships between young people and adults is a critical element of successful youth work. Young people had positive relationships with staff working in *myplace* centres, and their friendly and welcoming approaches had succeeded in creating inclusive environments in which they felt supported and comfortable:

> *"I think it's a really good place where we can feel comfortable with who we are because people here don't judge us as much as in school, we are more free in that sense"* (Young person, focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

5.27. Interviewees also commented on the range of skills required to run a successful *myplace* centre, which differed from those which were needed for traditional youth work. In particular, the role of Centre Manager, or Chief Executive, was seen to be crucial, requiring skills in working with young people, partners and investors, as well as effectively leading a multi-million pound facility. A principal factor in the achievements of at least three of the case study centres was reportedly down to key individual members or groups of dedicated staff who would drive the work of the centres forward. In one centre this was the Chief Executive whose experience and enthusiasm as well as contacts built up over years working with young people were acknowledged as a key factor in the centre's success and who was described as *"unstoppable"* by a colleague. At the TAB Centre, although it was acknowledged that the staff team was smaller than desired, the commitment of those staff in place was highlighted:

> *"the small amount of staff that we have had have been very effective, there's a lot of people that have come in, they've come to volunteer for one thing…and they've jumped in with something else [another task]…they get stuck in…a lot of people that are involved in the project are in it because they care, and they'll give the extra time, like even if they're supposed to finish at five but they'll work straight through until seven…and even some of the guys on their day off from somewhere else, they'll come in"* (Staff interview, TAB Centre, Enfield).

I took this photo because Gemma (youth-worker) is always there for us and helps us with tricky situations and also the management board.
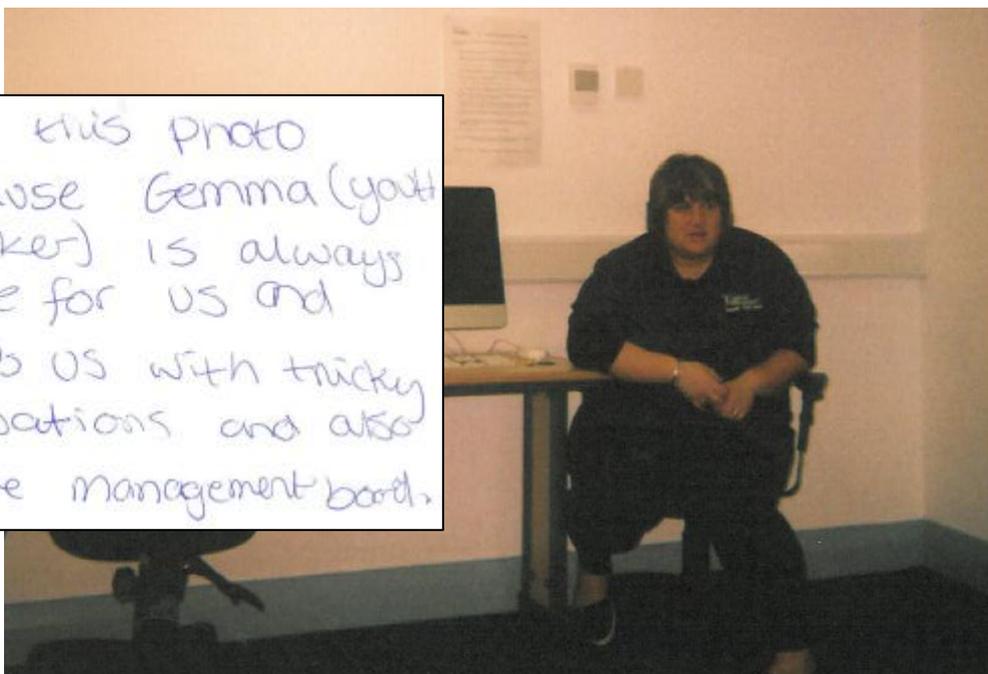
5.28. And at Blackburn Youth Zone the Chair of the private sector driven board has been credited with acting as a champion in local fundraising. Described by staff as a "*charismatic*" individual who *"carries weight and responsibility in the local business community"*, the Chair has personally asked a lot of founder patrons to invest in the project. His contacts have been vital in engaging business community.

### *Volunteers*

5.29. Chapter Ten suggests that centres have on average 34 volunteers, delivering 36 volunteer hours per week. As with numbers of staff, numbers of volunteers across the case study centres also varied widely, from one centre with just four volunteers, to another with around 150. Staff interviewed in case study centres reported that they had been successful in attracting volunteers and they had what they considered to be adequate numbers. Volunteers are involved in different roles across all aspects of provision including running, or helping to run, sessions with young people, being involved in events, promotions and community volunteer programmes, and working in cafes and helping to run events.

5.30. Centres have generally been proactive in managing volunteers. At the Parkfield *myplace* centre in Torbay volunteers were given the same training and supervision levels as staff and were considered to be core members of the team. The example of Blackburn Youth Zone also highlights a constructive approach to volunteer management.

> **Blackburn Youth Zone - Working with volunteers**
>
> The Blackburn Youth Zone (BYZ) is dependent on the involvement of a large number of volunteers who help paid staff to supervise the high volumes of young people attending each of the open access sessions, which run for six days a week. Approximately 15,000 volunteer hours per year are required to maintain a 50/50 staff to volunteer ratio, which is seen to be ideal at open sessions.
>
> A Volunteer Manager is responsible for the recruitment and training of volunteers. Establishing good links with the local university (student volunteering) and volunteer bureau has been crucial in attracting volunteers, although word of mouth and promotion through the centre's website have also been important. The involvement of private sector sponsors at BYZ is also a potential source of volunteers, as employers may encourage their employees to get involved.
>
> All applicants expressing an interest in volunteering at BYZ are invited for an informal interview with the Volunteer Manager. Those that are suitable are invited on to a two week training programme, at the end of which those wishing to continue are asked to commit to volunteering at the centre for at least three hours per week for a period of six months. All applicants are considered, although close monitoring of the characteristics of volunteers enables the Volunteer Manager to identify any groups which are under-represented and target recruitment efforts accordingly. This approach has recently highlighted a need to recruit more Asian women as volunteers, and the Volunteer Manager has instigated a programme of engaging with local Women's Centres to promote volunteering opportunities.
>
> Volunteers are involved across all aspects of provision. They are assigned to specific roles and supervised by a paid staff member with line management responsibilities. According to the Volunteer Manager, direct supervision of volunteers by managers with whom they are in regular contact is important in maintaining their involvement and commitment - "*the quality of the experience is what keeps people coming back"* (Volunteer Manager, BYZ).
>
> The Volunteer Manager anticipates a degree of turnover in volunteers (although many stay for longer than six months) and this is managed proactively. A new cohort of potential volunteers is trained every month and volunteers leaving BYZ are contacted by the Volunteer Manager to discuss their reasons for leaving, gather feedback on their volunteering experience at  BYZ, and maintain contact should they wish to volunteer again in the future.

5.31. In one ***myplace*** centre, despite having a Volunteer Coordinator and acknowledging how important volunteers were to the running of the centre, staff members noted that the administrative processes involved in recruiting and maintaining volunteers could be difficult to manage, partly due to the requirement for CRB checks:

> *"A lot of volunteers could be challenging to manage, what goes with volunteers is the support that they need… you get people who come in and they're really interested in volunteering and they have to fill the CRB in so they can't do anything unsupervised…and by the time the CRB's come through they've lost interest and gone and done something else"* (Staff interview).

5.32. Across the case study centres interviewees reported that the centres could either not be run without volunteers or that the centres would run, but that staff costs would be higher and delivery less effective, and that volunteers were valued for their contribution to specific roles:

> *"We couldn't open without them… no way, we call them staff"* (Staff interview, Parkfield, Torbay).

> *"I don't see any way that a centre of this size can exist in the future without volunteers"* (Staff interview, CRMZ, Halton).

> *"You can always run a centre without volunteers, the costs will be higher, your offer will be different. The volunteers add that extra element to it that I think is very worthwhile"* (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

5.33. Some case study centres prioritised volunteering opportunities for young people. In half of the case studies the centres volunteers consisted of mainly young people aged 18 or under, and Chapter Ten indicates that on average each centre has 19 young volunteers. Often these centres encouraged young people to take on a volunteer role as a means of increasing engagement with the community as well providing an opportunity to gain skills and increase confidence.

5.34. At the OPEN *myplace* centre in Norwich, for instance, volunteer numbers were substantial (there were approx. 140 active volunteers at the time of the research) and the volunteers in place reported that they were gaining a great deal from the work they were taking part in, as the example of James illustrates. There is evidence that across the programme, *myplace* centres are offering many opportunities for young volunteers and there is scope for more research to understand the impacts of these opportunities on the outcomes, and career trajectories, of those taking part.

James volunteers as a sound engineer/stage manager. He volunteers on average for 15 hours per week. He has received some training on sound engineering and in the recording studio. He has also been involved with the designing of event posters. James reported he had learnt a great deal about music. In addition he reported that he felt valued by staff members, his ideas were listened to and valued. He described his involvement as *"like an investment"* for the future. (Volunteer, OPEN Centre, Norwich).

5.35. In other *myplace* centres volunteers were adults from the community, in one case most of the adult volunteers had children who attended other activities at the centre:

> *"There's one lady who comes in in the mornings to volunteer as a receptionist because her child comes in for the drop in, for the children's centre. So she volunteers, which is a great help because that releases other people to do other tasks at that time so we get more done"* (Staff interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

5.36. This chapter has looked at aspects of the *myplace* buildings and reported on the staff and volunteers working in them. The *myplace* buildings have been universally well received and young people are impressed by their quality. The extensive involvement of young people in the design of the centres has resulted in centres which are appealing to young people but in some centres this priority afforded to the preferences of young people may have been at the expense of practical considerations and the functionality of buildings, particularly in relation to the ability of *myplace* centres to use the capital asset to support income generation activities.

The successful running of *myplace* centres requires a range of skills, and not all centres have been able to employ a full staff complement, primarily because of a lack of revenue resources. Volunteers are vital to *myplace* centres and all those spoken to for this evaluation have been successful in attracting volunteer involvement.

5.37. The next chapter discusses what the centres offer to young people, looking at activities and services, charging policies and opening times.

# The offer to young people

**6**

6.1. This chapter looks at what *myplace* centres are providing to young people in terms of activities and services, prices and opening hours. It also reports on the views of young people about what is on offer to them.

## Activities

6.2. As outlined in the introduction to this report, a key objective of the *myplace* programme is to offer young people access to a range of positive out of school activities. *myplace* investment has enabled youth workers to provide a wide range of activities, often rivalling commercial provision, and in the case of refurbished facilities greatly enhancing what could be provided previously. Figure 6.1 outlines the main activities that *myplace* centres offer to young people. It demonstrates that there is a strong emphasis on social activities, and opportunities to take part in arts and sports sessions. Just under 80 per cent of centres report that they provide support for young people to develop enterprise activities (for instance through training, apprenticeships or support for business development) and just under half are providers for the National Citizen Service 'Summer of a Lifetime' programme.

**Figure 6.1: *myplace* activities**
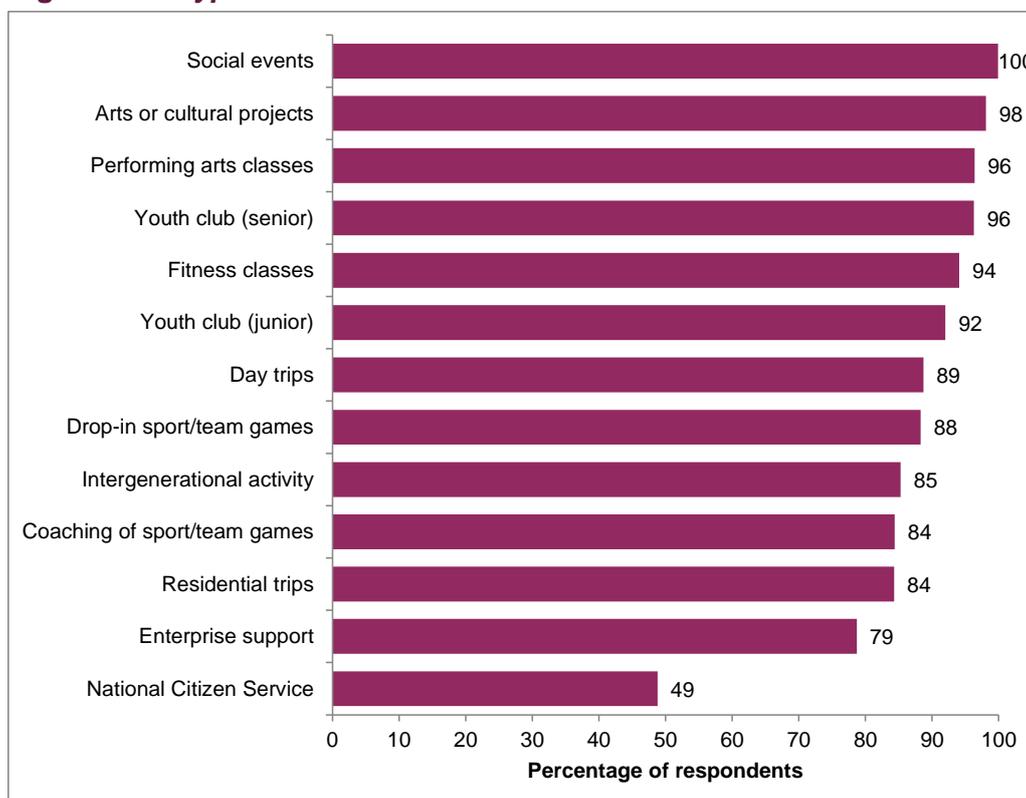


Source: *myplace* provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 57 respondents

6.3.  Young people appreciate the variety of activities on offer. The diary extract, written by a young person, highlights the broad range of activities available at the Fairplay young people's centre in Chesterfield.

> Visit Number
>
> **Experiences**
>
> What did you do at Fairplay today?
>
> Sat 28th
> Today i played water polo and basketball and wheel-chair basketball It was a good day we had a picnic in the cafeteria

6.4.  Young people at CRMZ centre in Halton and the Parkfield Centre in Torbay also welcomed the variety of activities on offer.

> *"I think it's a building that has a mix of different facilities, it's good to have that all in one place; you have the chill out room - the name explains exactly what it is, you go in there and you just feel calm, then you have the main area where there lighting rigs are, you can do dances and drama pieces or you can use it for graduation as well as using it for general groups. You have the kitchen so you can do life skills with young people".* (Young volunteer, CRMZ, Halton).

> Today at Parkfield we where just hanging around the building and the best part in the sports hall Playing Badminton and in the wheelchairs with everyone.

6.5.  Young people also value the positive impacts that new and refurbished space has had on their activities. For instance, young people at the Pegasus Theatre in Oxford said that there was more space to do a wider variety of activities since the building had been refurbished:

> *"It's so much nicer, there are so many facilities. Before there was no space for work or an office, there was no café and that's really good because all the money from that goes to Pegasus. It didn't have the dance studio or any facilities or anything. It is much better now because of the way it has changed there is more space for more things"* (Young person interview, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

> *"Obviously the building is amazing, it's really taken the theatre to the next level, I really enjoy being here, Pegasus has definitely developed me as a person. It was a big grey block with a theatre in the middle and a few offices dug into the walls, it wasn't very interesting, this is a proper theatre where you can do stuff and operate properly - it's made a huge difference"* (Young person interview, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

6.6.  And in Stoke On Trent, where **myplace** funding had contributed to the redevelopment of the Youth Campus which offers residential accommodation and social activities, young people who were interviewed for the evaluation remarked on how the new facilities had changed their perceptions of the building, of young people who used its services, and of the YMCA which runs the Campus:

> *"I didn't expect to have all these facilities here. I put off coming here a long time - I didn't even know where the place was and I expected it to be full of drug users and that. I come here because I was sleeping on a mate's sofa and it wasn't what I expected. Straight away I seen the social area and that and it*

*completely changed my mind. It feels like a little safe haven"* (Young person interview, Youth Campus, Stoke on Trent).

*"It's a lot better than I first thought. I saw how it was before when my friend was here and it's much better now. The people that were here before were worse - how they acted and they thought they could get away with things. Obviously now the whole place has been cleaned up and because they've got things to do it occupies the mind"* (Young person interview, Youth Campus, Stoke on Trent).

6.7. They particularly appreciated the improved social space that the refurbishment offered:

*"I use the social space all the time. If you didn't have that you'd be sitting in your room, bored. With the social space you get to talk to different people"* (Young person interview, Youth Campus, Stoke on Trent)

*"I play pool every day. Last night we were all down watching a DVD together. It's a good thing having that - I don't know what I'd do with myself if it wasn't for that room down there. It feels friendly and safe - the staff make you feel at home and there's always something you can be doing"* (Young person interview, Youth Campus, Stoke on Trent)

6.8. In all the case study areas, staff remarked that it was important to generate an easy, relaxed environment in which young people could participate in activities, and in which friendships were made in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Again, this was valued by young people who sometimes participated in activities that they would not have done elsewhere. Two young people commented on their centres:

*"In school I wouldn't really do basketball or badminton because there's nothing to do and people show off a lot. But here it's like everyone's good and it's just having fun and not showing off…Say you were playing football in school, hardly anyone would pass to you, running and trying to do all this good stuff, but here they pass to you, so nobody shows off here, they just pass and play"* (Young person interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

*"I just think it's an amazing place to be and if I wasn't here I don't know what I would be doing, I wouldn't be dancing, I have been to dance companies before and I don't like the atmosphere, it's all very competitive, you have to be the best, whereas here it's very inclusive and no matter what you can do its good enough. I don't think I would have been given the same opportunities anywhere else"* (Young person interview, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

6.9. One young person at the Fairplay centre in Chesterfield reported that she hadn't accessed other youth facilities in the past or had much of a social life beyond that with family, "*I'd probably be sitting at home on my laptop".* Another talked about the social isolation she felt at home due to a lack of opportunity to make friends. The opportunity to make friends at Fairplay and meet other young people with disabilities and additional needs is recognised as being very important, particularly as a number of these young people have been subjected to bullying in mainstream environments. "*I went to college; it wasn't my thing college because I got bullied loads…when the term ended I came here"* (Young person interview, Fairplay, Chesterfield)*.* Since attending Fairplay, this particular individual has made friends who she also meets outside of the centre for shopping trips and meals. Her diary entry reveals the extent of her socialising and the positive impact on her.

**Visit Number**

**Experiences**

What did you do at Fairplay today? 23/8/12

We went for a walk through
Queens Park. We played on the
Park for 5 mins. Then we walked
to The Pizza hut and I
sat next to my friends, and
we had a buffet and limited
drinks and salad, and for
Pudding I had cookie dough.
after we eat our dinner
we walk back to the
centre, we played some games.

**Feelings**

How did you feel about it? Has it changed your views at all?

I Really enjoyed Pizza hut
and had a great chat with
friends.

## Services

6.10.   A key aim of *myplace* is to increase access to information, advice and guidance (IAG) services for young people, delivered in environments in which young people feel comfortable.  Figure 6.2 demonstrates the services that *myplace* centres are delivering. The majority of centres report that they offer careers advice and mentoring, vocational training, youth health services, alternative and further education, counselling and financial advice. However, across the programme there is great variation in terms of services. The case study sites included centres which have a wide range of services available to young people (such as the Culture Fusion centre in Bradford, and Custom House in Middlesbrough) and those which have no services on-site. Business plans which had been developed on the basis of extensive involvement of service delivery agencies, to develop 'one stop shops' for service provision, had in half of the case study organisations needed to be altered when, in the period between project development and realisation, the anticipated involvement of service delivery agencies had been cut due to reductions in public sector funding.

**Figure 6.2: *myplace* services**
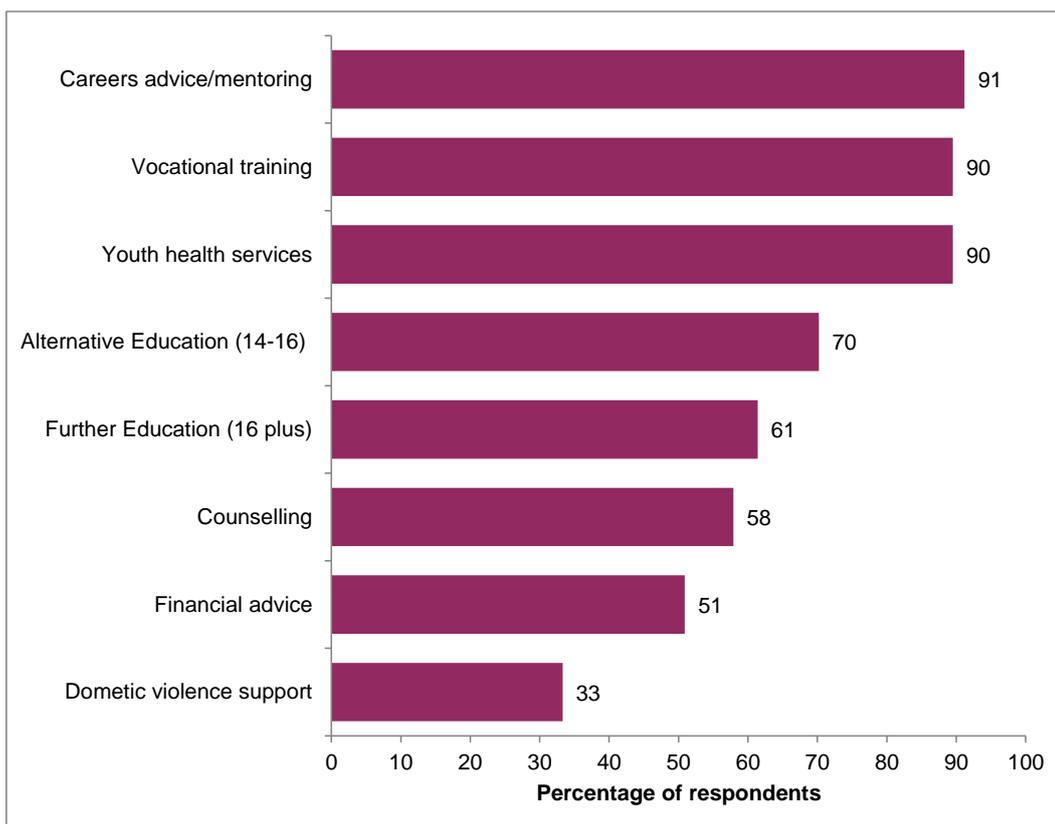


Source: ***myplace*** provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 57 respondents

6.11. Where services are in place, these can differentiate ***myplace*** from other local youth provision. There was general agreement among Custom House staff in Middlesbrough that the *"major difference"* between the Custom House and other youth provision in the area is some of the services on offer. Staff report that they can provide specialist support/treatment and 'diversionary' facilities to reduce risk all in one place. There is also no stigma attached to the centre as young people wouldn't know what services other young people were accessing when they walked in the door (important for instance for access to sexual health services). The Culture Fusion Centre in Bradford offers another example of integrated support services for young people.

**Delivering One Stop-Shop Services – Culture Fusion, Bradford**

The Culture Fusion Centre in Bradford offers a range of services to young people. These include an information and advice service, Prospects (job search support), and Connexions. The Centre also offers progression courses in catering and construction, with access to the local college, a Prince's Trust personal development programme, and Metro training which helps young people with transition from primary to secondary school.

There is also alternative education for children aged 11-16 who are excluded from school:

> *"The aim is always for those children to go back to school, that isn't always the case, sometimes we have them for a little bit longer but it's meant to be a temporary half-way house to see if you can get them back into education"* (Partner agency representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

The centre also houses an environmental department, offering conservation and environmental volunteering opportunities to young people and support for environmental issues to local businesses.

Support work includes, one-to-one work with targeted young people and a PALZ [Play and Learn Zone] group for children who are 8-13. This service works with children at risk of offending, or at risk of not engaging in the school system. The Early Intervention and Psychosis service works with targeted young people who are experiencing psychotic episodes. There is a schools linking network which works predominately with primary schools and the local authority also delivers some youth work at the centre and the Peace Museum run sessions for young people.

An interviewee from Bradford Youth Service commented on benefits of an holistic service:

> *"Our information shop offers everything from benefits advice to help with relationships to a whole range of health services, pregnancy testing, all the employability and training side of things, working in partnership with Prospects, Connexions and Culture Fusion we've been able to offer a broader spectrum of information services. Young people can come in on one particular thing, they might be coming in because they want they're NEETs…but what we find out is their housing is vulnerable, their relationship has broken down, and [they need] a whole variety of other services, so they're getting the full package, which means we can move them quicker into successful outcomes. It's a constant support because the shop is open on a daily basis, it's a ground floor shop, they have their own entrance, there's no complicated systems to get access to the staff, they can just walk in, it's a shop floor as any other retail unit is a shop floor and that's worked really well"* (Local authority representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

6.12. In centres where service delivery is taking place, staff commented on the benefits that this brings. At the CRMZ rooms in Halton, evening provision for young people focuses on social activities. In the daytime, the centre provides access to services. A number of agencies are on site, offering a wide range of services: youth justice, substance misuse support, youth advocacy, sexual health provision and Connexions. One to one rooms are free for local agencies to use, providing a neutral venue in which workers can meet with young people, and which are used by youth offending and mental health teams.  Young volunteers at the centre said:

*"Because there are so many different organisations in one building its quite easy to be signposted to the right place and everyone knows everyone and you know what work they are doing, and there are plenty of posters and leaflets"* (Young volunteer, CRMZ, Halton).

*"I think you need a healthy balance of both, the activities are designed to help, they are fun but they are educational as well, so long as they're not boring then I think striking a healthy balance is needed"* (Young volunteer, CRMZ, Halton).

6.13.   Young people at the OPEN centre in Norwich reported they had been happy with the help and support they had received. They took on board the advice and contacted recommended services. *"I was able to unload everything and felt better afterwards"* *"you can unload even if you have just had a bad day"*.  Similar feelings were reported at Parkfield as the diary extract shows.



**Experiences**
What did you do at Parkfield today?

Today I got some support about my family.

**Feelings**
How did you feel about it? Has it changed your views at all?

this made me much happier + took alot of weight of my chest.

6.14.   At one of the case study centres, Blackburn Youth Zone, there are no support services available on site, but there are strong links with a links with a local health centre which runs provision specifically for young people. Young People from the *myplace* centre development group worked with the architect for the new health centre as a 'spin off' from *myplace*.  The work was facilitated by a joint worker who is now the participation officer for the Youth Zone. Services located at or delivering via the Everybody Centre are occasionally 'invited in' to Youth Zone to deliver specific sessions in response to young people's needs. The separation of services from the centre is central to its ethos of being young-person led and keeping the centre free from *"being driven by top-down targets"*. A high staff/volunteer to young person ratio is maintained so that staff can engage with young people informally and talk to them and are able to identify issues that emerge. Youth workers report that as they get to know the young people they can identify when there are problems and respond appropriately. Initially, young people are encouraged to discuss issues with staff who have counselling and support experience. Young people are then signposted and

referred to other services. "*Young people, particularly the most marginalised, struggle to cope with the diversity of relationships* (involved in access to multiple services) *we avoid all that as much as we can*" (Staff interview, Blackburn Youth Zone, Blackburn with Darwen).

6.15. However, despite extensive provision across the programme relatively small numbers of young people are accessing advice and guidance.

6.16. Figure 6.3 demonstrates that amongst services the 30 centres responding to the follow-up centre survey, the majority of centres have less than 25 people per week accessing each of the services available, the exceptions are health services, careers advice and vocational training.

6.17. Using information from the centre surveys it is possible to estimate the absolute numbers of young people accessing Information, advice and guidance, and as a proportion of overall attendees. This information is contained in Table 6.1. It suggests that between two and eight per cent of the total numbers of young people attending *myplace* centres are accessing the information, advice and guidance services identified.

**Table 6.1: Estimated numbers of young people accessing *myplace* services on a weekly basis**

|  | Percentage of young people | Min | Mid | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alternative Education (14-16) | 7% | 996 | 1,382 | 1,768 |
| Further Education (16 plus) | 4% | 624 | 894 | 1,164 |
| Youth health services | 8% | 1,203 | 1,624 | 2,044 |
| Careers advice/mentoring | 8% | 1,177 | 1,629 | 2,080 |
| Financial advice | 3% | 435 | 654 | 874 |
| Counselling | 5% | 583 | 909 | 1,235 |
| Domestic violence support | 2% | 253 | 405 | 557 |
| Vocational training | 8% | 1,240 | 1,641 | 2,041 |
| Referral to other services | 7% | 913 | 1,304 | 1,695 |

**Figure 6.3: Estimated number of young people accessing *myplace* services during a typical week**
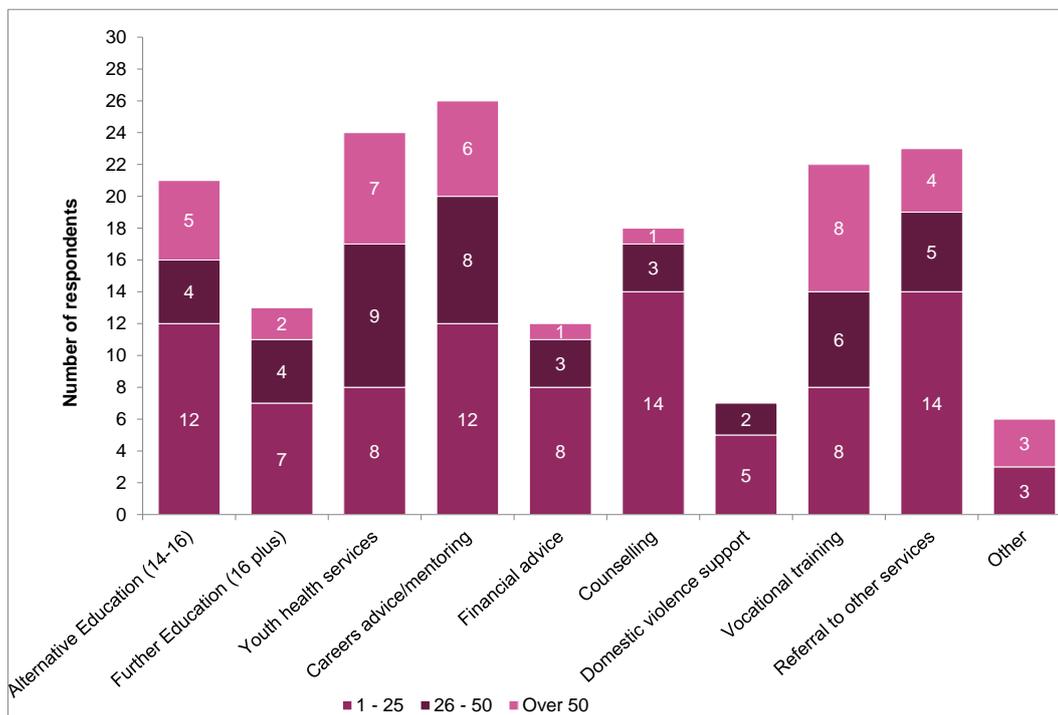


Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 30 respondents

## Charges

6.18. Charging and pricing structures vary across case study centres but all centres keep prices low in order to maximise access for young people and generally, prices were thought to be affordable. Some centres have membership fees (e.g. Custom House, Parkfield, BYZ). Others operate a pay as you go system for non-members, and others offer activities free of charge to young people (CRMZ, TAB Centre Plus, Culture Fusion).

6.19. Where membership fees are in place these vary from 50p per visit to £12 per year.

6.20. Analysis presented in Chapter Eleven suggests that charges and membership fees contribute a small percentage of overall centre income (contributing five per cent and one per cent respectively to non-local authority income in 2012/13). Nevertheless,

interviewees in the case study centres expressed mixed views about both the desirability of charging young people for activities, and the appropriate amount to charge. Some interviewees expressed concern that entry charges can sometimes be exclusionary, particularly for young people and families with low incomes, whist others held opposing views and thought that young people would still be willing to pay, even if prices were higher.

6.21.   All the centres that were charging for activities were charging at substantially lower rates than those that might be paid to access equivalent facilities and activities on a commercial basis, and the activities were heavily subsidised for all groups. This is important in encouraging young people to attend centres. There was no evidence to suggest that these charges were acting as a barrier to access, and all the young people that we spoke to felt that the centres were offering good value for money, particularly when compared to charges for other, similar provision:

>   *"Nothing compared to many drama courses in Oxford it's a minimal amount"* (Young person focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

>   *"Three friends of mine come here and they said that it's really good because there's 15 different rooms and that and 50p that's like a bargain to come here and do what you want"* (Young person focus group, BYZ, Blackburn).

6.22.   A trustee of Fairplay whose daughter previously accessed services at Fairplay, iterated that, *"the service that Fairplay offers is way, way more cost effective and economical and cheaper than anything we can get (elsewhere)…they offer tremendous value for money".*

6.23.   Young people attending DCAS, also in Chesterfield, think the prices are very reasonable for the quality of services, facilities and activities they receive. One remarked *"The equipment is really good for the price you pay"* and according to another young person, *"Drama sessions cost £2 which is very reasonable because a lot is learnt in that time, such as creative performance"* and this is cheaper compared to drama provision elsewhere, *"A lot of the other places are quite expensive to go to, you're talking about sort of £30 a month for drama".*

6.24.   The potential for charges to act as a barrier to access did not emerge as an issue during focus groups carried out with young people who were not regularly attending **myplace** centres (see paragraphs 7.35 to 7.41).

6.25.   However, some centres have recognised that charges might disadvantage young people on low incomes, and have introduced flexible charging structures, according to user and group characteristics. At the Youth Campus in Stoke on Trent, clients of North Staffordshire YMCA pay the lowest prices, and these are subsidised by income earned from charges to other users. And at the Pegasus Theatre in Oxford a concessionary programme is offered to young people from low income backgrounds, and the families who are better off are invited to pay extra, on a voluntary basis. This avoids the necessity for means-testing, which the staff feel would be stigmatising.

6.26.   In the case study centres which are not currently charging for activities, interviewees reported that these policies were under review, as the need to generate revenue income has become more pressing. At one centre, for instance, most sessions are free, and there are charges for a few sessions such as cooking, to pay for ingredients *"just to cover the costs of things that we would have to buy in additionally to run those sessions, I think it's a pound or two pounds. We're really keen that people who want to access this place can...some of the young people don't have a lot of money, so that's an issue that we're trying to keep on top of and still looking at*

*how we can generate some income to cover the costs of running it...This is something we're looking at"* (Staff interview).

## Opening Times

6.27.    There is also variation in terms of the opening hours of centres.  In most centres opening hours are extensive in order to maximise access opportunities for young people. But there are examples of centres which are opening less frequently than originally intended. In the case study sites there were examples of centres which were open to young people for 365 days a year, and those which were offering open access sessions for two hours on two nights per week.  In the latter case, the centre had struggled to attract high enough numbers of young people to justify longer opening hours.

6.28.    In one case study centre, opening hours had been cut as part of local authority budget savings and the centre now closes on Sunday and Monday nights. Youth workers reported that they had been consulted about the best nights for closure and suggested that other nights were less busy. However, the decision was made by the local authority to close on Sunday and Monday nights. This has caused some tension with young people and youth workers, and youth workers reported they felt that their views were not listened to and valued. One respondent reported that he thought staff involvement in the decision was tokenistic.

6.29.    Holiday opening is important to staff and young people, and in the case study centres a range of holiday provision was running. The benefit of Fairplay opening during the holidays is acknowledged by staff, as young people *"can come in the holidays when they haven't got anything to do"* (Staff interview, Fairplay, Chesterfield).

6.30.    Despite generally extensive opening hours, young people interviewed for the evaluation often stated that they wanted different opening times, usually longer hours on week nights. Shortened opening times at weekends were also seen as problematic by young people, particularly closure on Sundays when they felt they needed the provision most of all. This suggests that, although there will be a need in all centres to balance the needs of young people against available resources, young people would value the opportunity to have a greater influence over the times that ***myplace*** centres are open.

6.31.    Young people at one centre reported that they would like different opening times. The centre opens late on weekdays until 9pm and young people felt this was late for a school night; they get home late and then are tired for school the next day. However, at weekends the centre closes at 6pm and young people would like it open later on Friday and Saturday nights until 9pm. Young people articulated their disappointment that the centre is closed on two nights per week. They reported that they just sat outside with nothing to do. Young people explained they knew why the building was closed and understood the need to generate income but it was confusing when youth workers were in the building and young people were not allowed in. Young people also reported that it was important for them to understand the reasons for closure even if they didn't agree with it. Engaging young people in discussions about the use of buildings for income generation purposes offers a way to address these tensions.

6.32.    Similar issues were reported elsewhere:

*"We need more Sunday provision, it doesn't open anymore. It's a full day when kids are off school"* (Young volunteer).

*"On a Saturday people will ask if its open tomorrow and they get told no'* (Young person interview)

6.33.    This chapter has outlined the activities and services available to young people, and the opening hours and charging policies of ***myplace*** centres. The evidence suggests that the wide range of activities on offer is valued by young people, and sports and social activities are particularly appreciated. There are variations in the extent to which direct access to services are offered by ***myplace*** centres and in some areas plans for one-stop shop provision have been affected by cuts in local provision. In other cases local service providers have been located in ***myplace*** centres to offer comprehensive provision.  The low charges implemented by centres allow young people to access the facilities at substantially lower than market rates and do not appear to be a barrier to access. Although opening hours are generally extensive, young people in some centres report that they would like the centres to be open for longer, or at different times.

6.34.    The next chapter looks at the numbers of young people using ***myplace*** provision and the centres strategies for engaging disadvantaged young people and involving young people in decision making.

# Involving young people

**7**

7.1.    Chapter Four highlighted the extensive engagement of young people in the planning and development of *myplace* centres. This chapter reviews evidence on the ways in which centres are continuing to involve young people, both in positive activities and in on-going decision making processes. It also looks at the strategies employed for engaging with vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. The chapter begins by providing evidence on the numbers and characteristics of young people currently attending provision.

## Numbers of young people attending the centres

### Figure 7.1: Number of young people accessing *myplace* centres each week
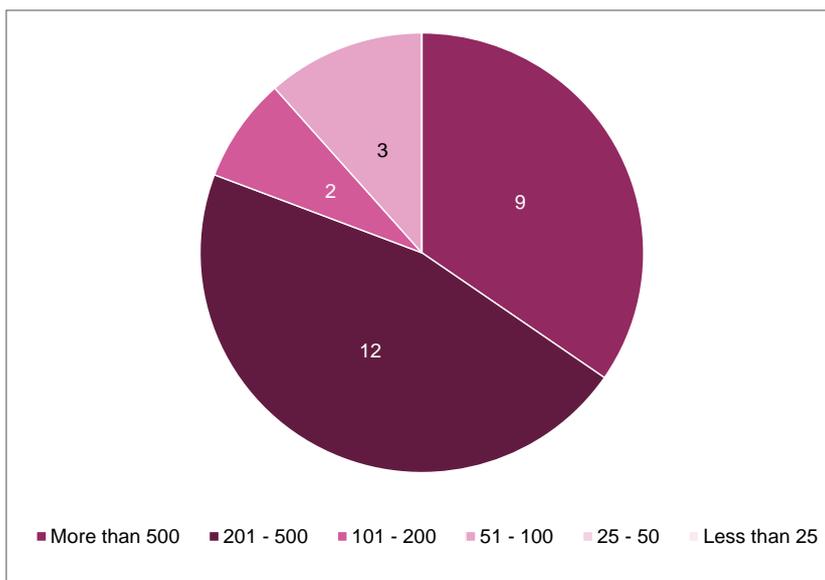


Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 26 respondents (facilities which are open)

7.2.    Figure 7.1 indicates that twelve *myplace* centres are accessed by between 201 and 500 young people each week.  Nine centres are used by more than 500 young people each week. Of the 26 centres that responded to both provider surveys four had more users per week at the time of the second survey compared to the first, and one had fewer users.

7.3.    It is possible to estimate the number of young people currently accessing *myplace* centres based on the numbers of centres open at the time of reporting.  Table 7.1 contains an estimation of the numbers of young people currently accessing *myplace* provision each week. This is based on data from the follow-up centre survey extrapolated to cover the 53 centres that are open at the time of reporting.

**Table 7.1: Estimated number of young people accessing *myplace* centres on a weekly basis**

|  | Estimated number |
|---|---|
| Min | 14,716 |
| Mid | 20,358 |
| Max | 26,000 |

**Figure 7.2: How often young people went to a *myplace* or youth centre last month**
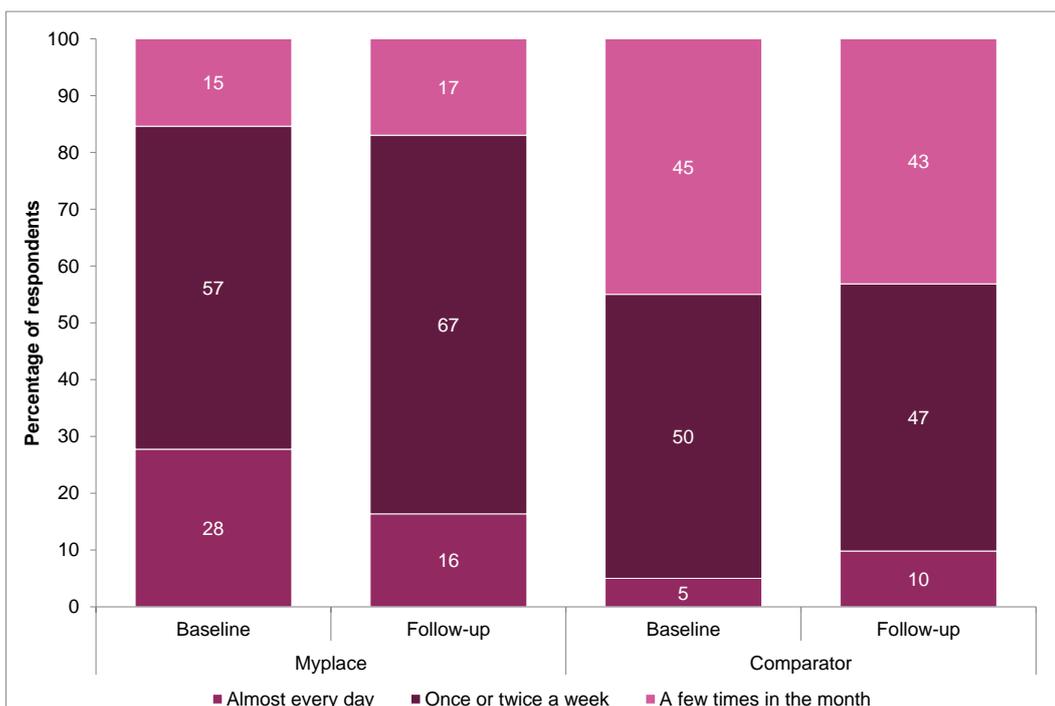


Source: *myplace*/comparator baseline and follow-up surveys
Base: 1,222 *myplace* baseline, 159 *myplace* follow-up, 120 comparator baseline, 51 comparator follow-up (respondents who attended a *myplace* or youth centre at least a few times a month)

7.4.    Evidence suggests that *myplace* centres have attracted new users. Eighty one per cent (n=1177) of respondents to the *myplace* baseline survey had not been to another youth club/group or community centre which offered organised activities prior to attending a *myplace* centre.

7.5.    They are also encouraging young people to attend youth centres more frequently (see Figure 7.2). Eighty three per cent of young people completing the follow-up myplace survey attended the centre at least once or twice a week, compared to 57 per cent of young people completing the follow-up survey in comparator areas.

7.6.    There are examples in the case studies of centres which have exceeded expectations in relation to the numbers of young people attending and those which could provide support to greater numbers of young people if facilities and resources allowed. For instance, the business plan for the Blackburn Youth Zone, in Blackburn with Darwen, predicted 1,500 members within its first year of operation. This was exceeded within 12 weeks of opening and the centre currently has 2,500 members. Although the Centre Manager conceded that the original target was 'conservative' and based on 'guesswork' derived from examples of similar centres in other areas, the centre has succeeded in attracting large numbers of young people within a short

space of time. A number of factors were felt to have contributed, including a programme of 'soft openings' prior to the official opening, which brought groupings of young people from local schools into the building to try out the facilities; a high profile within the town (both in terms of location, and in support from the local authority and business community), and the opportunity that the centre provided for young people from the age of eight upwards to access a range of social activities, at low cost, for several hours on every day of the year, which was not comparable with anything else on offer in the town. And in Oxford, staff at the Pegasus Youth Theatre, which provides performing arts and production classes for children and young people from the age of six upwards, reported that they ran a full and comprehensive programme of activities but that local demand always outstrips what they are able to deliver.

7.7. In other cases it was suggested by both staff and young people that centres are underutilised, and that they have struggled to attract sufficient numbers of young people:

*"I think it's underused; everyone would love to see it used. It's not the staff though; it's hard to reach out to young people"* (Young volunteer).

*"I think consistency is something that we struggle with here. On a session by session basis we never know how many young people are going to turn up and some weeks we have 20, 25 people and it's thriving and the next week you might only have three or four"* (Staff interview).

7.8. Maintaining young people's involvement was also highlighted a problem for one case study centre, particularly when it was reliant on the local authority to provide activities:

*"What happened it was like a rollercoaster of kids, when I first started we had pretty much how it was tonight [four young people] or worse, sometimes no kids. Then we had a steady growth and we started attracting around 30 kids on average, and then it started to dwindle because they all wanted to do sports. And this is when we contacted our partners and asked 'will you provide sports coaches for our kids?' and then they were so slow in responding"* (Staff interview).

7.9. In these centres, a number of reasons were suggested by interviewees for under usage. These included a lack of awareness of the centre among young people, a lack of a distinct identity, the impact of a settling in period, and trying to finalise the offer to young people.

7.10. It is likely that all these factors are relevant, but critical factors include awareness amongst young people, and providing activities for which there is local demand. Those centres which have been successful in attracting young people have a high profile locally. Approaches to marketing and publicity are particularly important in this context, including good relationships with local schools, and the effective use of social media. They are also providing social activities of a comparable or sometimes higher quality, but at a significantly lower cost, than those available through local commercial providers.

7.11. Some centres have addressed these issues proactively. The Parkfield centre in Torbay, for instance, has employed a marketing manager to raise awareness with young people further afield in the bay but also with potential customers and community groups. Young people have taken up the task of actively promoting the activities on offer at Parkfield in local schools mainly through peer promotion, and members of the Young People's Management Board are undertaking promotional events at school assemblies.

## Access

7.12. An additional factor in attracting young people to provision is access. Seventy three per cent of *myplace* centres are located in central urban areas, close to public transport networks which make them accessible to young people from across local authority areas and beyond. Figure 7.4 demonstrates that 63 per cent of centres reported that their catchment area is the local authority, and 31 per cent anticipate that young people will travel from beyond local authority boundaries.

7.13. Figure 7.3 confirms that young people attending *myplace* provision are more likely than those in comparator areas to travel to access provision. Forty two per cent of young people in the participant group travel more than 20 minutes walking distance to access *myplace* provision, compared to 28 per cent of those in the comparator areas who were travelling from further than 20 minutes walking distance to access other youth centres.

**Figure 7.3: Distance to *myplace* or other youth provision (*myplace* centre and comparator areas)**
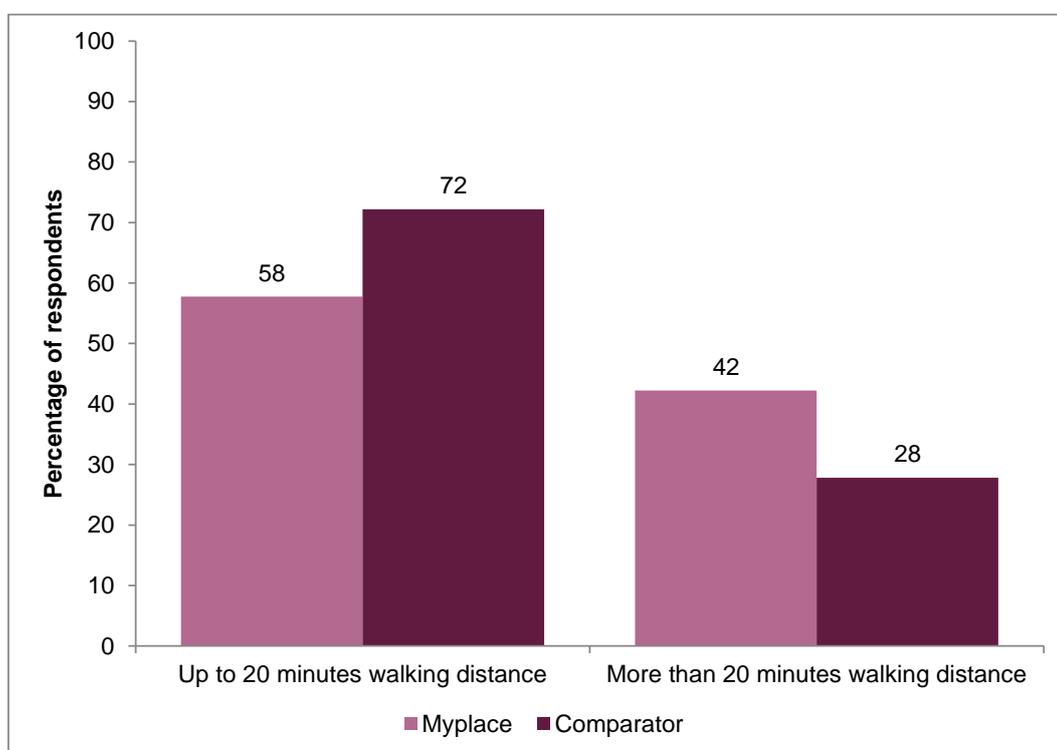


Source: *myplace*/comparator baseline surveys
Base: 1,238 *myplace*, 331 comparator (valid responses)

**Figure 7.4: Catchment areas of *myplace* projects**
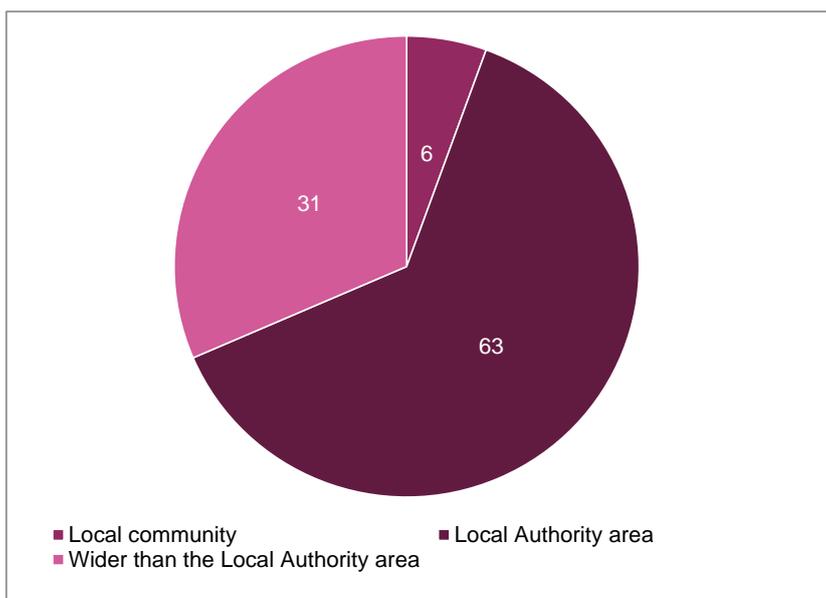


Source: ***myplace*** provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 54 respondents (valid responses)

7.14. The willingness of young people to travel to provision was confirmed in the case study areas. ***myplace*** centres in Blackburn, Enfield, Norwich, Chesterfield and Oxford, for example, all attracted young people from a wide area in some cases across boroughs. The comments from young people taking part in focus groups at ***myplace*** centres in Oxford and Blackburn are illustrative:

### *Oxford*

*"I live not nearby. It's almost half an hour car journey in traffic"* (Young person focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford)

*"I live in Oxford but far away"* (Young person focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

*"I cycle. It's the other side of town to me. I cycle late at night to here, it's cold but I feel fine, just strap on some lights and go."* (Young person focus group, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

### *Blackburn*

*"I live all the way in Darwen. I get here by car"* (Young person focus group, BYZ).

7.15. Other centres are more locally focussed, although young people travel there to access specific activities or events. The majority of young people who attend the Parkfield centre in Torbay, for example, live in Paignton. There were exceptions however, with one young person and his carers travelling about 30 minutes journey by car. In Norwich, staff at the OPEN centre reported a similar situation with the majority of their users coming from within a five mile radius but users of some of the specific activities and those attending music events, come from across Norfolk.

7.16. Given the widespread expectation that young people will travel to access ***myplace*** provision, good public transport links, and safe routes, are vital. In Middlesbrough staff at the Custom House reported that during the summer young people could cycle or walk to the centre but this was not appropriate on dark nights in winter months. A

lack of lighting outside the building on a path to the main road is also of concern at Parkfield.

7.17.  Some of the case study centres were facing challenging issues in these aspects.  A major issue in Halton is the geographical split between Widnes and Runcorn. Because the CRMZ centre is in Widnes it is difficult for young people from Runcorn to access. The bridge between the two areas was mentioned time and time again in interviews as being a (physical and psychological) barrier to widening access to young people from across the area. Staff and young people reported that the bridge will often shut for periods and can get very busy. Transport across the bridge can be unreliable and potentially unsafe in the evening:

> *"It's not always easy to access young people who live in Runcorn, we have issues with the bridge and transport. Sometimes young people can't afford transport over the bridge. They also stop the bridge for half an hour as well so if you get there sometimes you have to wait for half an hour."* (Young volunteer, CRMZ, Halton)

7.18.  The prohibitive nature of public transport emerged strongly as an issue in other case study areas. In Torbay, Norwich and Oxford, for instance, young people said that public transport is expensive, and that this sometimes limits their attendance or that of other young people:

> *"I commute. It takes about an hour and a quarter on the bus. It's quite expensive. When I was doing youth assistance I spent every penny of my wages on the bus fare."* (Young volunteer, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

7.19.  Centres had developed strategies to address transport problems, including working with bus and rail providers to extend routes or provide discounted travel to *myplace* users, and encouraging volunteers to provide lifts to young people.

## Engaging disadvantaged young people

7.20.  Figure 7.5 illustrates the wide range of groups of young people that *myplace* centres report that they are targeting.  However, there is no consistent information across the programme in relation to the characteristics of young people attending *myplace* provision and it is not possible therefore to assess whether centres have been successful in attracting these groups.  The lack of data in the characteristics of users is a problem for *myplace* centres, both in understanding their users, but also in demonstrating their impact (see Chapter Nine).

**Figure 7.5: Target groups**
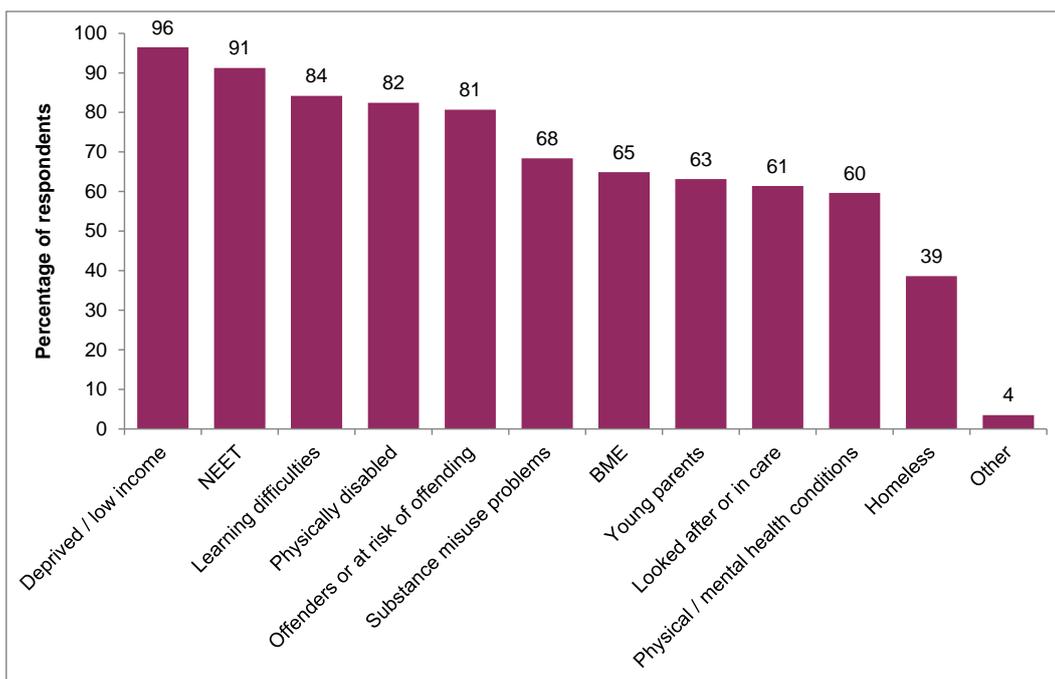


Source: *myplace* provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 57 respondents

7.21. There is specific provision within the programme to meet the needs of young people with disabilities. The Fairplay centre in Chesterfield offers specialist provision for young people with disabilities and additional needs. The organisation has a 20 year track record of working with disabled children, young people, and their families. In Blackburn, the Youth Zone offers inclusive activities for young people up to the age of 25 years. Seventy members have disabilities and attend sessions for disabled young people, currently held on Sundays in Partnership with the local authority Children and Young People's Service (CYPS). Thirty five of 70 members with disabilities also attend open sessions.

7.22. There is also emphasis within the programme on providing support to homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness. An example is offered by the case study *myplace* centre in Stoke on Trent, which provides residential accommodation alongside access to services and recreational opportunities, including a large sports facility and climbing wall.

7.23. Centres also specifically target young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) or those at risk of exclusion from school. Alternative curriculum programmes were provided in the case study centres at Parkfield in Torbay, Pegasus Youth Theatre in Oxford, and the DCAS centre in Chesterfield, where young people were often referred to the centre by youth workers and Multi-Agency Teams.

> **Engaging Young People at risk of exclusion from school - Pegasus Theatre, Oxford**
>
> The Pegasus Youth Theatre in Oxford runs a project called *'added extra',* providing performing arts courses for vulnerable young people excluded or at risk of exclusion from school and young people in care, or offenders. Young people are referred from school or the local Pupil Referral Unit.
>
> Projects start with a debriefing session for young the people, in which they are given the opportunity to talk about any issues bothering them. Young people attend a block of sessions, which lead up to a performance. These sessions involve low numbers as the young people need a higher level of support than the core creative learning projects. The aim is to support them and then push and challenge them towards the other core projects that the centre delivers.

7.24. Those centres which provide a high level of support services, are reaching disadvantaged young people through the nature of the programmes that they run. The DCAS centre in Chesterfield, for instance, targets young people who are in care, those that have problems with drugs or alcohol, and young people who are known to schools or youth services to require particular support.

Visit Number 2

**Experiences**

What did you do at DCAS today?

*During my Alternate Education I spent my day editing together video footage of a play that Dcas had put on at the pomegranate theatre in Chesterfield.*

**Feelings**

How did you feel about it? Has it changed your views at all?

*I had fun, it's something that I've done before. I learnt a lot about the software I was using, and I was able to do something that I enjoyed.*

7.25. In another centre which emphasises service provision staff acknowledge that this has created challenges in attracting young people who are not service users, and that this is impacting on the degree to which the centre is operating as a youth centre:

*"There is a gap targeting the generic youth...we are very good at engaging with the disadvantaged and the hard to reach. But we don't have a core user group of people who come in and it's just their youth centre. There are people who stay because they've been on programmes in the day time so they'll stay in an evening but we haven't really marketed and developed that sort of core group who will be our 'youth'."* (Staff interview).

### Involving young people in decision making

7.26.    As discussed in Chapter Four, there was widespread involvement of young people in the developmental stages of the programme. This chapter looks at the on-going involvement of young people in decision making. Figure 7.6 demonstrates that the majority of *myplace* centres seek to involve young people in different ways across different aspects of provision. For instance, the majority of centres (51 per cent) report that young people led on the design of the facility, and 88 per cent of centres report that young people lead or are involved in decision-making around the activities and facilities provided.  Sixty five per cent report that young people are involved in decision making on aspects of income generation.

**Figure 7.6: To what extent are young people involved in decision making processes around the following issues associated with the *myplace* project?**
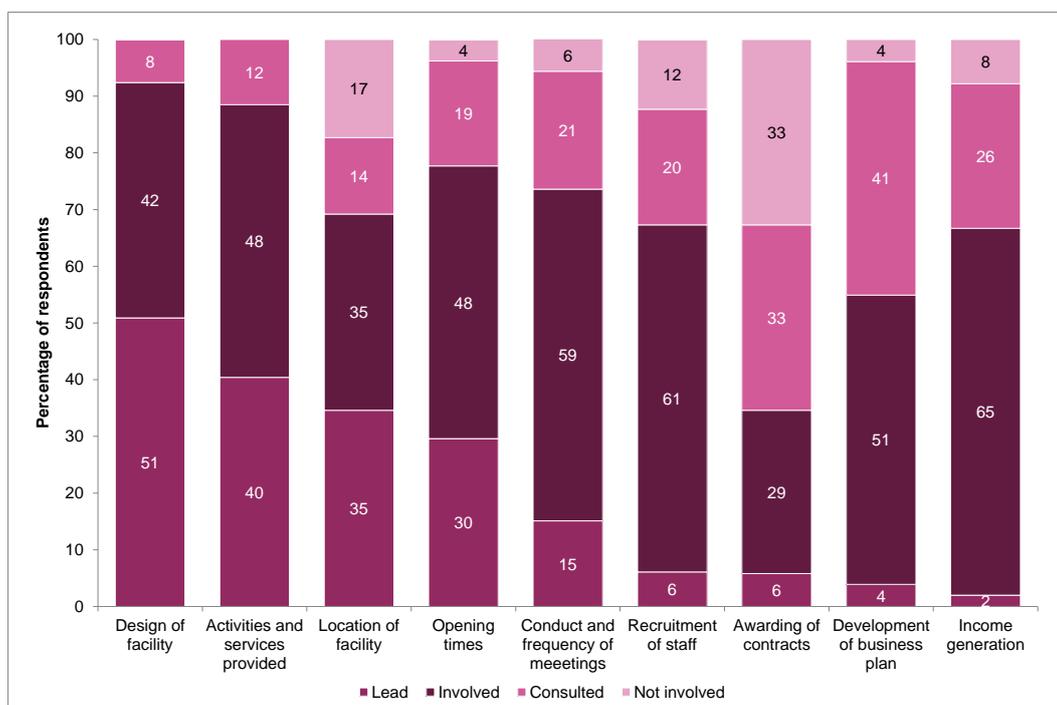


Source: *myplace* provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 57 respondents

7.27.    Figures 7.7 demonstrates that amongst young people attending *myplace* centres, 38 per cent of those completing the follow-up participant survey have been involved in decisions about how their centre looks or works, suggesting that the intensive involvement of young people in project planning has not been maintained on a longer term basis. In some ways this is not surprising: the involvement of young people in the early stages of the programme was resource intensive, and although it was experienced positively by those young people involved, it is likely that many of them are no longer attending *myplace* centres, as they have grown older and moved on. However, despite the positive reports by centre of the extent to which they seek to involve young people, 66 per cent of respondents to the follow-up participant survey reported that they would like to me more involved in decision making (Figure 7.8).

**Figure 7.7: Whether young people have been involved in decisions that affect how their Centre looks or works?**
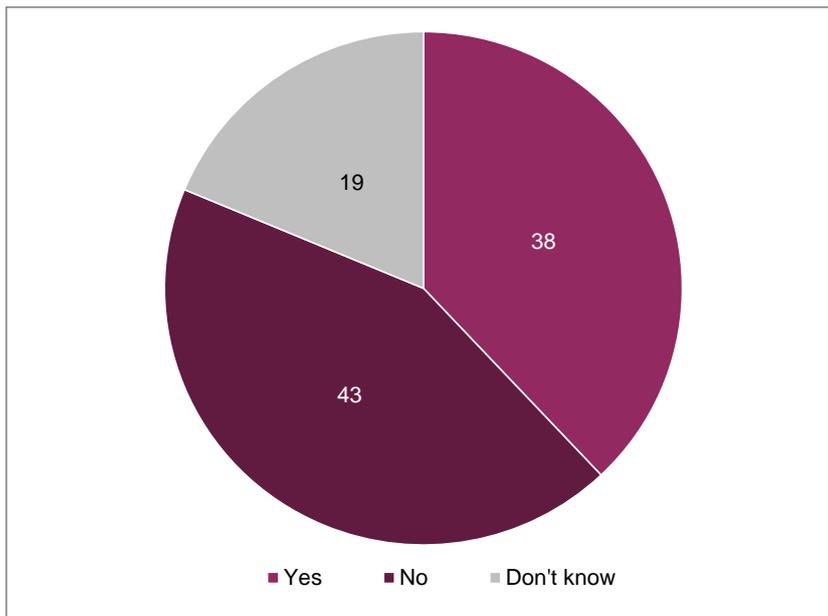


Source: follow-up *myplace* survey
Base: 187 (valid responses)

**Figure 7.8: Whether young people would like to be more involved in decisions that affect how their Centre looks or works?**
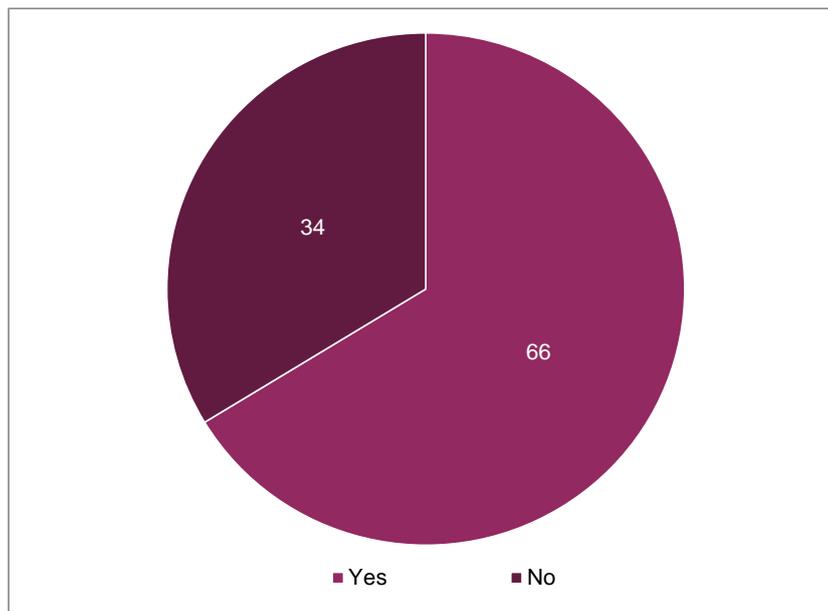


Source: follow-up *myplace* survey
Base: 178 (valid responses)

7.28. Where young people are involved in decisions they are confident that that their views and opinions are listened to. Ninety one per cent of young people completing the follow-up participant survey who had been involved in decision making agreed that their views and opinions about how their centre looks or works have been taken seriously (Figure 7.9).

**Figure 7.9: To what extent young people agree or disagree that their views or opinions about how their Centre looks or works have been taken seriously?**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
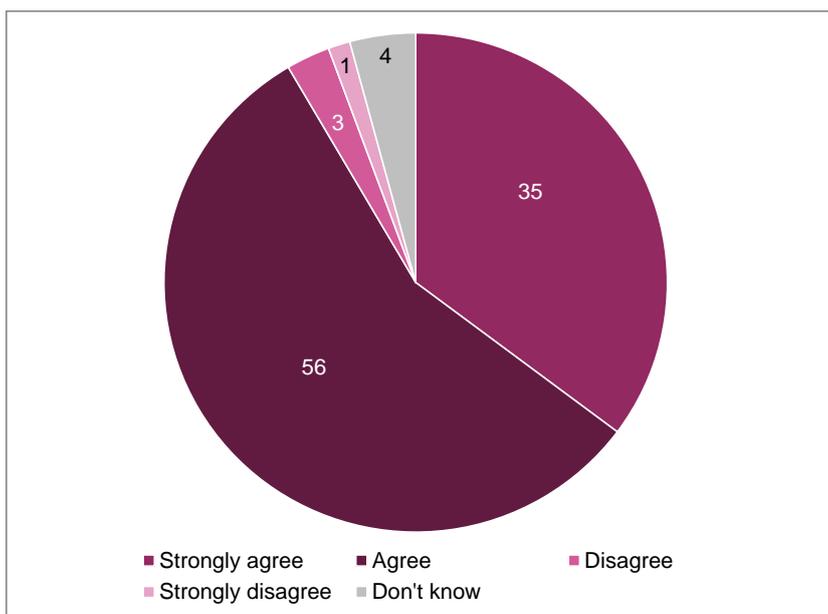
Source: follow-up *myplace* survey
Base: 71 (valid responses: *myplace* respondents who had been involved indecisions)

7.29.    Across the case study sites, staff in *myplace* centres recognise the benefits of continuing to engage young people in decision making, and are implementing a strategies to facilitate this. In all the case study centres young people are influencing decisions around the activities provided. Examples are the DCAS and Fairplay
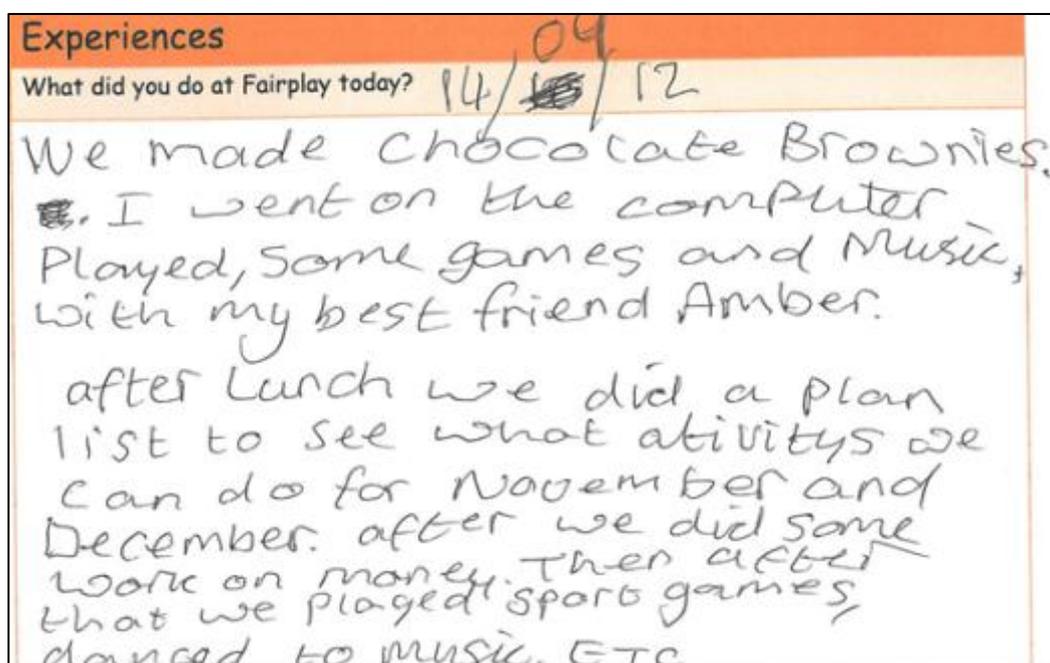


centres in Chesterfield, and the TAB centre in Enfield. The diary extract indicates that young people are actively involved in choosing and planning their activities at Fairplay.

7.30.    Young people accessing the CRMZ centre in Halton and the TAB centre in Enfield , confirmed that they were confident that their opinions were listened to:

> *"We have loads of contributions, we can give ideas on where we'd like to go in the holidays and stuff and say there's not enough stuff going on "* (Young person interview, TAB Centre Plus, Enfield).

> *"I know that if I said something, my voice would be heard"* (Young person interview, CRMZ, Halton).

7.31.   There are examples amongst the case studies of centres which have established mechanisms to engage young people fully in decision making across all aspects of provision. At the Pegasus Theatre in Oxford two young people sit on the Board of Trustees, and have full voting rights. An adult Trustee has responsibility for young people and governance and chairs a young people and governance sub-committee which focuses on diversity, and engaging hard to reach groups in the activities of the centre. There is also a members committee, which is open to all young people aged 10 years or over who are involved in activities at the centre. The Committee meets once a month, and currently has 35 members. Young people work with staff to influence many aspects of provision including marketing and promotion (young people have designed a brochure and produce a regular magazine); staffing (young people are involved in the recruitment of senior staff); deciding on activities and menus for the café.

7.32.   Young people participating in interviews and focus groups confirmed their influence:

> *"Definitely with things like members committee… they really try as hard as they can to make it youth orientated. They ask us about specific things that we want, we organise our own events. It makes you think that it's your own"* (Young person focus group Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

7.33.   However, interviewees also pointed out that it was important that young people felt supported in decision making, and the expertise and experience of staff was valued by young people, for its ability to introduce new ideas to young people, and to facilitate different approaches.

7.34.   Other centres were working towards these levels of sustained involvement. At the OPEN centre in Norwich, for instance, young people are involved in a Youth Forum
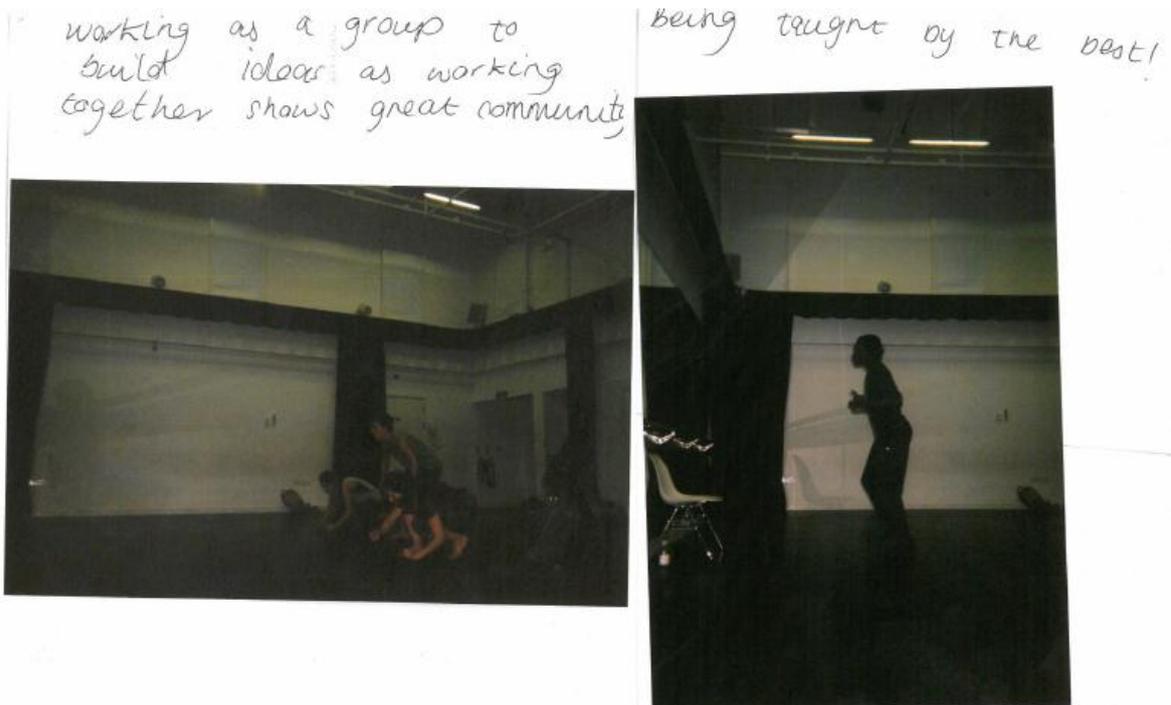
which meets with the Centre Manager every two weeks. A longer term aim is develop and train two young people to sit on the Trustee Board. In this centre, and others which have less established formal structures for engagement, plans had been delayed whilst capital project issues were addressed.

## Barriers to involvement

7.35.   Three focus groups were held with young people who were not regular attenders at *myplace* centres, to discuss the young people's views on the *myplace* provision, and the reasons why they did not attend more regularly. Focus groups were conducted with young people attending other youth centres close to *myplace* centres in two of the case study areas: Torbay and Chesterfield, and an additional group was held in Rotherham, with young people attending a youth centre close to the *myplace* centre there.

7.36.   Thirty four young people in total participated in these groups. Findings are presented under three sub-headings: awareness, access and restrictions.

### *Awareness*

7.37.   Awareness of *myplace* provision is high amongst young people living in communities near the centres; many of the young people participating in the groups had heard of their local *myplace* centres and had attended open events, or participated in specific activities or made use of particular facilities there. In Torbay, for example, a number of young people reported that they had used the BMX track and skate park at the Parkfield centre. And in Rotherham young people had attended workshops (including drumming, nail art and DJing) and advice sessions at the *myplace* centre. In Rotherham too, local youth workers often took young people from neighbouring centres to the *myplace* centre to attend events, and when a local youth centre had closed temporarily, youth workers ran open sessions from the *myplace* building for a short period of time.  In Chesterfield, less young people knew of the *myplace* centre, despite the fact that people posters were up in their school and youth centre. Only two young people had attended activities at the *myplace* centre.

7.38.   The young people were impressed by the facilities and activities on offer at *myplace*, remarking that the buildings are 'big, new and colourful', and that they offer lots of rooms for activities, which are appealing. Young people using the skate and BMX tracks at Parkfield commented that they are 'great'.

### *Access*

7.39.   In Torbay there were issues relating to the cost of travel to the centre for young people living in neighbouring areas, and some reluctance to travel across natural area boundaries to access provision in another area.

### *Restrictions*

7.40.   In Rotherham, young people valued the familiarity of the centre that they were already attending and the comfortable and flexible space that it offered to them, which allowed them to move freely around and to engage in a range of activities according to interest. This was contrasted by the young people with the *myplace* centre, which was felt to provide only specific activities at scheduled times, and that if young people got bored with these activities, or did not want to do them, there were unlikely to be alternatives. Some young people also reported that they did not know what sessions were on at the *myplace* centre, and one participant remarked on problems with access, when bouncers on the door at the *myplace* centre had not

allowed him in because he could not prove his age eligibility for the session (in this particular case young people needed to prove that they were under 16 years of age).

7.41.   In Chesterfield some of the young people participating in the focus group were not aware of the *myplace* centre but reported that they would be interested in the activities on offer there.  However, they also reported that they liked the familiarity and flexibility of the club that they were attending, and were concerned that they would not get on with other young people at the *myplace* centre.

7.42.   This chapter has reported on how the centres have engaged young people. It has suggested that there is wide variation in the numbers of young people attending *myplace* provision, and although some centres have been very successful in attracting young people, others have struggled to maintain sufficient numbers. High levels of awareness, good access to facilities, and the ability to provide activities which are responsive to local demand are important factors in encouraging young people to attend *myplace* provision. There is widespread emphasis on engaging disadvantaged young people but the lack of information on the characteristics of centre users means that it is not known to what extent disadvantaged groups are reached.  The chapter has also reviewed evidence which suggests that the on-going involvement of young people in decision making is not as intensive as that which characterised the project development phase, and there is a desire amongst young people attending the centres to be more involved in decision making. Centres are at different stages in implementing strategies for involving young people, with some having well developed structures and processes, and others working towards these. Providing opportunities for young people to engage in decision making in a variety of ways, including informal discussion and representation at boards or management groups ensures that young people's views are represented across all aspects of provision. Where young people are involved in decision making they value the opportunity, and report positively on its impact on their views of provision.

7.43.   The next chapter discusses the centres' approaches to working in partnership

# Working in Partnership

8

8.1.    Partnership working is central to the ***myplace*** programme, and Chapter Four has highlighted widespread collaboration across sectors in the development and early stages of the programme. This chapter looks at on-going involvement in partnership working across the ***myplace*** programme, and explores the experience and benefits of working with service providers and other youth services, as well as relationships which involve agencies in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

## Partnership operation

8.2.    Most ***myplace*** centres have a range of project partners involved in a variety of partnership arrangements. Figure 8.1 outlines the different partners involved in delivering and planning ***myplace*** services and activities.

**Figure 8.1: Partnership working**
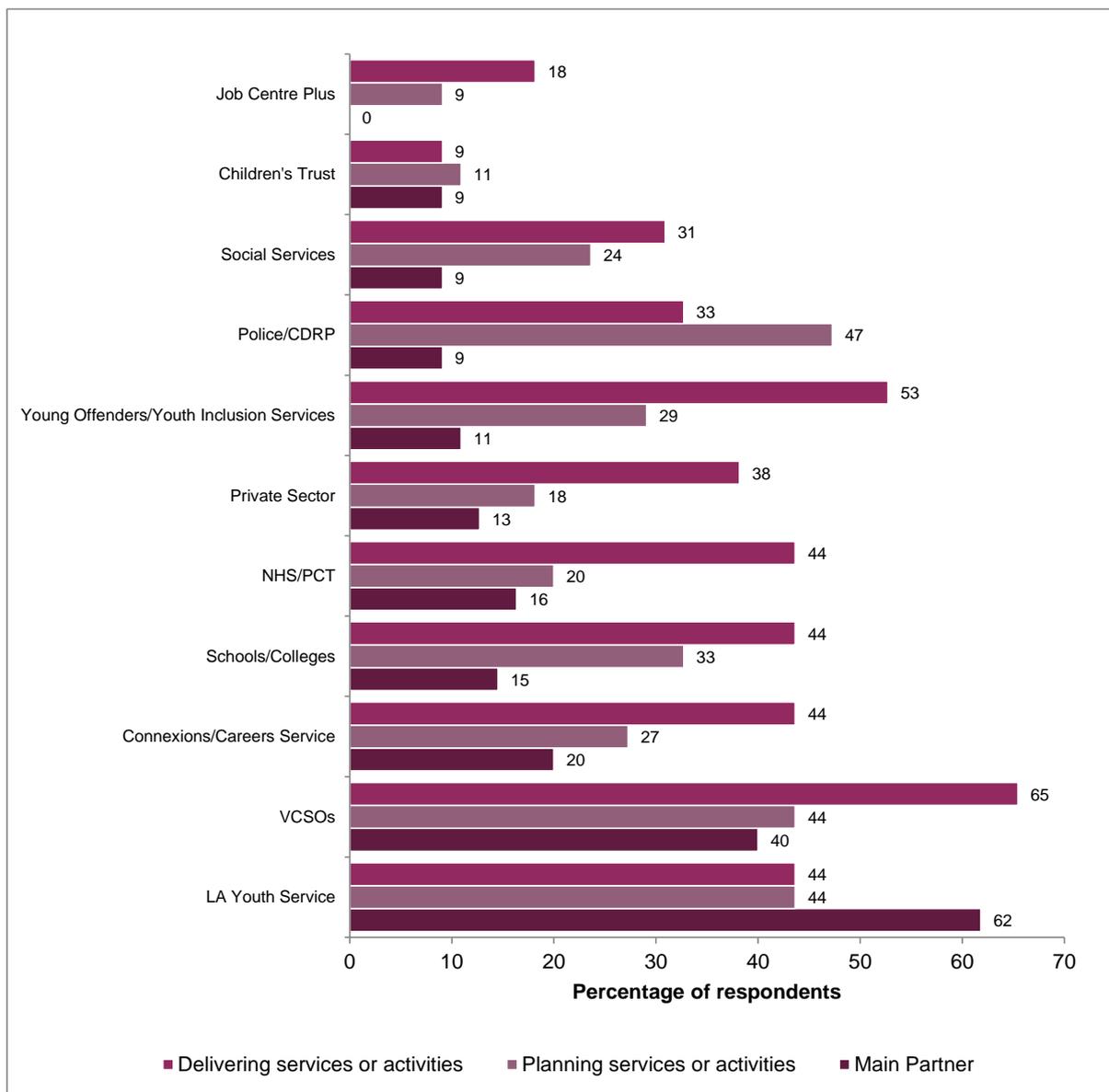


Source: *myplace* provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 55 respondents

8.3.    The case study areas included both partnership working that had built on existing relationships and networks, and new partnership working that had emerged during *myplace* project planning and delivery. The high profile *myplace* buildings and facilities have been a catalyst for partnership working:

> "Some we had a working relationship with or knew of, but then it's very much come about because of the *myplace* centre, people have heard of it and asked 'how can I get involved?' and that type of thing" (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

8.4.    Figures 8.2 and 8.3 suggest that most *myplace* centres are wholly owned by a single agency, with one agency acting as the lead delivery partner.

**Figure 8.2: Governance arrangements of *myplace* projects**
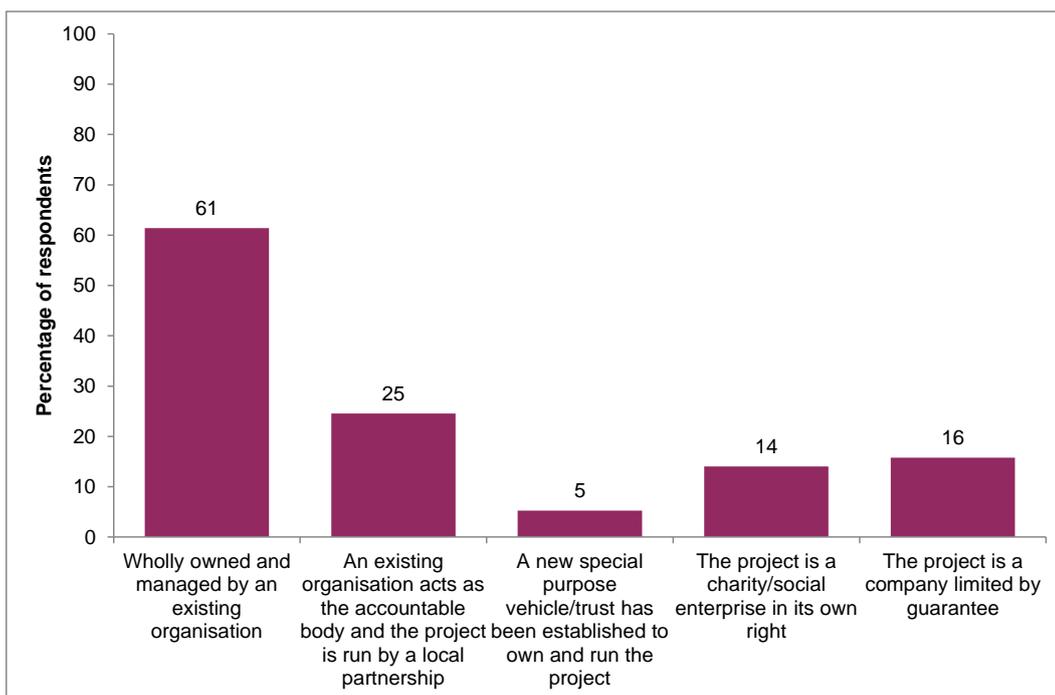


Source: ***myplace*** provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 57 respondents

**Figure 8.3: Nature of partnerships arrangements for *myplace* projects**



- One agency/organisation is the lead partner
- Two agencies/organisations are working together as equal main/lead delivery partners
- Three or more agencies/organisations are equal delivery partners
- Other
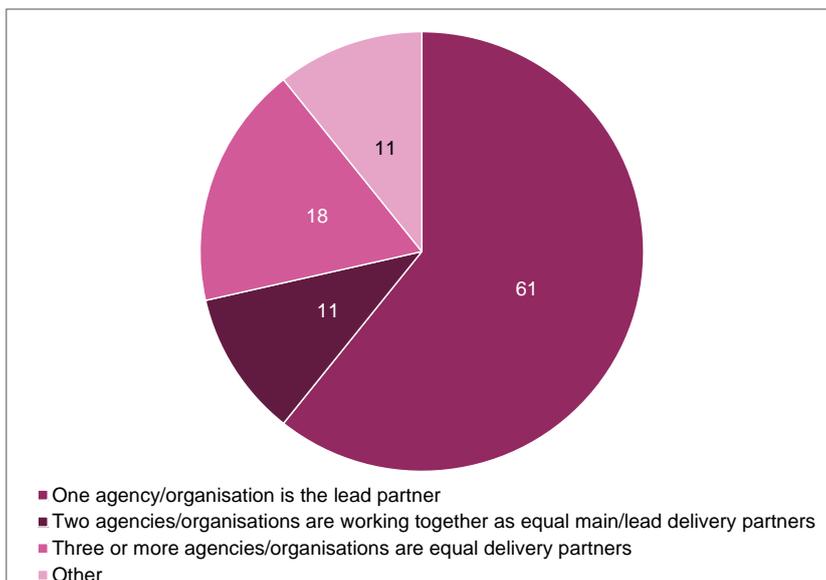
Source: ***myplace*** provider survey one (March 2012)
Base: 56 respondents (valid responses)

8.5.    In case study areas where local authority services had been moved to be embedded within ***myplace*** centres, this is a foundation for joined up working. The Bradford ***myplace*** centre provides an example:

> "We'd moved our information, advice and guidance shop that was in the town centre, into the information centre at [***myplace***] which includes our own service and that of the Connexions and Prospects team. We were previously in two separate locations in the town centre and when the opportunity became available for us to move into [***myplace***] that was something that we felt would be really, really useful to get on board with and join them… so ourselves and

*Prospects came together and we now share one space"* (Partner agency representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

8.6.    In centres where partnership arrangements were founded on shared space, with (at least 'core') partner agencies hiring rooms or offices to deliver their services within *myplace* buildings, staff and/or partner interviews involved praise of the *myplace* facilities available and what this could give to partners associated with the project:

> *"It's cleaner, newer and fresher, there seems to be more going on, it's open access, they have lots of partners so there is variety; it's a one stop shop"* (Partner agency representative, CRMZ, Halton).

8.7.    In one case study this popularity was evidenced by a *myplace* project having to turn away potential new partners because of (lack of) capacity issues:

> *"The demand has outstripped what we're able to do… we're not able to fit in anymore full time partners in any of the spaces" (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).*

8.8.    Logistically, partnerships can operate in different ways, and all *myplace* centres had some form of partnership board(s)/group(s). Illustrations were provided of how practical issues could arise when working together that partnership relationships could then help to resolve:

> *"We had different smoking policies for our young people, some said 'no you can't smoke when you're here'... other partners allow their young people to smoke, so there are different rules. So we got together a little task group to look at it and try and understand where everyone is coming from and agree a way forward, and there's been lots of examples of that in terms of operational groups that work and come together"* (Staff interview, Culture Fusion, Bradford).

8.9.    Some problems in partnership working were raised within the interviews, related to lack of communication or lack of involvement at an early enough stage (e.g. during project/building design) meaning that resultant buildings and facilities were not meeting partner expectations or needs, leading to disappointments and/or frustrations, and in one case withdrawal of involvement altogether.

8.10.   At other times, barriers were more practical (and potentially surmountable) in nature. In one centre, for instance, a number of case study participants said that the ease of multiagency networking was restricted due to issues about security swipe cards within the building.

8.11.   Another practical difficulty for *myplace* projects could be in working with large organisations that necessitated dealing with large numbers of different people, meaning more time was needed for the *myplace* staff member:

> *"The [football club], they've got various different departments, so the person that was doing most of the work here was doing work with women, so it was working very well with the women, but to develop stuff with the boys and the men and that's a different department so it's another person you have to link with and bring them in, doing the same thing over and over again… It's the same thing within the council".* (Staff interview, TAB Centre, Enfield).

8.12.   Good relationships with local schools are an important mechanism for promoting youth centres and engaging young people, and the central role that *myplace* centres play in supporting young people who are at risk of exclusion, or experiencing difficulties with transition is demonstrated by the 44 per cent of centres that are involved in delivering services in partnership with schools and colleges. However,

partnerships with schools could also be problematic. In one case study a number of staff members interviewed raised issues about the difficulty of working with schools in the current climate. One, for example, said that it was difficult to get schools to *"cough up cash"* to use *myplace* facilities. There was also agreement that getting schools on board will be harder in the future as an increasing number of academies focus on academic attainment rather than broader social issues for young people. Local authorities could assist in brokering relationships between *myplace* centres and local schools, with a view to broadening opportunities for access to young people, and extending successful partnership working.

8.13. The changing external climate was an issue that influenced partnership working in the case study *myplace* centres. One participant, for example, commented that the *"the environment is not conducive"* to partnership working, largely because of wide-scale job uncertainties leading to *"massive turmoil"* in youth services across their area. Job cuts within youth service staff teams could lead to tensions with *myplace* centre staff. Interviewees in another area said they had to explain to people that they were not meant to be a replacement for existing/former services, and were therefore not 'responsible' for job cuts, but at the same time they were beginning to operate as replacement services. One young person felt that this was leading to other community-based centres becoming more 'adult focussed'. The ability for *myplace* centres to operate as local hubs could therefore be impeded by broader contexts of 'austerity' leading to professional tensions and/or uncertainties.

8.14. Cuts to staffing and/or other services in the local area could lead to uncertainty about future provision:

> *"The big challenge is the environment in the district, the health staff are undergoing massive changes as well… a lot of people don't know quite what the future will bring"* (Staff interview).

8.15. Conversely, issues that shape successful partnership working included previous experience(s), and the general professionalism of staff involved. Establishing effective referral networks and pooling resources to offer a better quality of service were also said to aid and facilitate collaboration, of mutual benefit in terms of meeting individual organisational, as well as *myplace*, aims and objectives. One interviewee suggested:

> *"The success of something like this depends on the manager and [he] is very good, positive... he makes sure the services work together and keeps people in the loop. I think that's important, that proactive approach. If you didn't have that it would just be a building with a lot of disparate services and people coming in and out whereas he helps create a 'we're working together' atmosphere"* (Partner agency representative, CRMZ, Halton).

## The benefits of partnership working

8.16. The impact of partnership working, in particular being co-located within *myplace* centres, was expressed in terms of ease of working together on service delivery, and positive impacts for young people related to the potential for improved outcomes.

8.17. A partnership approach was considered crucial to helping deliver good quality youth services, as one respondent commented: *"we can't be everything to the young people"*. In Bradford, interviewees described how provision was benefitting from working alongside other services:

> *"Our historical focus have been on mental health and not youth, that's why here has been such a benefit really because it's introduced us into a much greater*

*awareness of the range of services our people can tap into… we've been here a year now, and the number of times that people have approached us for our mental health support with their young people has increased. And I guess the same is true in reverse… it's increasing those relationships… and awareness of what each other does"* (Partner agency representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford)

8.18. Impacts upon referral practices were also noted in Halton:

*"Because the services are integrated we know a lot more about what other services do so you are more confident in referring them. It gives more confidence in what other services do; you know each other better, you seem them everyday"* (Partner agency representative, CRMZ, Halton).

8.19. There was evidence that partnership working could contribute to improved outcomes for young people:

*"Young people can come in on one particular thing, they might be coming in because they're NEETs… but what we find out is their housing is vulnerable, their relationship has broken down, and [they need] a whole variety of other services, so they're getting the full package, which means we can move them quicker into successful outcomes"* (Partner agency representative, Culture Fusion, Bradford)

8.20. This chapter has looked at partnership working across the ***myplace*** programme and argued that partnership working is central to the programme and brings a range of benefits including efficiencies in service delivery and improved outcomes for young people. In some areas partnership working has been impeded by changes and cuts in local provision.

8.21. The next chapter looks at the impact of youth centres funded through the ***myplace*** programme.

# The impact of youth centres  9

9.1.   This chapter looks at the impact of youth provision. It presents evidence from longitudinal surveys of young people attending ***myplace*** centres, and a group of similar young people living in areas that do not have a ***myplace*** centre.

9.2.   Two types of data are reported: longitudinal analysis of outcome change for individuals between the baseline and follow-up questionnaires; cross-sectional analysis of self-reported measures of the benefits of attending a ***myplace*** centre collected through the follow-up questionnaire.

9.3.   The data was also modelled in attempt to identify factors associated with change. However, this exercise failed to shed any further light on the outcome change identified and the results of statistical modelling have not been reported. This was predominantly a result of the small number of young people reporting outcome change between the baseline and follow-up surveys on each measure. In order for statistical modelling to have added further insights into the analysis it would have required larger numbers of young people with a variety of characteristics (personal and centre related) to have experienced outcome change (positive or negative) so that the relative influence of those characteristics on outcome change could be modelled.

9.4.   Key characteristics of the sample include:

- age: 16 per cent of respondents within the ***myplace*** sample are drawn from non-target age groups (i.e. under 13 years, or over 19 years - or 25 with a disability) compared to none in the comparator sample; this is due to differences in the way that the sample was drawn – the survey was open to all young people attending ***myplace*** centres but questionnaires were sent only to those in the 13-19 age group in the comparator areas.

- gender:  there are more females than males in both samples (61 per cent in the ***myplace*** group and 64 per cent in the comparator group)

- ethnicity: the ***myplace*** group is 86 per cent white, compared to 78 per cent of the comparator group

- disability: self-reported disability is eight per cent for the ***myplace*** group and four per cent for the comparator group

- receipt of Free School Meals: 22 per cent amongst the participant group and 20 per cent in the comparator group.

9.5.   Differences between the two samples have been accounted for in analysis, for instance by comparing outcomes for males from each sample, those in receipt of free school meals in each sample, and so on. Details of sampling techniques, and further information on the characteristics of responding groups are contained in a separate technical report.

## Measuring outcome change

9.6. This chapter presents analysis of survey data regarding the outcome change experienced by young people attending *myplace* centres. The findings are presented under seven themes that are indicative of the types of outcomes *myplace* centres are aiming to help young people achieve:

- education and learning
- exercise
- antisocial and risky behaviour
- community and the local area
- peer relationships
- aspiration and confidence
- well-being.

### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.7. Longitudinal analysis explored change between the baseline and follow-up questionnaires *within* the *myplace* and comparator samples and then compared the *difference in change* between the two samples and certain subgroups within them:

- *within* sample change describes the percentage point change in the proportion of respondents in each sample (*myplace* and comparator) providing a positive response for a particular outcome measure
- *difference in change* describes the difference in change between each sample (*myplace* and comparator), and for particular subgroups in each sample.

9.8. Outcome change has been explored for a number of different subgroups in the *myplace* sample:

- personal characteristics: gender, age, disability, ethnicity
- *myplace* centre attendance characteristics: regular users, new attendees, involved in centre decisions, attend for social reasons, attend to use facilities/activities, in receipt of direct support, distance travelled to the centre
- *myplace* centre characteristics:  operating costs, user numbers, open access, targeted provision.

9.9. Where appropriate, outcome change was also compared between subgroups in the *myplace* and comparator samples (gender, free school meal eligibility, those studying full time). Subgroup findings are only discussed in this report where they have been found to be statistically significant.

9.10. Change was calculated for each outcome measure and tested for statistical significance[11]. Where evidence of statistically significant outcome change *within* and *between* the samples could be identified this provides the strongest evidence of a net additional *myplace* effect. This analysis is developed in Chapter Ten.

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[11] 95 per cent confidence intervals were applied. The Mcnemar test was applied to identify statistically significant change between baseline and follow-up questionnaires *within* the *myplace* and comparator samples. The statistical significance of the difference in change *between* the *myplace* and comparator samples was estimated using the z-test for proportions.

9.11.    Statistically significant change is important because only outcomes showing this can be used to deduce the monetisable net additional outcomes for the *myplace* programme.   It is only in these instances where it can be said there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples has not occurred due to chance and a *myplace* net additional impact can be identified.

### *Self-reported benefits of attending a myplace centre*

9.12.    Respondents to the *myplace* follow-up survey were asked to think about the difference attending a *myplace* centre had made to the way they think, feel and act in relation to a series of statements linked to measures of outcome change. This approach provides additional evidence on the benefits of the programme. In particular it provides an insight into the types of benefits young people perceive themselves to have experienced as a result of attending a *myplace* centre.

## Findings: thematic analysis of outcome change

9.13.    This section presents analysis of longitudinal and self-reported outcome change under each theme.

9.14.    In the tables that follow in this section examples of statistically significant longitudinal change are denoted with asterisks (*, **). Where the *myplace* sample has performed positively relative to the comparator sample the difference in change figure is positive.

### *Education and learning*

#### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.15.    The questionnaire measured outcome change in detail across four indicators linked to education and learning. Table 9.1 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

**Table 9.1: Outcome change for the education and learning theme**

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who missed lessons without permission (i.e. truancy)** | | | | | | |
| 26.4 | 22.5 | -3.9 | 18.6 | 19.8 | 1.2 | **5.1** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents who enjoy school/college** | | | | | | |
| 90.2 | 96.6 | 6.4* | 98.3 | 97.2 | -1.1 | **7.5**[**] |
| **3. Proportion of respondents who think learning is interesting** | | | | | | |
| 89.7 | 94.6 | 4.9 | 97.7 | 98.8 | 1.2 | **3.7** |
| **4. Proportion of respondents who would like to do more learning in the future** | | | | | | |
| 93.8 | 96.9 | 3.1 | 98.0 | 98.0 | 0.0 | **3.1** |

*Denotes statistically significant *within sample change* between Baseline and Follow-up questionnaires (95 per cent confidence interval)

**Denotes statistically significant *difference in change* between **myplace** and Comparator samples (95 per cent confidence interval

9.16.    There is evidence of statistically significant *within* sample change for the increase in the proportion of **myplace** sample respondents who **enjoyed school or college**: this increased by 6.4 percentage points compared to a reduction of 1.1 percentage points in the comparator sample. On this measure the *difference* in change between the **myplace** and comparator samples of 7.5 percentage points was also statistically significant.

9.17.    Further analysis of this indicator suggests that significant difference in change was greater for particular subgroups within the **myplace** sample:

- for young people involved in decisions that affect their **myplace** centre the difference in change was 12.9 percentage points when compared to the comparator sample

- for males in the **myplace** sample the difference in change was 11.7 percentage points when compared to males in the comparator sample

- for young people who attended predominantly open access **myplace** centres (more than 90 per cent open access provision) the difference in change was 15.4 percentage points when compared to the comparator sample  and 10.8 percentage points when compared to centres with a higher proportion of targeted provision

- for young people who attended larger **myplace** centres (more than 500 attendees per week) the difference in change was 10.6 percentage points when compared to the comparator sample and 5.5 percentage points when compared to smaller centres

- for young people in the **myplace** sample who identified themselves as having a disability the difference in change was particularly large when compared to young people without a disability. However, the scale of this difference should

be treated with some caution due to the low number of disabled respondents in the sample (n=18).

9.18. There was some difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples on the other three outcome measures, and the *myplace* sample did improve relative to the comparator sample, but this change was not statistically significant.

9.19. When additional analysis of these three measures in the education and learning theme was undertaken one further example of statistically significant change was identified. The proportion of *males* in the *myplace* sample who had missed lessons without permission reduced by 14.5 percentage points compared to an increase of 3.4 percentage points for males in the comparator sample - a difference in change of 17.9 percentage points.

9.20. Collectively the longitudinal data for the education and learning theme suggests that the main change associated with attending a *myplace* centre is greater enjoyment of school or college**,** and this is particularly the case for young people involved in decision making, and those attending larger, open access centres. There also appears to have been more change associated with **males** attending *myplace* centres, who were far less likely to truant and more likely to enjoy school when compared to males in the comparator sample.

9.21. It is important to note here that the *myplace* sample (and the males within it) had a greater chance of improving relative to the comparator sample because fewer respondents answered positively in the baseline survey: they had greater capacity for change. Even though the *myplace* sample and *myplace* males recorded statistically significant improvements, proportionately they still provided fewer positive responses than the comparator group. However, the outcome change identified means the gap between the two narrowed considerably between baseline and follow-up questionnaires and reflects positively on the effect attending a *myplace* centre has had on these measures for males in particular.

*Self-reported benefits*

9.22. The self-reported outcome measures for the education and learning theme indicate that some respondents in the *myplace* sample were positive about the difference attending a centre has had on them:

- over one fifth (23 per cent) said how often they miss lessons at school or college without permission had decreased, compared to nine per cent who said the frequency had increased

- more than half said how well they are doing at college or school had improved (57 per cent) and that their desire to do more learning in the future had increased (53 per cent)

- almost half (48 per cent) also said how well they enjoyed school or college had increased.

9.23. Comparing the responses to these questions with answers provided in the baseline survey provides further evidence of the self-reported benefits associated with this theme:

- of the 35 respondents who said they had missed lessons without permission in the baseline survey, over one third said how often they missed lessons had decreased

- nine out of the 11 respondents who disagreed in the baseline survey that doing well at school or college meant a lot to them said how well they are doing at college or school had increased

- of the 18 respondents who disagreed that they enjoyed school or college in the initial survey, eight stated in the follow-up survey that how well they enjoyed school or college had increased, and three stated that their enjoyment had fallen.

9.24. Overall this indicates that young people report a number of education and learning benefits associated with attending *myplace* centres. Importantly, a number of young people who responded negatively to questions associated with these measures in the baseline questionnaire reported improvements in their responses to the follow-up survey.

### *Exercise*

#### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.25. The questionnaire measured the frequency with which young people were involved in exercise. Table 9.2 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

#### Table 9.2: Outcome change for the exercise theme

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who exercise at least once a week** | | | | | | |
| 89.7 | 90.8 | 1.1 | 91.6 | 86.4 | -5.2* | **6.3**** |

*Denotes statistically significant *within sample change* between Baseline and Follow-up questionnaires (95 per cent confidence interval)

**Denotes statistically significant *difference in change* between *myplace* and Comparator samples (95 per cent confidence interval

9.26. The table shows evidence of statistically significant *within* sample change on this measure: the proportion of comparator respondents who exercised at least once a week decreased by 5.2 percentage points compared to an increase of 1.1 percentage points in the *myplace* sample. On this measure the *difference* in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples of 6.3 percentage points was also statistically significant. Further analysis indicates that the difference in change was greater for particular subgroups within the *myplace* sample:

- for young people who attended predominantly open access *myplace* centres the difference in change was 14.9 percentage points when compared to the comparator sample and 10.3 percentage points when compared to those who attended centres with a higher proportion of targeted provision

- for young people who attended larger *myplace* centres (more than 500 attendees per week) the difference in change was 10.4 percentage points when compared to the comparator sample and 7.4 percentage points when compared to smaller centres

- for young people in the *myplace* sample who identified themselves as having a disability there was a moderate difference in change when compared to young people without a disability. However, the scale of this difference should be

treated with some caution due to the low number of disabled respondents in the sample (n=18).

9.27.   The evidence indicates that attending a *myplace* centre may enable young people to maintain their involvement in exercise which otherwise may have dropped off. While the comparator sample experienced a fall in the proportion exercising at least once a week the *myplace* sample reported a small increase. The timing of the follow-up survey during December and January suggests this could be related to the provision of exercise facilities through *myplace* centres which can be used during the cold winter months. This explanation is supported by the finding that within the *myplace* sample the difference in change was greatest for young people attending open access and larger centres: these are the centres that are likely to be providing the widest range of opportunities to take part in exercise.

### *Self-reported benefits*

9.28.   The one self-reported outcome measure for the exercise theme supports the longitudinal findings:

- more than half of respondents (52 per cent) said that as a result of attending a *myplace* centre the frequency with which they exercised had increased**.**

9.29.   Comparing the responses to this question with data from the baseline survey provides further evidence of the self-reported benefits:

- over half (52 per cent) of those who were exercising at least once a week at the time of the baseline survey stated that the frequency they were exercising had increased

- of the 16 respondents who said they exercised less than once a week in the baseline survey, five said how often they did any kind of exercise had increased.

### **Anti-social and risky behaviour**

### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.30.   The questionnaire measured outcome change across five indicators linked to anti-social behaviour and indicators of risky behaviour. However, the number of respondents engaging in forms of anti-social behaviour[12] was very low. Consequently, to help identify outcome change, data from these five measures was collated into a single composite measure. This measure identified the proportions of respondents engaging in at least one form of anti-social behaviour in the three months prior to the baseline and follow-up surveys. Table 9.3 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up survey responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

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[12] Respondents were asked if in the last three months they had done any of the following things: damaged a car or other vehicle on purpose, stolen from someone's home, stolen something from a shop or other business site, sprayed paint on walls or buildings (without permission), smashed or damaged public property or something in a public place.

**Table 9.3: Outcome change for the anti-social and risky behaviour theme**

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who have engaged in at least one form of ASB in the last 3 months** | | | | | | |
| 7.4 | 3.2 | -4.2* | 3.5 | 1.2 | -2.3 | **1.9** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents who have had an alcoholic drink in the last 3 months** | | | | | | |
| 46.0 | 48.5 | 2.5 | 37.5 | 48.4 | 10.9* | **8.4** |
| **3. Proportion of respondents who have taken illegal drugs in the last 3 months** | | | | | | |
| 7.2 | 5.8 | -1.4 | 1.6 | 4.3 | 2.8* | **4.1** |

*Denotes statistically significant *within sample change* between Baseline and Follow-up questionnaires (95 per cent confidence interval)

**Denotes statistically significant *difference in change* between *myplace* and Comparator samples (95 per cent confidence interval

9.31. This shows that there were several examples of statistically significant *within* sample change for this theme:

- the proportion of *myplace* respondents who engaged in at least one form of anti-social or risky behaviour in the last three months decreased by 4.2 percentage points compared to a decrease of 2.3 percentage points in the comparator sample

- the proportion of comparator respondents who had at least one alcoholic drink in last three months increased by 10.9 percentage points compared to an increase of 2.5 percentage points in the *myplace* sample

- the proportion of comparator respondents who had taken illegal drugs in last three months increased by 2.8 percentage points compared to an small reduction of 1.4 percentage points in the *myplace* sample.

9.32. However, the *difference* in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples on each of these measures was not statistically significant. Further analysis of these measures by subgroups did not reveal any additional examples of statistically significant change.

9.33. The data on this theme suggests that the *myplace* sample experienced some small improvements relative to the comparator samples but that these improvements were not large enough to be statistically significant *between* the samples as well as *within*. The small number of young people reporting engagement in anti-social behaviour means that although there may have been substantial behavioural changes for individuals these are unlikely to be captured in programme-wide data analysis.

*Self-reported benefits*

9.34. The self-reported outcome measures for the anti-social and risky behaviour theme indicate a mixed picture among the *myplace* sample regarding the difference attending a *myplace* centre has made for them:

- eighteen per cent said how frequently they drank alcohol had decreased, while 16 per cent said it had increased

- fifteen per cent said how often they take illegal drugs had decreased, while a smaller proportion (nine per cent) said the frequency had increased

- eleven per cent said how often they had smashed or damaged someone else's property had decreased, compared to a smaller proportion (four per cent) who said it had increased

- fifteen per cent said how often they had stolen someone else's property had decreased, while two per cent said the frequency had increased.

9.35. Comparing the responses to these questions with answers given in the baseline survey also shows mixed results:

- of those who had consumed alcohol at least once in the three months prior to the baseline survey, 20 per cent said how often they have an alcoholic drink had decreased while 19 per cent said the frequency had increased

- of the 10 respondents who had taken illegal drugs at least once in the three months prior to the baseline survey, three said how often they took drugs had increased while two said the frequency had decreased

- only two respondents had smashed or damaged someone else's property in the baseline survey and of these, one said the frequency of this behaviour had decreased while the other reported no change

- just one respondent said they had stolen someone else's property in the baseline survey and this respondent said how often they undertook this behaviour had reduced.

9.36. Collectively the self-reported measures support the findings from the longitudinal analysis that attending a *myplace* centre has had a limited effect on young people's propensity to engage in antisocial and risky behaviours.

### *Community and the local area*

#### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.37. The questionnaire measured outcome change in detail across seven indicators linked to community and the local area. Table 9.4 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up survey responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

**Table 9.4: Outcome change for the community and local area theme**

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who agree their local area is a good place to live** | | | | | | |
| 78.4 | 77.5 | -0.9 | 85.2 | 81.3 | -3.9 | **3.0** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents who agree they generally trust people in their local area** | | | | | | |
| 69.0 | 69.0 | 0.0 | 71.3 | 65.0 | -6.3* | **6.3** |
| **3. Proportion of respondents who agree their views and opinions are taken seriously by people in their local area** | | | | | | |
| 52.8 | 46.6 | -6.2 | 47.6 | 44.4 | -3.2 | **3.0** |
| **4. Proportion of respondents who agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together** | | | | | | |
| 61.6 | 62.6 | 1.0 | 76.5 | 71.3 | -5.2 | **6.2** |
| **5. Proportion of respondents who agree they feel they belong to their local area** | | | | | | |
| 74.0 | 74.0 | 0.0 | 77.5 | 71.9 | -5.6 | **5.6** |
| **6. Proportion of respondents who agree they don't feel safe going out at night in their local area** | | | | | | |
| 37.6 | 39.1 | 1.5 | 39.6 | 40.4 | 0.8 | **0.7** |
| **7. Proportion of respondents who agree that crime is a big problem in their local area** | | | | | | |
| 29.4 | 25.9 | -3.5 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 0.0 | **3.5** |

*Denotes statistically significant *within sample change* between Baseline and Follow-up questionnaires (95 per cent confidence interval)

**Denotes statistically significant *difference in change* between **myplace** and Comparator samples (95 per cent confidence interval

9.38.    Table 9.4 shows that the only evidence of statistically significant *within* sample change was for the decrease in the proportion of comparator respondents who agree they generally trust people in their local area: this decreased by 6.3 percentage points compared to no change in the **myplace** sample. On this measure the *difference* in change between the **myplace** and comparator samples was not statistically significant.

9.39.    The evidence does indicate that there was some difference in change between the **myplace** and comparator samples on the other six outcome measures. Generally the **myplace** sample either declined less than the comparator sample or remained relatively stable where the comparator sample reduced, but these changes were not statistically significant.

9.40.    Further analysis of these measures by subgroups did not reveal any additional examples of change that was statistically significant and *within* and *between* the different samples and subgroups.

9.41.  Collectively the data for the community and local area theme suggests that attending a *myplace* centre has had limited effect on outcome change. The *myplace* sample has experienced either minimal change or witnessed a small decline in performance. The comparator sample generally saw greater declines in performance. However, these differences have not been large enough to be statistically significant when change between samples has been compared.

*Self-reported benefits*

9.42.  There is one self-reported outcome measure for the community and local area theme:

- almost two fifths (39 per cent) said their satisfaction with their area as a place to live had increased, while 12 per cent said their satisfaction had reduced.

9.43.  Comparing responses for this question with data from the baseline survey appears to support this largely positive stance but only partially:

- two fifths (39 per cent) of those who agreed in the baseline survey that their local area was a good place to live said their satisfaction with their area had increased

- of the 43 respondents who disagreed previously however, 15 said their satisfaction with their local area had had increased, while 11 said that their satisfaction had fallen.

***Peer relationships***

*Longitudinal outcome change*

9.44.  The questionnaire measured outcome change in detail across ten indicators linked to peer relationships and young people's experience of negative behaviour from and towards their peers [13]. The results indicate that very few respondents either experienced individual forms of negative behaviour from peers, or behaved negatively towards peers in a specific way. Consequently, to help identify outcome change, data from these ten measures were collated into two composite measures. The first identifies the proportions of respondents who experienced at least one form of negative behaviour from peers in the three months prior to the baseline and follow-up surveys, while the second identifies the proportions behaving negatively towards peers in at least one form in the three months prior to the surveys.

9.45.  Table 9.5 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up survey responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

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[13] Five measures of behaviour from and towards peers were used: causing upset through hurtful names; exclusion from friendship groups/activities; threatening violence; actual violence; stealing.

**Table 9.5: Outcome change for the peer relationships theme**

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who have experienced at least one form of negative behaviour from peers in the last three months** | | | | | | |
| 49.1 | 47.2 | -1.9 | 45.6 | 39.4 | -6.2 | **-4.3** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents who have behaved negatively towards peers in at least one form in the last three months** | | | | | | |
| 21.8 | 18.5 | -3.2 | 22.8 | 18.1 | -4.6 | **-1.4** |

*Denotes statistically significant *within sample change* between Baseline and Follow-up questionnaires (95 per cent confidence interval)

**Denotes statistically significant *difference in change* between ***myplace*** and Comparator samples (95 per cent confidence interval

9.46. This shows there is no evidence of statistically significant *within* sample or *difference* in sample change on either of these measures. Further analysis of these measures by subgroups did not reveal any additional examples of statistically significant change.

9.47. The data on this theme therefore suggests that attending a ***myplace*** centre has had limited effect on overall outcome change.

*Self-reported benefits*

9.48. Although there was no evidence of longitudinal change the one self-reported outcome measure for the peer relationships theme suggests a more positive attitude among the ***myplace*** sample regarding the difference attending a centre has had on them:

- two thirds (66 per cent) of respondents felt that **how well they get on with others had increased** while only six per cent indicated relations with other young people had worsened.

9.49. Comparing responses for this question with answers given to questions in the baseline survey appears to support this positive attitude to peer relationships among respondents:

- over two thirds (69 per cent) of those who had experienced at least one form of negative behaviour from peers in the three months prior to the baseline said how well they get on with others had increased

- three fifths (60 per cent) of those who had behaved negatively towards peers in at least one form in the three months prior to the baseline survey also said how well they get on with others had increased.

***Aspiration and confidence***

*Longitudinal outcome change*

9.50. The questionnaire measured outcome change in detail across seven indicators linked to aspiration and confidence. This included a series of eight measures

regarding how in control of their lives young people felt[14]. These measures have been combined to produce a composite outcome measure in which respondents who provided a positive response to at least four measures were compared with those that did not. Table 9.6 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up survey responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

**Table 9.6: Outcome change for the aspiration and confidence theme**

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | *Baseline (per cent)* | *Follow-up (per cent)* | *Change* | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents who feel confident meeting new people** | | | | | | |
| 78.0 | 73.4 | -4.6 | 69.8 | 70.2 | 0.4 | **-5.0** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents who feel confident working with other people in a team** | | | | | | |
| 81.2 | 81.7 | 0.5 | 79.3 | 83.6 | 4.3 | **-3.8** |
| **3. Proportion of respondents who feel confident being the leader of a team** | | | | | | |
| 65.1 | 64.2 | -0.9 | 57.6 | 57.6 | 0.0 | **-0.9** |
| **4. Proportion of respondents who feel confident speaking up in a group** | | | | | | |
| 63.2 | 63.7 | 0.5 | 60.2 | 61.7 | 1.6 | **-1.0** |
| **5. Proportion of respondents who feel confident explaining their ideas clearly** | | | | | | |
| 66.7 | 71.4 | 4.7 | 66.5 | 69.3 | 2.7 | **1.9** |
| **6. Proportion of respondents who feel confident having a go at things that are new to them** | | | | | | |
| 79.6 | 80.6 | 1.0 | 76.4 | 76.4 | 0.0 | **1.0** |
| **7. Proportion of respondents giving a positive view on at least 4 measures regarding how in control of their lives they felt** | | | | | | |
| 96.2 | 98.4 | 2.2 | 94.8 | 94.8 | 0.0 | **2.2** |

9.51.   This shows there is no evidence of statistically significant *within* sample change or *difference* in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples.

9.52.   The evidence does indicate that there was some difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples on these measures but that this was not sufficiently large to be statistically significant and there were no consistent patterns between the different samples and subgroups. Further analysis of these measures by subgroups did not reveal any additional examples of statistically significant change.

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[14] The eight separate measures were if someone is not a success in life, it is usually their fault; even if I do well at school, I will have a hard time getting the right kind of job; Working hard now will help me get on later in life; People like me don't have much of a chance in life; I can pretty much decide what will happen in my life; Doing well at school/ college means a lot to me; How you get on in the world is mostly a matter of luck; if you work hard at something you usually succeed.

9.53. Collectively the data for the aspiration and confidence theme suggests that attending a *myplace* centre has had limited effect on outcome change. The *myplace* sample recorded minimal change on most measures as did the comparator. Where there has been a change, the difference has not been large enough to be statistically significant.

9.54. There is within this theme an issue in relation to the capacity for change in young people. The questions are based on an assumption of 'deficit', i.e. that young people attending provision may be lacking in aspiration and confidence and the benefits associated with attending youth centres will result in improvements in these measures. This has not proved to be the case for three reasons:

- young people in the *myplace* sample scored highly on these measures at the baseline stage

- for some indicators scores were higher at the baseline stage for the *myplace* sample than in the comparator sample

- scores for some measures were higher at the baseline stage for *myplace* respondents than at the follow-up stage.

9.55. There are a number of potential interpretations of this finding: it may be that young people in the *myplace* sample have already benefited from attending youth centres and thus have higher levels of confidence and aspiration at the outset (although there is no relationship between duration of attendance and outcome change in this theme), or it may be that open access youth centres are more likely to attract young people who have high levels of aspiration and confidence, or that those with these attributes have been more likely to participate in the survey. Whatever the explanation it remains true that the likelihood of youth centres delivering improvements in these outcomes is low if young people already score highly on these indicators, and that measuring change in these outcomes at two single points in time is insufficient to be confident that this data is an accurate indicator of longer term change.

*Self-reported benefits*

9.56. Despite the absence of longitudinal change the one self-reported outcome measure for the aspiration and confidence theme demonstrates that the *myplace* sample was largely positive regarding the difference attending a centre has had on them:

- over half (56 per cent) said their confidence about their future had increased, while just six per cent said their confidence had fallen.

9.57. Comparing responses for this question with data from the baseline survey supports this positive response:

- of the 36 respondents who said they rarely felt optimistic about the future in the baseline survey, 18 responded that their confidence about their future had increased, while just three said it had decreased

- of the 18 who said they felt optimistic about the future 'none of the time' in the baseline survey, 11 said their confidence about their future had increased, while just two said it had decreased.

### *Well-being*

#### *Longitudinal outcome change*

9.58. The questionnaire measured outcome change in detail across three indicators linked to well-being. Two of these were the Rosenberg self-esteem scale [15] and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale (WEMWBS) [16]. Respondents were asked all questions on the scales and individual scores added together to produce composite scores. The third indicator examined how satisfied with life respondents are using a scale of 1-10 [17].

9.59. Table 9.7 provides an overview of baseline and follow-up survey responses for the *myplace* and comparator samples and compares difference in change between the two samples.

### Table 9.7: Outcome change for the well-being theme

| Myplace | | | Comparator | | | Difference in change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | Baseline (per cent) | Follow-up (per cent) | Change | |
| **1. Proportion of respondents obtaining a high score (41-70) on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)** | | | | | | |
| 78.1 | 77.5 | -0.6 | 82.7 | 80.6 | -2.1 | **1.5** |
| **2. Proportion of respondents obtaining a normal/high score (15-30) on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale** | | | | | | |
| 78.4 | 77.8 | -0.6 | 79.4 | 75.1 | -4.3 | **3.7** |
| **3. Proportion of respondents scoring 7-10 when asked on a scale of 1 to 10 'How satisfied are you with your life?** | | | | | | |
| 70.4 | 72.4 | 2.0 | 78.9 | 76.5 | -2.4 | **4.4** |

9.60. This shows there is no evidence of statistically significant *within* sample change or *difference* in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples.

9.61. The evidence does indicate that there was some difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples on these measures and that the *myplace* sample did perform positively relative to the comparator sample on all three measures. However, the difference in change between the *myplace* and comparator samples was not sufficiently large to be statistically significant. Further analysis of these measures by subgroups did not reveal any additional examples of statistically significant change.

9.62. This evidence raises questions about the suitability of these indicators for measuring improvements in well-being amongst young people. The WEMWBS and the Rosenberg self-esteem measures are scales developed primarily for use in measuring the impact of clinical interventions with adults and although they are

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[15] See http://www.bsos.umd.edu/scoy/research/rosenberg.htm

[16] The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale was funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and well-being, commissioned by NHS Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh. See http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/Measuring-positive-mental-health.aspx

[17] This is one of the well-being measures preferred by the Office for National Statistics.

recognised tools for measuring changes in well-being they appear not to have translated well in this context. There are a number of issues: firstly, there is insufficient difference in the scores at the baseline stage between the *myplace* and comparator samples on both the WEMWBS and the Rosenberg scales to be confident that more positive change could be achieved in the *myplace* sample; secondly change between the baseline and follow-up questionnaires has been negative for both the *myplace* and comparator samples for the WEMBS and the Rosenberg scale suggesting that on the basis of these measures well-being has decreased, not increased. Third, the questions have been administered differently in the *myplace* and comparator groups. There is evidence that the aspects of survey design (such as wording, method of administration and context of interview) have the capacity to affect responses to questions designed to capture measurements of well-being (see, for example, Pudney, S., 2010, An experimental analysis of survey design on measures and models of subjective well-being, Institute for Social and Economic Research) and it may be that differences in survey implementation methods between the *myplace* and comparator groups have affected the responses to these questions.

9.63.   The third indicator, which looks at life satisfaction, appears to offer a more suitable measure in this context, although again change has not been statistically significant. There is scope for further testing of these different measures of well-being amongst young people but the experience from this evaluation suggests that a simple measure is preferable, particularly when it is not possible to adhere to strict conditions for data collection.   However, this needs to be balanced against the findings of other research into well-being which suggests that multi-question scales are more reliable than single items for measuring aspects of well-being accurately within small samples (Nevill, C., 2009, Feelings Count: Measuring children's subjective well-being for charities and funders, New Philanthropy Capital).

*Self-reported benefits*

9.64.   Although significant longitudinal change could not be identified the one self-reported outcome measure for the well-being theme suggests a largely positive feeling among the *myplace* sample regarding the difference attending a centre has had on them:

- over half (51 per cent) stated that their satisfaction with their life overall had increased, while just eight per cent said it had reduced.

9.65.   Comparing responses for this question with data from the baseline survey appears to support this finding:

- over one third (36 per cent) of those who gave a response of six or less when asked how satisfied with life they were in the baseline questionnaire, said their satisfaction with their life overall had increased, while only a fifth (20 per cent) said it had decreased

- the proportion saying their satisfaction had increased rises to 55 per cent among those who gave a score of seven or more in the baseline questionnaire, while the proportion stating their satisfaction had decreased falls to three per cent.

## Identifying the impact of youth centres

9.66.   Young people report benefits associated with their attendance at myplace centres and outcomes are generally positive. However, overall the analysis presented suggests there has been limited longitudinal outcome change for the sample of *myplace* attendees when compared to young people from areas without a *myplace* centre. Statistically significant evidence of outcome change has emerged most

strongly for two themes: education and learning, specifically young people's enjoyment of school or college; and exercise.

9.67.   There are some clear explanations as to why outcome change in these areas is pronounced. For education and learning, there is an emphasis on supporting young people's engagement with school and learning through alternative curriculum provision, and supporting particularly those young people who may be at risk of exclusion from school, or experiencing difficulties with transition. This focus on engaging with those who are disadvantaged in these areas has meant that lower baseline scores for the *myplace* group have contributed to a greater opportunity for change.

9.68.   For exercise, the provision of high quality sport, leisure and recreation opportunities is a key objective of many centres, and it seems logical that young people using the centres would make use of these to partake in exercise more regularly. That change was greatest for attendees of larger centres (in terms of the numbers of young people attending) and those which have greater proportions of open access activities supports this argument, for it is these centres that provide the widest range of exercise related activities. The maintenance of exercise levels amongst the *myplace* sample during the winter months (when the follow-up survey was conducted) whereas those amongst the comparator sample have fallen over the same time period suggests that the provision of sport and exercise opportunities has been important in maintaining levels of activity when they might otherwise have been expected to drop-off.

9.69.   There is less evidence of statistically significant change between the samples across other outcome areas, and one issue may be the capacity for change: across some indicators, particularly those relating to aspiration and confidence, the baseline scores for young people in the *myplace* group were equivalent, or higher, than those in the comparator group, meaning that there is less capacity for change. However, this evidence should not be taken to mean that additional outcomes will not occur. It is simply that this evaluation has not been able to capture them over the time period in which this evaluation has been conducted.

9.70.   There is additional evidence on self-reported benefits associated with attending a *myplace* centre. Similar to the longitudinal findings survey respondents in the *myplace* sample were positive about the benefits associated with their attitudes to education and learning and frequency of exercise, but they also reflected positively on the benefits associated with area satisfaction, relationships with peers, confidence about the future and overall life satisfaction.

9.71.   *myplace* centres were able to provide concrete examples of the impact on individual young people, for instance as in Oxford:

> *"I know of young people who have been engaged in some quite risky behaviour have accessed work at Pegasus and its veered them on a different path. There was one young lad and much of his family has gone into care, he was very low self-esteem and low confidence, he started to work with us and then at Pegasus and he is really achieving well now. His social worker came in to help, he got engaged in a music project and produced something at the end, it's a real confidence builder"* (Partner agency representative, Pegasus Theatre, Oxford).

9.72.   Some *myplace* centres are using other methods to capture the impact of their activities. For instance, North Staffordshire YMCA which runs the Youth Campus in Stoke on Trent uses Outcomes Star tools to measure the distance travelled of its clients. These tools are used to assess clients' scores on a range of measures at the point of joining the service, and over the time of their 'journey' with the YMCA. Other

centres have used Social Return on Investment (SROI) models to value the benefits that stakeholders attach to provision. These tools help centres to identify benefits for a range of stakeholders, which may include young people, families, and service providers, but care needs to be taken not to overestimate the impacts of provision, and there are problems associated with identifying appropriate values to outcomes (this has also emerged as an issue for this evaluation, see Chapter ten). However, evidence suggests that across the *myplace* programme, and in youth centres in general, practice in relation to impact measurement is limited, and there is a need for capacity building in this area.

9.73.   Centres will need to decide which tools are appropriate for their needs but this evaluation has faced a number of methodological challenges which limit its ability to identify longitudinal change, and which provide important pointers for future practice:

- the absence of a 'genuine' baseline: the timing of the evaluation meant that the baseline questionnaire was administered by centres over a three month period between May and July 2012. However, the **myplace** centres themselves had been open for differing lengths of time: some for only a few weeks or months, others for more than a year. This meant that young people participating in the survey were at different points in their **myplace** 'journey'. Some will have been attending a centre for a short period while others will have been attending for far longer. For young people in this latter group a certain amount of the outcome change associated with their **myplace** attendance may have already occurred and the capacity for further change be less than for those whose engagement with centres was more recent

- young people engage with *myplace* centres, and youth provision more generally, for different reasons and in different ways: the wide and varied nature of **myplace** centre provision has been highlighted elsewhere in this report and the nature of a young person's engagement with this provision is likely to affect the types of outcome change they experience. For example, a young person attending a **myplace** centre to use sports facilities might be expected to experience health benefits associated with more frequent exercise, while a young person attending alternative curriculum provision might be expected to experience better educational attainment. Although the questionnaire tried to determine the nature of **myplace** centre attendee's engagement with provision as accurately as possible, the evaluation was not able to identify any firm links between specific outputs (the activities, facilities and services young people access) and particular outcomes

- the time period over which outcome change occurs: the timing of the evaluation meant that outcome change was measured between two points in time between six and eight months apart. Outcome change is not linear, and young people's responses may be more positive or negative at different time points. While some young people may experience change on certain outcomes relatively soon after an intervention, for some young people and certain outcomes change may only occur over a longer period. It seems reasonable to assume that young people in the **myplace** sample who did not experience outcome change in the period between the two surveys might well realise the benefits of their engagement with the **myplace** centre at some point in the future

- young people are influenced by a range of external factors outside of their engagement with youth provision: it is entirely feasible that a young person could experience positive benefits from their engagement with a **myplace** centre but experience negative outcome change as result of other influences in their life (such as problems at home or school) which are outside the scope of this evaluation. Likewise positive outcome change could be associated with factors

outside of their engagement with youth provision (such as support from other statutory or voluntary providers).

9.74.  This chapter has looked at evidence from surveys of young people attending *myplace* centres and those in areas which do not have *myplace* provision to assess the impact of the youth centres. There is evidence that the *myplace* centres have impacted positively on enjoyment of school and levels of exercise, and that these are particularly relevant for males, and (in the case of exercise) associated with attendance at larger, open access centres. Other outcomes have changed more positively for young people attending *myplace* centres (when compared to those in comparator) areas, and overall young people report positively on the impacts associated with their attendance at *myplace* centres, but these changes are not statistically significant.

9.75.  The next chapter provides evidence on the costs and benefits, and value for money of the *myplace* centres.

# Cost and Benefits

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10.1.   This chapter looks at costs and benefits of the *myplace* centres. It assesses the extent of, and relationships between, the inputs (or resources) behind *myplace* centres and the outputs and outcomes achieved. It also places values on the net additional impacts associated with the programme.

10.2.   The analysis has been informed by, and is consistent with, Government Guidance (the HM Treasury Magenta[18] and Green[19] Books and Value for Money[20]). Evidence has been drawn from a range of sources collated by both the BIG and the evaluation team. These include:

- responses to the two *myplace* provider surveys

- responses to the longitudinal survey of young people; one sample which had access *myplace* centres and another sample which had not (the comparator sample)

- financial monitoring data

- and case study work with 10 *myplace* centres.

10.3.   It is important to acknowledge two key points:

- calculations are based on self-reported data and may involve estimation or forecasting; no validation has taken place

- unless stated the analysis and estimates provided focus on those centres that were open at the time of data collection; when population estimates have been provided from the *myplace* centres survey a population of 40 open *myplace* centres has been used; this is the number of centres *myplace* centre open by the 6 June 2012 and which could therefore have been involved in the young person's survey[21].

## Inputs and economy

10.4.   This section looks at the inputs and resourcing of the *myplace* centres. It assesses:

- the initial funding of the centres and issues relating to the cost of inputs: have cost been minimised (economy)

- the    on-going    operational    costs    of    running    the    centres

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[18] HM TREASURY (2011), The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation . London, TSO.
[19] HM TREASURY (2003), The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government. London, TSO.
[20] HM TREASURY (2006), Value for Money Assessment Guidance. London, TSO.
[21] Note that this differs from the estimations of user numbers outlined at 3.1 and 7.4. These are respectively based on estimated numbers of users at the time of the first provider survey, and at the time of reporting (the latter figure is based 53 open centres).

- staffing and volunteers.

### *The capital funding of myplace centres*

10.5.   Analysis of financial monitoring data up to 7<sup>th</sup> February 2013 shows that **myplace** funding amounted to £236.707 million. The average grant was £3.757 million, however, the actual amount ranged from £1.189 million to £5.000 million. In total five centres received grants worth £5.000 million.

10.6.   In addition to the **myplace** funding, **myplace** centres received an additional £57.721 million capital funding from other sources: for every £1 of **myplace** funding an additional £0.24 came from other sources. Total funding was therefore £294.428 million. Analysis of additional and total funding by **myplace** centre shows:

- the average amount of additional funding (i.e. non-**myplace** grant funding) received was £0.916 million

- four projects received additional funding equal to or greater than that from **myplace** funding; the highest example being the OPEN centre in Norwich, where for every £1 of **myplace** funding an additional £4.59 was levered in

- the public sector provided just over three quarters of the additional funding, with the local council providing around a quarter; voluntary and community sector and private sector organisations contributed 18 per cent and six per cent of additional funding respectively

- the average **myplace** centre cost was £4.673 million, with the actual cost ranging from £1.444 million to £8.835 million

- five centres cost more than £7.000 million, including two which cost more than £8.000 million.

10.7.   Analysis of 'economy' considers whether provision has been secured at the minimum necessary cost. It is hard to argue that this applies to the **myplace** programme. The ambition to achieve world class youth provision has been interpreted as high quality and high specification capital builds in which economy has not been the primary concern. For instance, young people have been central to the design of the centres and architects were commissioned on how they related to and took on board the desires of the young people. Although not minimising costs, this departure from targeting economy has contributed to a key success of the **myplace** centres: generating buildings which are attractive to young people and for which they have a real sense of ownership, and which, in turn, has led to young people attending youth centres who have not previously engaged with this provision.

### *Income and operating costs*

10.8.   The second **myplace** provider survey asked centres for detailed information about their income and operating costs for the current and most recently completed financial years (i.e. 2011-12 and 2012-13). This is summarised in Table 10.1. Twenty two **myplace** centres provided information about their income for 2011-12. The average income for these centres was £451,000. Actual income ranged from more than £1 million (two centres) to less than £50,000 (three centres).

10.9.   The centres were also asked to estimate how much of their non-local authority income had been secured as a direct result of the building provided through the **myplace** project. Just under half (12) of the 26 centres which responded reported that all (nine centres) or nearly all (three centres) of the secured income was as a result of the building. Five centres reported either none (one centre) or almost none (four centres) of income secured was as a result of the centre.

10.10. Twenty four open **myplace** centres provided an annual or projected cost of operating their project. For the purpose of analysis, operating costs are defined as the self-reported cost of employing staff; building running costs, maintenance and repair; utilities; and insurances. The mean operating cost was £520,000, with five of the 24 centres reporting annual operating costs of at least £1 million. Multiplying the average operating cost per centre by the number of centres open by June 2012 (40 centres) it is estimated that the total annual operating costs of **myplace** centres was £20.809 million.

**Table 10.1: *myplace* centre income (2011/12) and operating costs (2012/13)**

|  | Average (mean) | Maximum | Minimum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income (2011/12) | £451,176 | £1,094,738 | £28,410 |
| Operating costs (2012/13) | £520,227 | £1,453,326 | £32,000 |

Source: **myplace** provider survey (December 2012)
Base: 22 (income); 28 (operating costs)

### *Staffing and volunteers*

10.11. The second **myplace** provider survey also asked about staffing and volunteering. Analysis of responses received identified that on average centres:

- directly employed 27 staff (16 FTE employees)

- paid for 12 staff from other organisations or agencies to provide on average 57 hours per week

- are supported by 34 volunteers (including 19 young people volunteers) who provide on average 36 hour per week.

10.12. Grossing up from these average figures it is estimated that the 40 open **myplace** centres:

- directly employed 1,070 staff: 620 FTE employees

- 490 staff from other organisation or agencies provided an average 2,260 hours

- are supported by 1,340 volunteers (including 770 young people volunteers) who provide 1,450 hours per week; valued at the minimum wage it would cost £372,000 per annum to employ people to do the work undertaken by these volunteers.

## Outputs and Efficiency

10.13. This section looks at the outputs from the **myplace** programme: what facilities, activities and services are provided and how many young people are accessing the centres? It then considers the extent to which these are additional: were the same facilities and services already being provided within the target areas and were the young people already accessing similar youth provision? The section concludes by considering relationships between inputs and outputs (efficiency). In particular it compares the number of young person's accessing **myplace** centres against the operational cost of running **myplace** centres.

### *Gross Outputs*

10.14. The following assessment of gross outputs looks at the following measures:

- the facilities, services and activities provided by the centres

- and the numbers of young people accessing the centres.

*Gross Outputs: facilities*

10.15. The **myplace** centres were tasked with providing high quality facilities. Table 10.2 summarises the range of facilities available at the **myplace** centres and the proportion of centres providing them. This shows approximately nine tenths of **myplace** centres provided: an area for quiet learning/study; and/or a café/restaurant; and/or an area to learn practical skills (e.g. cooking or mechanics).

10.16. Sport and recreational facilities are also commonly provided with:

- 86 per cent containing an indoor games/recreational area

- 70 per cent containing indoor sports area

- 46 per cent containing outdoor sports area

- 44 per cent containing outdoor games/recreation area.

10.17. Seventy seven per cent hosted also office, conference, meeting or exhibition space.

**Table 10.2: Facilities provided at myplace centres**

| | Per cent |
|---|---|
| Area for quiet learning/study | 91 |
| Cafe/restaurant | 91 |
| Area to learn practical skills (e.g. cooking, mechanics) | 89 |
| Indoor games/recreation area | 86 |
| Office/conference/meeting/exhibition space | 77 |
| Indoor sports area | 70 |
| Outdoor sports area | 46 |
| Garden/allotment | 46 |
| Outdoor games/recreation area | 44 |
| Music Dance Performing arts studio | 25 |
| Residential facilities | 12 |
| Childcare | 9 |
| Other shops/retail outlets | 5 |
| Other (please specify below) | 23 |

Base: 57

*Gross Outputs: services*

10.18. A key aim of the *myplace* programme is that young people will have access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable. Drawing on evidence from the first *myplace* centres survey Figure 6.2 shows the range of services available at *myplace* centres.

*Gross Outputs: activities*

10.19. The programme also has an objective to deliver opportunities for young people to participate in a range of positive activities. Figure 6.1 details the types of activities offered to young people by *myplace* centres. Over 90 per cent of *myplace* centres provide:

- social events
- arts or cultural projects
- performing arts classes
- senior youth clubs
- fitness classes
- and junior youth clubs.

10.20. Activities that are available on a daily basis include those involving sports coaching and drop-in sports. However, most activities are offered several times a week or on a weekly basis: 89 per cent of responding organisations offer performing arts classes weekly or several times a week; 71 per cent provide senior youth clubs (13 years plus) with the same frequency and 71 per cent also offer regular fitness classes.

10.21. The majority of activities are open access: 78 per cent of respondents indicated that 50 per cent or more of the activities that they provide are open to all young people.

*Gross Outputs: young person's accessing the centres*

10.22. Gathering accurate and reliable data on the number of young people accessing *myplace* centres has proved a complex task, primarily due to lack of consistent data across the programme. A series of questions were asked in the second *myplace* provider survey on the numbers of young people accessing:

- the centres during a typical week

- each type of facility during a typical week

- each type of service during a typical week

- each type of activity during a typical week.

10.23. The centres were asked to select the banding in which they thought the value fell. Due to the difficulties which many *myplace* centres had in providing accurate data on attendees these bands were purposely wide. This has had implications for estimating numbers of young people accessing the centres, and estimates provide an upper and lower limit to account for this.

10.24. Using the mid-point of the bands, the average weekly number of young person's accessing each *myplace* centre was estimated to be 390. This has been based on responses from 25 *myplace* centres which were open and took part in the second *myplace* centres survey. Maximum and minimum estimates can be derived by using the upper and lower limits of the response bands. The lower estimate of the average number of young people accessing a *myplace* centre in a typical week was 280. The upper estimate was 500.

10.25. It is possible to obtain estimates of the overall numbers of young people accessing the 40 open centres each week by grossing up from these averages. This produces a best estimate of 15,650 young people accessing *myplace* centres in a typical week at June 2012.

*Additionality of Outputs*

10.26. This section assess at the extent to which the outputs are additional:

- whether there were similar facilities, activities and services already being provided within the target areas

- and whether young people accessing *myplace* centres were already accessing other similar youth provision.

10.27. The first *myplace* provider survey asked centres to identify whether the facilities and services which they provided (or would be providing in the case of centres not already open) were already available to young people within their target area before their project was developed. For the purpose of this analysis *myplace* centres facilities and services have been judged to be additional if are they were not already available within the target area.

10.28. Tables 10.4 and 10.5 summarise the responses by *myplace* centres to these questions. Key points include:

- 79 per cent of café/restaurants facilities provided were additional in the target areas

- 62 per cent of the areas for quiet learning/study provided were additional in the target areas

- only four centres (seven per cent) will or are providing facilities all of which were already available within the target area.

- 35 per cent of centres (19) responding will or are providing facilities none of which were already available within the target area

- 71 per cent of careers advice/mentoring services provided were additional in the target areas

- 80 per cent of youth health services provided were additional in the target areas

- 72 per cent of vocational training services provided were additional in the target areas

- only 15 per cent of *myplace* centres (eight) provided services all of which were available in local area.

**Table 10.4: Additionality of facilities**

| | Per cent | |
|---|---|---|
| | provide at the centre | not already in target area |
| Area for quiet learning/study | 91 | 62 |
| Cafe/restaurant | 91 | 79 |
| Area to learn practical skills | 89 | 72 |
| Indoor games/recreation area | 86 | 59 |
| Office/conference/meeting/exhibition space | 77 | 89 |
| Indoor sports area | 70 | 49 |
| Outdoor sports area | 46 | 44 |
| Garden/allotment | 46 | 80 |
| Outdoor games/recreation area | 44 | 60 |
| Music Dance Performing arts studio | 25 | 100 |
| Residential facilities | 12 | 100 |
| Childcare | 9 | 60 |
| Other shops/retail outlets | 5 | 100 |
| Other (please specify below) | 23 | 100 |

**Table 10.5: Additionality of services**

| | Per cent | |
|---|---|---|
| | provide at the centre | not already in target area |
| Careers advice/mentoring | 91 | 71 |
| Youth health services | 89 | 80 |
| Vocational training | 89 | 72 |
| Alternative Education (14-16) | 70 | 75 |
| Further Education (16 plus) | 61 | 69 |
| Counselling | 58 | 65 |
| Financial advice | 51 | 72 |
| Domestic violence support | 33 | 74 |
| Other (please specify below) | 14 | 75 |

10.29. It is important to note that this evidence does not account for five important points which have been highlighted in chapters four to nine:

- the facilities and services already available have tended to be of a lower quality than those offered through *myplace*

- *myplace* facilities and activities are generally available at a lower cost to young people than other elsewhere

- the co-location of facilities and services within *myplace* centres provides multiplicative benefits

- *myplace* centres reportedly provide safe and neutral environments.

- *myplace* provision is seen as additional and goes beyond statutory mainstream services, for example by providing activities for young adults with disabilities.

10.30. A final assessment of additionality of outputs looks at the extent to which young people were already accessing similar provision before they started attending *myplace* centres. The baseline young person's survey asked a question 'before you started going to the Centre, what things did you do in your free time?' A minority of respondents reported going to either a youth club/group to take part in organised activities (19 per cent) and/or going to another youth club or community centre with few or no organised activities (10 per cent). This would suggest high levels of additionality.

### *Relating Inputs to Outputs*

10.31. This section looks at the efficiency of *myplace* centres in producing outputs. This is presented as the average or unit cost per output and is based on the relationship between operational costs and the numbers of young people attending the centres.

10.32. Comparing the estimated the average *myplace* centre operational cost against the estimated typical number of young people accessing *myplace* centres each week it is estimated that the annual cost to serve one young person accessing the centre is £1,340. The upper and lower estimates are £1,880 and £1,040 respectively. When interpreting this estimate it is important to consider:

- this is an average cost, actual unit costs will vary considerably by centre, by activity or service attended and by frequency and duration of attendance (there is no data available on the total number of hours spent by young people at *myplace* centres)

- it includes all operating costs not solely the costs associated with the delivery of services and activities to young people

- this cost has been met by all funders, including in most instances the young people themselves

- and the unit cost may fall over time as *myplace* centres build up to full capacity and adjust their cost base to meet the realities of being in operation.

10.33. There are very few benchmarks against which to compare these values, and none which provide a like-for-like comparison. For illustrative purposes it is interesting to note that:

- the National Citizenship Service pilot estimated a unit cost of £1,553 per commissioned place[22]

- in 2011/12, £877 million was spent on youth services in England[23].

## Outcomes and Effectiveness

10.34. This section looks at outcomes and impact from the *myplace* programme. It includes assessment of:

- gross outcome change: change in responses reported by young people to questions on the survey

- net additional outcome change: how change for the *myplace* sample compares with that for young people in the comparator sample

- the relationship between outputs and outcome change (effectiveness)

- the monetised value of net additional outcome change.

10.35. The assessment of impact focuses on the 27 indicators of change considered in Chapter Nine. This chapter concentrates on aggregate measures where there is evidence of statistically significant outcome change. It is only for these indicators that we can be confident that additional outcome change has occurred and where there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the difference has not occurred due to chance: that if a different sample of *myplace*, and comparator, young people had responded, then different outcomes would have been identified.

10.36. It should be acknowledged that using survey evidence provides one mechanism for assessing gross and net additional outcome change. The use of survey evidence may have missed out on wider outcomes which have been suggested within the case studies such as acting as a stimulus for regeneration and providing economic benefits to local business through the hosting events.

### *Gross Outcome Change*

10.37. Gross outcomes report how individual young person's circumstances or attitudes have altered over time (between the baseline and follow-up stages of the survey). Tables 9.1 to 9.7 summarise gross outcome change on the 27 core measures. In only two instances has outcome change for the *myplace* sample been found to be statistically significant and in both case this was positive change. Young people accessing *myplace* centres were statistically significantly:

- more likely to enjoy/have enjoyed school or college

- less likely to have engaged in at least one of the listed anti-social activities.

### *Net Additional Outcome change*

10.38. The next step is to assess net additional local impact on outcomes[24] associated with the activities of *myplace* centres. In essence, gross outcome change for young people accessing *myplace* centres (i.e. change shown in the third columns of Tables 9.1 to 9.7), less that occurring for young people who do not attend *myplace* centre, is seen to equal the total net additional local impact of *myplace* centres.

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[22] NatCen, 2012, Evaluation of National Citizen Service Pilots: interim report
[23] Department for Education, January 2012, Section 251 Outturn Expenditure on Services for young people 2011-12
[24] in subsequent text these are referred to as net additional outcomes

10.39. Tables 9.1 to 9.7 summarise net additional outcome percentage point change for each of 27 core indicators. These tables show limited outcome change within the sample of *myplace* attendees when compared against young people from areas without a *myplace* centre. Statistically significant evidence of outcome change has emerged for two outcomes:

- enjoying/have enjoyed school or college

- engaging in exercise at least once a week.

10.40. In both instances the net additional change identified was positive: the *myplace* sample reported an improved outcome compared against the comparator sample.

10.41. The next step is to translate the percentage changes into numbers of young people. Based on the estimates of young people accessing *myplace* centres above, it is estimated that *myplace* centres have had an additional impact on:

- 1,170 additional young people who enjoy/enjoyed school or college

- 990 additional young people who engaged in exercise at least once a week.

### Relating outputs to outcomes (effectiveness)

10.42. This section looks at the relationship between outputs (the facilities, activities and services) provided by *myplace* centres and change for young people, with a particular focus on the two outcomes where there is evidence of net additional outcome change. Two pieces of analysis provide insight on this relationship:

- exploration of outcome change by the main reasons young people have accessed *myplace* centres; for example did young people accessing *myplace* centres to take part in education or training report greater outcome change in terms of, for example, attainment or enjoying school?

- responses to eight questions asked at the end of the follow up young persons' survey on the perceived difference going to the centre has made to the way the young person thinks and feels.

10.43. A more detailed assessment of these relationships has been provided in Chapter Nine. In summary there is no statistical evidence of difference in outcome change by the main reasons young people provided for accessing the centres.

10.44. However some evidence linking outputs and outcomes has emerged from the self-reported measures of the perceived difference attending *myplace* centres have made, for example:

- more than half of respondents (52 per cent) said that as a result of attending a *myplace* centre the frequency with which they exercised had increased

- over half (52 per cent) of those who were exercising at least once a week at the time of the baseline survey stated that the frequency they were exercising had increased

- of the 16 respondents who said they exercised less than once a week in the baseline survey, 5 said how often they did any kind of exercise had increased.

- over one fifth (23 per cent) said how often they miss lessons at school or college without permission had decreased, compared to nine per cent who said the frequency had increased

- more than half said how well they are doing at college or school had improved (57 per cent) and that their desire to do more learning in the future had increased (53 per cent)

- almost half (48 per cent) also said how well they enjoyed school or college had increased

- of the 35 respondents who said they had missed lessons without permission in the baseline survey, over one third said how often they missed lessons had decreased

- nine out of the 11 respondents who disagreed in the baseline survey that doing well at school or college meant a lot to them said how well they are doing at college or school had increased

- of the 18 respondents who disagreed that they enjoyed school or college in the initial survey, 8 stated in the follow-up survey that how well they enjoyed school or college had increased, and three stated that their enjoyment had fallen.

### *The value of Net Additional Outcome change*

10.45. This section starts by considering the unit value of the two net additional impacts identified. It then applies these to the estimated numbers of young person's reporting net additional outcome change to give an estimated monetised value of the *myplace* programme. These monetised benefits are then compared against the costs.

10.46. The study has adopted a unit value for each additional young person enjoying school which acknowledges that core capabilities, such as enjoying school, are likely to lead to improved outcomes such as educational attainment, which will in turn have a positive impact on future employability and earnings (see Young Foundation, 2012, pp16). However the rate at which these processes accumulate is unknown and it would be overly optimistic to assume that all the additional young people who now enjoy school would see the value of future income gains. To illustrate the point, of the additional 1,170 young person's reporting that they enjoy school only a fraction will go on to achieve higher grades, of which only a small percentage will see an improved employment outcome or higher incomes.

10.47. Previous research such as that by Vignoles, A. and Meschi, E. ((2010) The determinants of non-cognitive and cognitive schooling outcomes, report to the Department of Children, Schools and Families, CEE Special Report 004 http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps/ceesp04.pdf)) has identified and quantified the relationship between enjoying school and attainment. The indicator used to measure school enjoyment within that study does not translate readily to that adopted in this evaluation. Nevertheless a key finding, which can help guide this assessment, was that whilst a statistical relationship was found the effect size was small. Pupils reporting a one standard deviation increase on their enjoying school measure on average were expected to see only a 0.1 standard deviation higher attainment at key stage 4. Given this finding it is probably not unrealistic to assume that between one per cent and 10 per cent of the 1,170 young people who now enjoy school will go on to realise additional income associated with this outcome.

10.48. The value of additional educational attainment has been calculated from previous evidence on the income differential that young people who go on the achieve NVQ 3 equivalent or higher can expect to earn (Sianesi, B. (2003) Returns to Education: A non-technical summary of CEE work and policy discussion, Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Centre for the Economics of Education). This expected differential has then been applied to the minimum wage for both 18 to 20 years old, and 21 year old and over, to give expected values of £283 and £281 more per year respectively. This value has then been applied to account for the likelihood that not all young

persons who now enjoy school will go on to achieve the higher attainment. Two scenarios have been adopted. The first assumes one per cent achieved the improved attainment and the second assumed ten per cent of the 1,170 young person's achieved improved attainment.

10.49. Using the unit value and assuming the benefit is seen for 5 years, at a discount rate of 3.5 per cent, the monetised present values for enjoying school or college are:

- if 1 per cent of beneficiaries achieved improved educational attainment (NVQ 3 or higher) the estimated net present value is £15,000

- and if 10 per cent of beneficiaries achieved improved educational attainment (NVQ 3 or higher) the estimated net present value is £149,600.

10.50. A unit value for the 990 additional young people who engaged in exercise at least once a week has used the estimated cost of weekly group exercise classes (£5.20) giving an annualised unit value of £270. This value has been drawn from previous research (Ecorys (2011) Tackling obesity: an evaluation of Age Concern Kingston upon Thames' fit as a fiddle programme, Age Concern Kingston upon Thames.) The approach values the services provided. Included within the value of services it has been assumed will lie the value which young person's place on softer outcomes, such as improved fitness, balance and strength, improved mental health and wellbeing and reduced social isolation, associated with exercising. However it should be acknowledged that this value may also represent the value which people place on exercising within a gym rather than other places such as a youth facility. It should also be noted that the types of exercise which young persons may engage in at *myplace* centres is likely to be different to that taking place at gyms. Further research is needed to further validate this valuation approach. Assuming that young person report this benefit for one year, the present value for the 990 additional young persons who engaged in exercise each week is £257,600.

10.51. It is also plausible to assume that there will be a reduction in cases of obesity amongst the 990 young people because of their participation in exercise. Evidence suggests that dealing with obesity is a significant cost for the NHS (http://www.wikivois.org/index.php?title=Obesity_costs_to_the_NHS). It has been estimated that the average cost per obese person was £3,379 in 2010 (£3,450 in today's prices). In the calculation of the value of savings from reduced costs of dealing with obesity it has also been assumed that one per cent of the 990 additional young persons who engaged in exercise per week were prevented from becoming obese and the value of the impact is realised over one year[25]. Under these assumptions there will be a £32,900 cost saving to the NHS from dealing with fewer cases of obesity. If 10 per cent of the 990 additional young persons who engaged in exercise per week were prevented from becoming obese this cost saving is £322,100.

10.52. This analysis suggests:

- the monetised value of the net additional impact is estimated to be £305,500; this increases to £729,400 if 10 per cent of young persons who now enjoy school/college are assumed to have achieved higher attainment and 10 per cent of additional young persons who engaged in exercise per week were prevented from becoming obese

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[25] Please note the treatment cost avoided could occur at any point in an individual's life and has been included in this calculation as a one-off impact rather than an impact that occurs every year

- this represents three per cent of the estimated half yearly operating cost of the 40 open *myplace* centres (£10,405,000)

- if the cost of volunteer time is included (see 10.12), operating cost increase to £10,590,000, however the value of benefits remain at three per cent of costs

- if the one off capital cost is also considered monetised benefits are 0.2 per cent of total costs.

10.53. An additional element of social value is that associated with volunteering. This may be of particular interest in relation to this programme, where large numbers of volunteers are young people. Standard approaches include those which use values associated with appropriate wage rates (usually national or local minimum or average rates) to calculate the replacement costs associated with volunteer hours (= number of volunteers x number of hours x average hourly wage). An alternative approach is to place monetary values on the leisure time foregone to participate in volunteering activities. However a potentially more appropriate approach for this programme, is to place monetary values on the output or Gross Value Added produced through volunteering activities.  This has not been explored within this study, but there is scope for future studies to develop this analysis.

10.54. The evaluation team has explored the use of shadow pricing using subjective well-being (SWB) method[26] to estimate unit values for core indicators. This method values net additional outcomes in terms of their impact on well-being. The absence of a household income measure within the young person's survey means that a three stage analysis would be needed. In the first stage, the baseline young person's survey has been used to estimate the relationship between SWB and the core indicators, where SWB has been measured using life satisfaction[27] . The second stage then uses evidence from another survey, such as the Understanding Society longitudinal survey, to assess the relationship between SWB, measured using an equivalent question, and a household income measure. The final stage would see the estimated relationships being brought together to estimate the monetary unit values of core indicators: the expected income compensating amount which produces an equivalent change in SWB.

10.55. Currently, the necessary second stage information is not available to calculate unit values and thus monetise net additional outcomes of *myplace*. However, even without this it is possible to reflect on the expected SWB gains for young people. It is estimated that:

- the 1,170 additional young people who enjoy/enjoyed school or college will on average have seen an improvement of 0.46 on the 10 point SWB scale

- the 890 additional young people who engaged in exercise at least once a week will on average have seen an improvement of 0.48 on the 10 point SWB scale.

10.56. This chapter has outlined the costs and benefits of the *myplace* programme and considered aspects of economy and efficiency. Whilst there is no comparable evidence on which to benchmark the costs of provision it would seem at this stage to be expensive. However, this needs to be considered in the context of the programme's aims and as the programme has thus far been successful in attracting large numbers of young people to youth centres it can be anticipated that unit costs will fall over time. The chapter has also considered the scope for placing a monetary

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[26] in subsequent text this is referred to as shadow pricing using SWB
[27] Measured by the question 'On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your life? Where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied

value on the outcomes associated with the programme. Although standard approaches have been applied these are considered to be unreliable, because of the uncertainties surrounding links between the outcomes identified here and benefits such as improved attainment which have recognised financial values. There may be scope for using well-being measures to place a value on the outcomes identified here but there is a lack of evidence in relation to appropriate monetary values for these outcomes and further primary research is needed.

10.57. The next chapter looks at income generation and sustainability.

# Income generation and sustainability

<div style="text-align: right">**11**</div>

11.1.    One of the four outcomes of the *myplace* programme is that:

> *"Stronger partnership working between local authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and **operate financially sustainable facilities** with and for young people"*

11.2.    Previous chapters of this report have discussed *myplace* centre's approach to partnership working and involving young people. This chapter builds on that evidence by discussing evaluation findings on the sustainability of *myplace* centres. It draws on evidence from the two *myplace* centre provider surveys and the case studies to discuss how centres generate income, how sustainable they perceive themselves to be, and the factors affecting sustainability.

## How do *myplace* centres generate income?

11.3.    Because the *myplace* programme provided predominantly capital funding, the capacity and capability of centres to generate sufficient income (revenue funds) to cover the costs of on-going operation is crucial to their sustainability. The interim evaluation report used evidence from the first centre survey to explore how *myplace* centres were planning to generate income to cover these operating costs. The second centre survey asked *myplace* centres for more detailed information about their income and operating costs for the current and most recently completed financial years (i.e. 2011-12 and 2012-13). This section discusses the responses to these questions and builds on the findings of the interim evaluation report to explore in some detail how *myplace* centres are generating income and the different funding models that are being employed.

11.4.    For the purpose of analysis, operating costs are defined as the self-reported cost of employing staff; building running costs, maintenance and repair; utilities; and insurances.

### *Total Income and operating costs*

11.5.    An overview of *myplace* centres income (2011/12) and operating costs (2012/13) is provided in Table 11.1 and discussed in more detail below.

**Table 11.1: *myplace* centre income (2011/12) and operating costs (2012/13)**

|  | Average (mean) | Maximum | Minimum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income (2011/12) | £451,176 | £1,094,738 | £28,410 |
| Operating costs (2012/13) | £477,463 | £1,453,326 | £32,000 |

Source: myplace provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 22 (income); 28 (operating costs)

11.6. Twenty two *myplace* centres provided information about their income for 2011-12. Total income ranged from more than £1 million (two centres) to less than £50,000 (three centres). Average (mean) income was £451,000. Twenty eight *myplace* centres provided information about their projected operating costs for 2012-13. These ranged from almost £1.5 million to less than £50,000. Five centres had projected operating costs of at least £1 million while four were operating on £100,000 or less. Average (mean) projected operating costs were £477.000.

### *Income from local authorities*

11.7. The majority of *myplace* centres responding to the provider survey received an income contribution from their local authority towards the cost of operating the centre. The importance of local authority income to the success and sustainability of *myplace* centres is highlighted by the following quote from the Deputy Chief Executive of Onside, which operates a number of *myplace* centres in the North West:

> *"The scale, quality and size of investment matters but what is more important is what is going on locally and what the public sector is doing. We need to be able to demonstrate evidence of public sector support. **We need 40 per cent of the revenue contribution from the local authority**. That is crucial to private sector provision"* (Onside deputy chief executive, emphasis added)

11.8. An overview of local authority contributions towards operating costs for 2011/12 and 2012/13 is provided in Table 11.2 and discussed in more detail below.

**Table 11.2: Local authority contributions towards operating costs (2011/12-2012/13)**

|  | Average (mean) | Maximum | Minimum |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2011/12 | £160,236 | £400,000 | £6,700 |
| 2012/13 | £171,008 | £434,300 | £6,700 |

Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 22 (2011/12); 27 (2012/13)

11.9. In 2011-12 the value of local authority contributions ranged from £400,000 (three centres) to less than £20,000 (two centres). In addition, two centres said they did not receive an income contribution from their local authority. The average (mean) local authority contribution was £160,000. For 2012-13 the pattern is very similar. The value of local authority contributions ranged from more than £400,000 (five centres) to less than £20,000 (three centres) and three centres have not received an income contribution from their local authority. The average (mean) local authority contribution is £171,000.

11.10. Local authority contributions are clearly an important source of income for *myplace* centres. This is evident through their percentage contribution. In 2011-12 almost half

(46 per cent; 10 centres) of *myplace* centres responding to the survey were dependent on the local authority for at least 40 per cent of their income. This ranged from more than 90 per cent of income (four centres) to less than 20 per cent (nine centres). The average contribution by local authorities was 48 per cent. For 2012-13 the pattern is very similar. More than two-fifths (42 per cent; 10 centres) of *myplace* centres responding to the survey were dependent on the local authority for at least 40 per cent of their income. This ranged from more than 90 per cent of income (six centres) to less than 20 per cent (five centres). The average contribution by local authorities was 48 per cent.

11.11. When the change in local authority contributions between 2011-12 and 2012-13 is compared it presents a picture of relative stability. Of the 22 *myplace* centres providing information for both financial years four reported an increase in their local authority contribution in 2012-13, four centres reported a reduction, and the majority (14 centres), said it had remained the same. Of the centres that reported a reduction two received more than £50,000 less in 2012-13: one centre's local authority contribution reduced from more than £150,000 to less than £100 thousand while the other went down from more than £100,000 to £50,000.

### *Other sources of income*

11.12. The findings from the provider survey suggest that the majority of *myplace* centres require income generated from other (non-local authority) sources to provide more than half of the revenue required to operate the centre on an on-going basis. The survey asked centres to provide a detailed breakdown on their sources of non-local authority income for 2011/12 and 2012/13. For 2011/12 they were asked to provide actual values for the income received by source, while for 2012/13 they were asked what percentage they expected each income source to contribute[28]. An overview of responses is provided in Table 11.3 and each type of income is discussed in more detail in the text that follows.

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[28] As the survey was carried-out prior to the completion of the 2012/13 financial year centres would not have be able to provide an accurate figure for the income values.

**Table 11.3: Overview of myplace centre non-local authority income sources (2011/12 and 2012/13)**

| | Number of *myplace* centres receiving income | | Number of *myplace* centres for which largest non-LA income source | | Average (mean) percentage contribution to non-LA income | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011/12* | *2012/13* | *2011/12* | *2012/13* | *2011/12* | *2012/13* |
| **Commercial income sources:** | | | | | | |
| Hire of equipment, facilities, rooms | 25 | 24 | 12 | 12 | 42 | 32 |
| Admission charges | 15 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| Membership fees | 12 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Sales income | 9 | 14 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Business sponsorship | 9 | 11 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 6 |
| Events | 13 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| **Charitable donations:** | 7 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| **Other non-commercial income sources*:** | 17 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 23 | 19 |
| *Base* | *30* | *30* | *25* | *22* | *25* | *22* |

Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
*Includes grants/contacts from other public sector bodies (local and national) and grants from charitable trusts and foundations

11.13. Table 11.3 shows that *myplace* centres have been able to attract income from a variety of commercial and non-commercial income sources. Of the commercial income sources **hire of equipment, facilities and rooms** emerges consistently as the most frequently identified and largest non-local authority source of income for *myplace* centres. About four-fifths of respondents to the provider survey said that they received this source of income in 2011/12 (25 centres) and 2012/13 (24 centres) and about half identified it as the most important source (by value) each year. On average (mean), the hire of equipment, facilities and rooms contributed between a third (2012-13) and a fifth (2011-12) of non-local authority income.

11.14. For survey respondents in receipt of income from the hire of equipment and services the average (mean) contribution in 2011/12 was £43,000. This ranged from one centre that received more than £230,000 from this source to seven that received less than £10,000. For the centre in receipt of more than £230,000 this accounted for 60 per cent of total income received in 2011/12: this particular centre has extensive conferencing facilities that can be hired out to the private sector.

11.15. The Figure also shows that admission charges were the second most frequently identified source of commercial income. About half of respondents to the provider survey said that they received this source of income in 2011/12 (15 centres) and 2012/13 (16 centres). However, admission charges were less important in terms of value, with only one centre identifying it as their largest source of non-local authority income in 2011/12 and 2012/13. On average (mean) admission charges contributed less than 10 per cent of non-local authority income in 2011/12 (six per cent) and 2012/13 (five per cent).

11.16. The limited ability of admission charges to contribute significant amounts of income is highlighted by further analysis of provider survey responses. Although one centre received more than £450,000 from admission charges in 2011/12, for the remaining 13 survey respondents in receipt of income from admission charges the average (mean) contribution was only £17,000 and for four centres the amount received was

£10,000 or less. For the centre in receipt of more than £450,000 from admission charges this accounted for more than 50 per cent of total income received in 2011/12: this particular centre provides a wide range of sports facilities and charges young people their use whilst also catering for parties and other events that generate admission fees.

11.17. **Membership fees from young people** were also identified by a significant proportion of respondents to the provider survey as a source of commercial income for *myplace* centres. About two-fifths of respondents to the provider survey said that they received this source of income in 2011/12 (12 centres) and 2012/13 (11 centres). However, membership fees were less important in terms of value, with no centres identifying it as their largest source of non-local authority income in 2011/12 and 2012/13. On average (mean) admission charges contributed less than one per cent of non-local authority income in 2011/12 and 2012/13.

11.18. Similar to admission charges, income from membership fees does not appear to contribute significant amounts of income for *myplace* centres. This is highlighted by further analysis of provider survey responses. For the 12 survey respondents in receipt of income from membership fees in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was only £6,000 and only one centre received more than £10,000. For one *myplace* centre income from membership fess contributed 12 per cent of its total income for 2011/12 but for the remaining centres it contributed less than five per cent.

11.19. **Sales** from, for example on site shops and cafes, were identified as a commercial income source by around a third of survey respondents (nine centres) in 2011/12 and half (14 centres) in 2012/13. However, only one centre identified sales as their most valuable source of non-local authority income and on average (mean) they contributed about five per cent of non-local authority income each year. Further analysis of provider service responses indicates that for the nine survey respondents in receipt of sales income in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was £48,000 and one centre received more than £100,000. For one *myplace* centre income from sales contributed a third of its total income for 2011/12 but for the remaining centres it contributed 13 per cent or less.

11.20. **Business sponsorship** was identified as a source of income for about a third of provider survey respondents for 2011/12 (nine centres) and 2012/13 (11 centres) and four *myplace* centres identified it is their most important non-local authority income source each year. On average (mean) income from business sponsorship contributed 12 per cent of non-authority income in 2011/12 and six per cent in 2012/13. Further analysis of provider survey responses indicates that for the nine survey respondents in receipt of business sponsorship in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was £163,000. However, this analysis is somewhat skewed by three centres that received between £300,000 and £400,000 each from business sponsorship and for which it accounted for between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of total income for 2011/12. For the remaining centres business sponsorship contributed an average (mean) of £23,000 in 2011/12 and less than 10 per cent of total income.

11.21. **Events** were identified as a source of commercial income by two-fifths (13 centres) of provider survey respondents for 2012/12 and a third (10 centres) 2012/13. However, no *myplace* centres identified events as their most important non-local authority income source for either year and the average (mean) contribution to total non-local authority income was 10 per cent or less each year. Further analysis of provider survey responses indicates that for the 13 survey respondents in receipt of events income in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was £34,000 and one centre received more than £100,000. For the one *myplace* centre with events

income of more than £100,000 this contributed more than two-fifths of its total income for 2011/12 but for the remaining centres it contributed 13 per cent or less.

11.22. Of the non-commercial income sources **Charitable donations** were identified as a source of income by about a quarter (7 centres) of provider survey respondents for 2012/12 and two-fifths (12 centres) 2012/13. However, no *myplace* centres identified charitable donations as their most important non-local authority income source for either year and the average (mean) contribution to total non-local authority income was 5 per cent or less each year. Further analysis of provider survey responses indicates that for the 7 survey respondents in receipt of charitable donations in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was £65,000 and one centre received more than £100,000. These were typically large *myplace* centres (income of about £1 million) so these donations only contributed between five per cent and 11 per cent of centres total income for 2011/12.

11.23. In addition to non-commercial income generated from charitable donations, a number of *myplace* centres also relied on grants and contracts from **other (non-local authority) local and national public sector bodies** and **charitable trusts and foundations** for a proportion of their non-local authority income. Collectively these sources of **other non-commercial income** were the most frequently identified source of non-local authority income and second most important by total value after the hire of equipment, facilities and rooms. Of the *myplace* centres that responded to the second provider survey more than half (17 centres) said they had received non-commercial income in 2011/12 and almost two-thirds (19 centres) reported other non-commercial income for 2012/13. In addition, other non-commercial income was identified as the most valuable source of non-local authority income by about one fifth of centres in 2011/12 (six centres) and for 2012/12 (five centres). The average (mean) contribution of non-commercial income to non-local authority income was 23 per cent in 2011/12 and 19 per cent in 2012/13.

11.24. Further analysis of provider survey responses indicates that for the 17 survey respondents in receipt of other non-commercial income in 2011/12 the average (mean) contribution was £162,000. This ranged from one centre that received almost £800,000 from these sources and one that received more than £430,000, to seven that received £50,000 or less. For five centres in receipt of other non-commercial income in 2011/12 it contributed to 50 per cent or more of the total income received.

11.25. This analysis of income received by *myplace* centres demonstrates the range of funding models employed. These funding models can be classified under four different categories, as demonstrated by Figure 11.1 below and the discussion that follows.

**Figure 11.1: Overview of funding models employed by *myplace* centres**
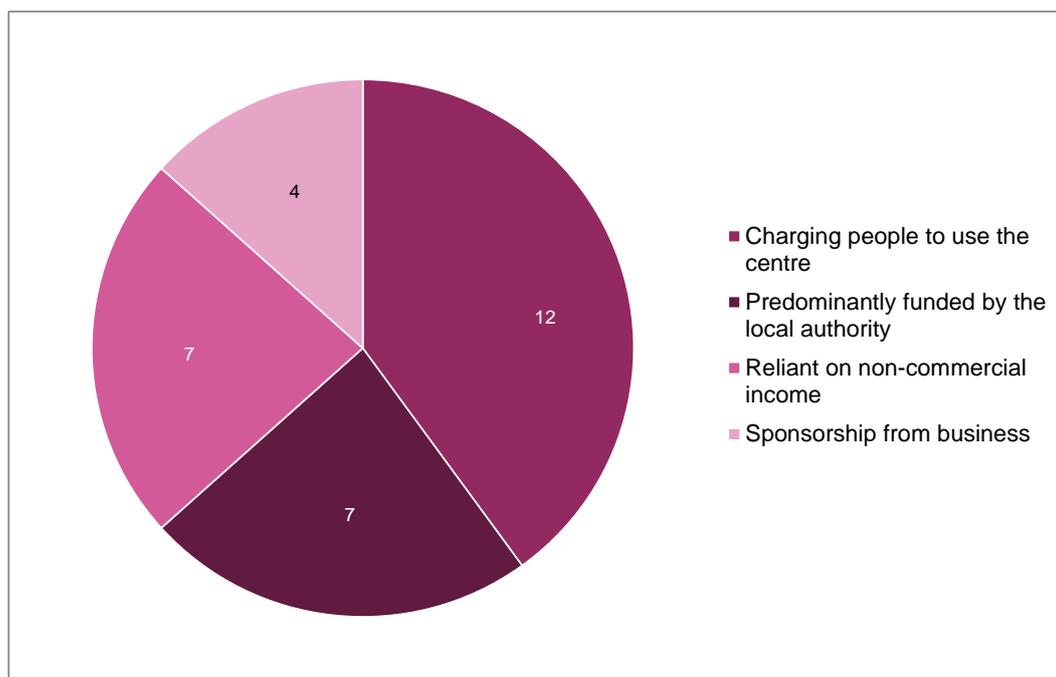


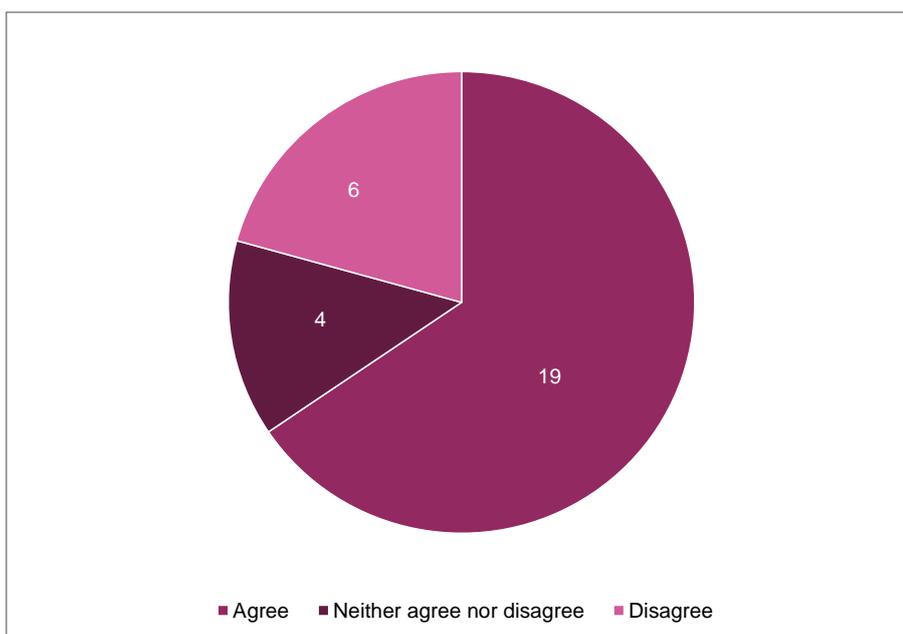Source: ***myplace*** provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 30

11.26. **Charging people to use the centre** is the main funding model for 12 centres responding to the provider survey. These centres have been able to generate significant amounts of income from charging young people to participate in activities and use the facilities available. Some of these centres are also charging the general public (including business) to use the facilities that are available. An example is the OPEN centre in Norwich which has developed as local music venue in order to generate revenue income.

11.27. **Predominantly funded by the local authority** is the main funding model for seven centres responding to the provider survey. They are usually fully embedded in local statutory youth provision and receive all or most of the income they need from the local authority. Although some of these centres are pursuing commercial income sources to supplement this core funding it is not fundamental to their sustainability.

11.28. **Reliant on non-commercial income** is the main funding model for seven centres responding to the provider survey. These centres appear to be pursuing traditional voluntary sector funding models based on generating income from public sector grants and contracts, and grants from charitable trusts and foundations

11.29. **Sponsorship from business** is the main funding model for four centres responding to the provider survey. The centres have been able to attract major investment from business to supplement income from other sources and include the ***myplace*** centres developed in the North West of England by Onside. The funding model for Onside centres (which have also been developed outside the ***myplace*** programme) is 40 per cent local authority funding, 10 per cent from charges to young people and 50 per cent from a combination of business sponsorship and grants. In the Onside centre which acted as a case study for this research (Blackburn Youth Zone), 50 per cent of monies had been obtained through business sponsorship. Key success factors included engaging business early and having a local business sector champion.

11.30. However, it is important to emphasise that regardless of the main funding model being deployed by ***myplace*** centres, the analysis presented demonstrates that the

majority of centres are reliant on their local authority for a large proportion of the income they need to run the centre on an on-going basis. It should also be recognised that these funding models are ideal types, and although most centres appear to be focussing on one as their main funding model, in practice they are generating income from a much wider range of sources.

### *Financial sustainability*

11.31. The first ***myplace*** provider survey asked centres about the extent to which they had been able to secure income to cover their operating costs in the short (up to 12 months) to medium (24 months) term. It also explored how confident ***myplace*** centres were in their ability secure income and wider aspects of their sustainability on a longer term basis (up to five years). The findings from analysis of these responses were presented in the interim report. The following section builds on these findings by discussing responses to the same questions in the second provider survey.

11.32. Respondents to the second provider survey were asked whether they had sufficient income to deliver their business plan effectively. Figure 11.2 demonstrates that the majority of ***myplace*** centres (19 centres) responding to the survey felt that they did have sufficient income. However, a significant minority (six centres) were not confident that they had enough income to deliver their business plan effectively.

**Figure 11.2: The proportion of *myplace* centres with sufficient income to deliver their business plan effectively**
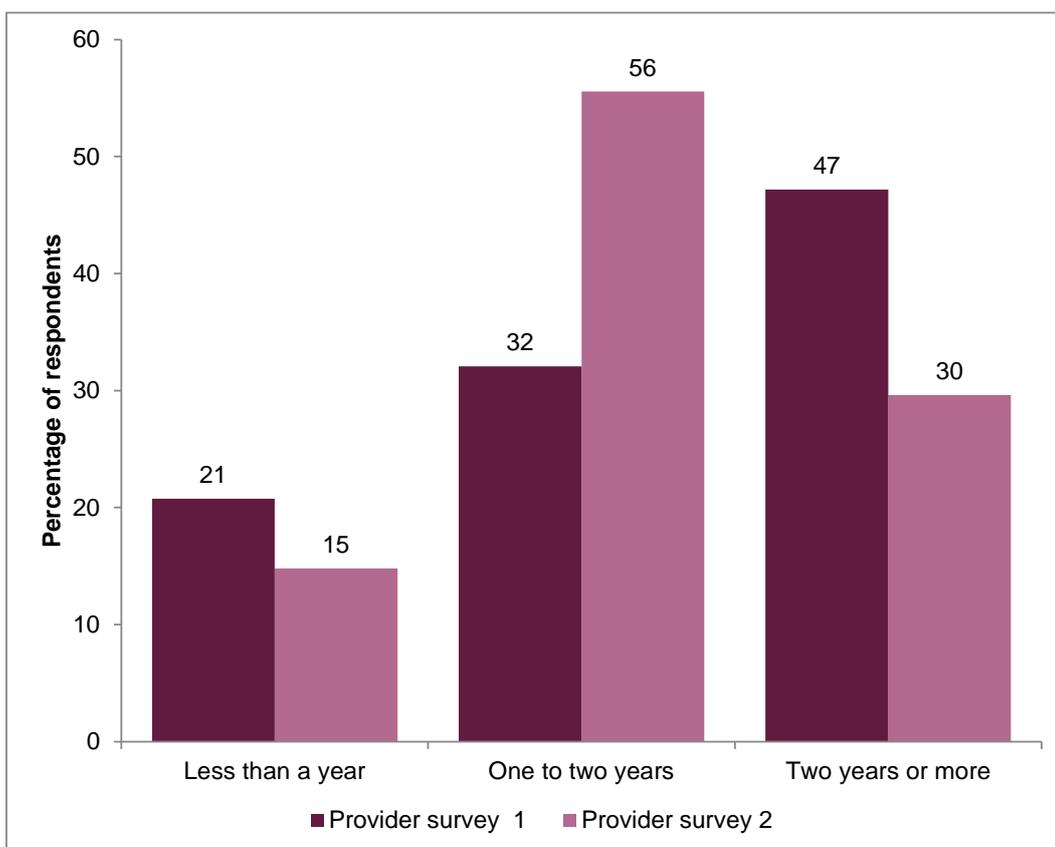


Source: ***myplace*** provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 29

11.33. The interim evaluation report highlighted the challenges ***myplace*** centres faced in generating sufficient income to cover their operating costs. Figure 11.3 compares responses to the first and second provider survey to the question that asked whether ***myplace*** centres had funds in place to cover all of its operating costs, and if so, for how long. It shows that a higher proportion of respondents to the second provider survey had secured sufficient income to cover one year or more of their operating costs (86 per cent) compared with the first survey (79 per cent). However, a lower proportion of respondents to the second survey had had secured sufficient income to cover two years or more of their operating costs (30 per cent) compared with the first survey (47 per cent).

11.34. Although the lower number of respondents, particularly to the second survey, means that the difference in percentage figures should be treated with some caution for comparative purposes, longitudinal analysis of survey responses suggests that financial sustainability, in the short term at least, might be improving. Six *myplace* centres that participated in both surveys said in their response to the first survey that they did not have sufficient income to cover the next year of operating costs. Of these, only two centres said they still did not have sufficient income in their response to the second provider survey: both of these centres employed funding models that focussed on charging people to use the centre and both received less than a quarter of their income from the local authority. Of the four centres who were now able to cover the next year of operating costs three said they had secured income to cover one to two years and one had secured income for more than two years: two of these centres employed funding models that focussed on charging and two focussed on non-commercial income.

**Figure 11.3: *myplace* centres' funding secured to cover operating costs**

11.35. Figure 11.4 compares responses to the first and second provider survey to the question that asked whether *myplace* centres thought they would be able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned. It shows that a majority of respondents to both surveys were positive in this regard but that a significant minority (about a third) were not confident that they would be able to generate enough income. Longitudinal analysis of these responses suggests that *myplace* centre's perceptions of longer financial sustainability have not changed much at all. Four *myplace* centres that participated in both surveys said in their response to the first survey that they did not think they would be able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned. Of these, none said in their response to the second survey that their views had become more positive.

**Figure 11.4: The proportion of *myplace* centres able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned**
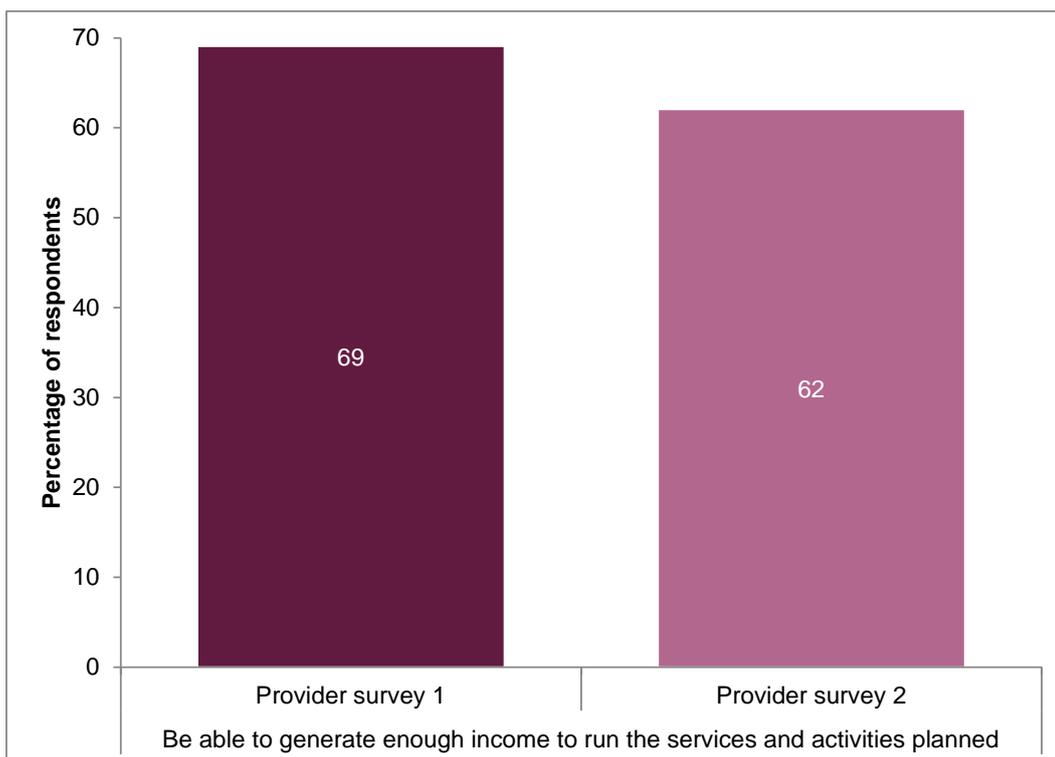


Source: *myplace* provider survey one (March 2012) and two (December 2012)
Base: 55/29

### *Factors affecting financial sustainability*

11.36. Further analysis of the second provider survey identified two factors associated with the financial sustainability of responding *myplace* centres[29]: funding model and lead provider type. The following section discusses this analysis in more detail.

11.37. Figure 11.5 provides an overview of provider survey respondent's funding secured to cover operating costs by the different funding models discussed earlier in this chapter. It shows that:

- of the six centres **predominantly funded by the local authority** five had secured income for between one and two years and one had secured income for two years or more

- of the 10 centres focussing on **charging people to use the centre** two had secured income for less than a year, five had secured income for between one and two years and three had secured income for two years or more

- of the four centres in receipt of significant amounts of **business sponsorship** one had secured income for between one and two years and three had secured income for two years or more

- of the seven centres reliant on **non-commercial** income two had secured income for less than a year, four had secured income for between one and two years and one had secured income for two years or more.

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[29] The following factors were also explored but no strong association with financial sustainability was identified: centre size by operating costs (small - less than £250k; medium - £250k-£750k; large - more than £750k); contribution local authority funding (less than 40 per cent of total income; more than 40 per cent of total income).

**Figure 11.5:** *myplace* **centres' funding secured to cover operating costs by funding model**
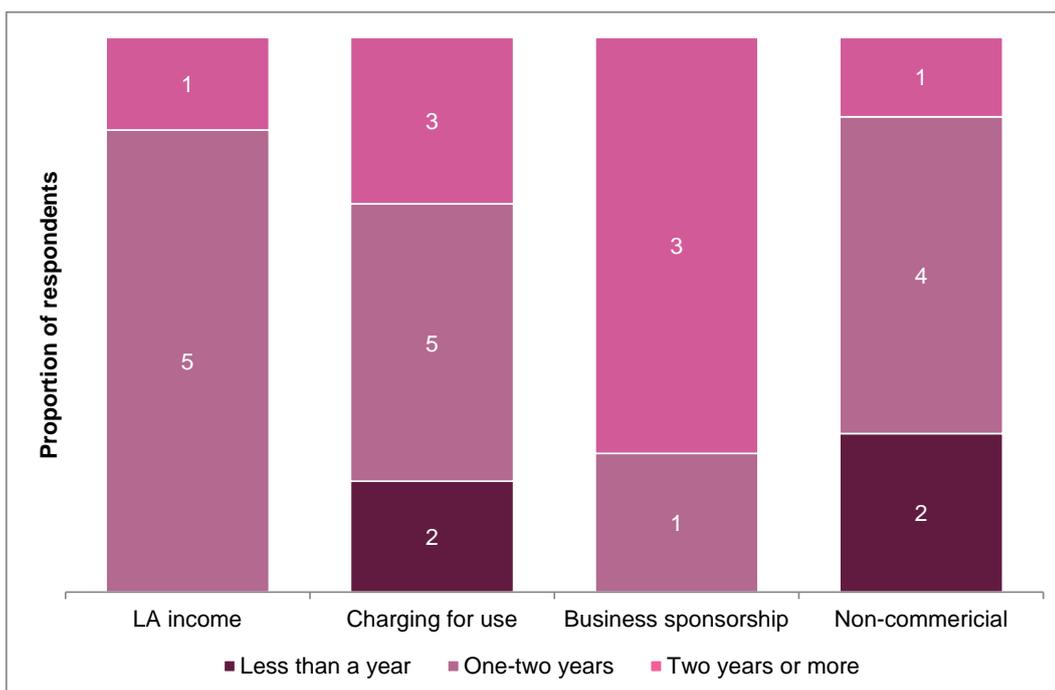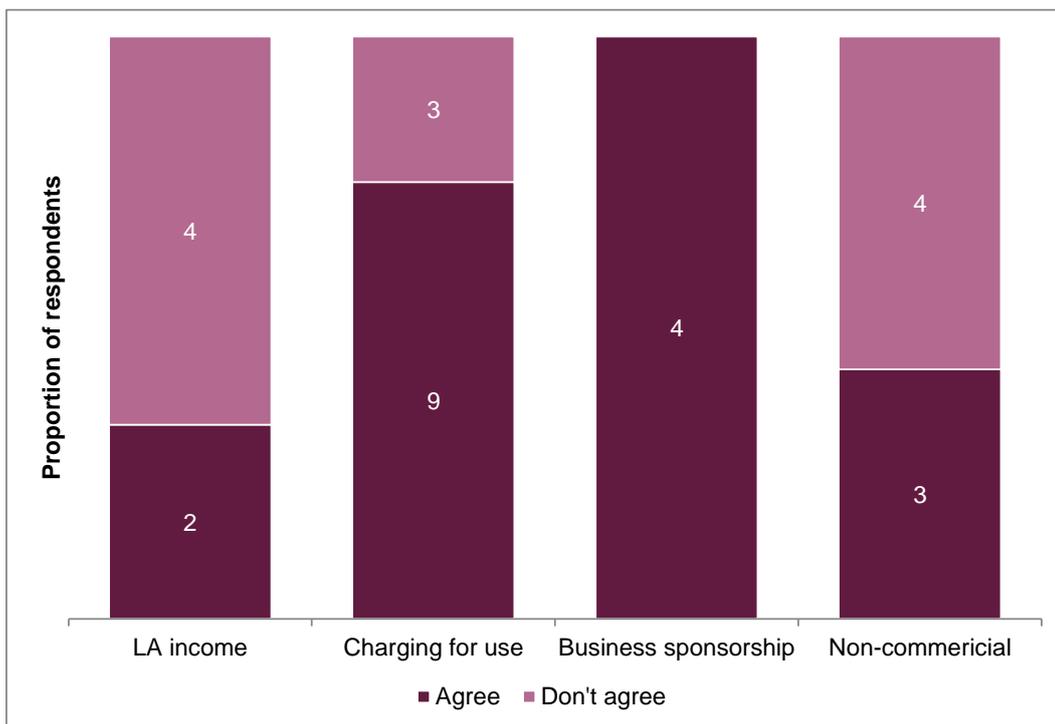


Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 27

11.38. Figure 11.6 provides an overview of the proportion of provider survey respondents who believed they would be able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned by funding models. It shows that:

- of the six centres **predominantly funded by the local authority** two believed they would be able to generate sufficient income

- of the 10 centres focussing on **charging people to use the centre** nine believed they would be able to generate sufficient income

- all of the four centres in receipt of significant amounts of **business sponsorship** believed they would be able to generate sufficient income

- of the seven centres reliant on **non-commercial** income three believed they would be able to generate sufficient income.

**Figure 11.6: The proportion of *myplace* centres able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned by funding model**
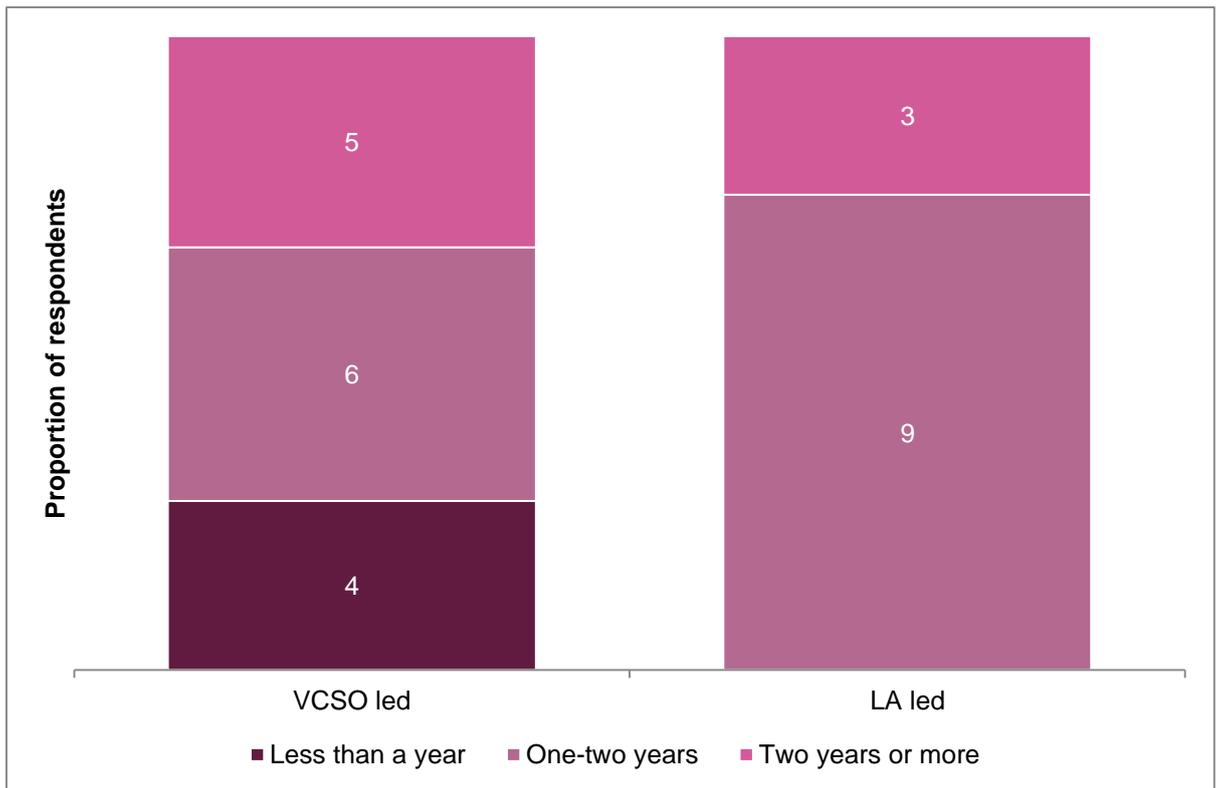


Source: *myplace* provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 29

11.39. Together Figures 11.5 and 11.6 suggest that centres reliant on non-commercial income are most likely to be struggling to generate sufficient income in the short and longer term. They also indicate that although centres predominantly funded by local authorities have secured sufficient income in the short term their prospects of continuing to receive sufficient income over the longer term are less certain. For centres focussing on charging people to use the centre the picture is more mixed: while some appear to be struggling to generate income in the short term the majority have been successful in generating sufficient income over the longer term. Likewise centres in receipt of significant amounts of business sponsorship have generally been successful in securing the income they need for the long term.

11.40. Figure 11.7 provides an overview of provider survey respondent's funding secured to cover operating costs by the lead provider type: centres led by voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs) compare to local authority (LA) led centres. It shows that:

- of the 15 centres led by **VCSOs** four had secured income for less than a year, six had secured income for between one and two years and five had secured income for two years or more

- of the 12 centres led by **local authorities** nine had secured income for between one and two years and three had secured income for two years or more.

**Figure 11.7:** *myplace* **centres' funding secured to cover operating costs by lead provider type**

11.41. Figure 11.8 provides an overview of the proportion of provider survey respondents who believed they would be able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned by lead provider type. It shows that:

- of the 16 **VCSO** led centres 12 believed they would be able to generate sufficient income

- of the 13 **local authority** led centres six believed they would be able to generate sufficient income.

**Figure 11.8: The proportion of *myplace* centres able to generate sufficient income over the next five years to run the services and activities planned by lead provider type**
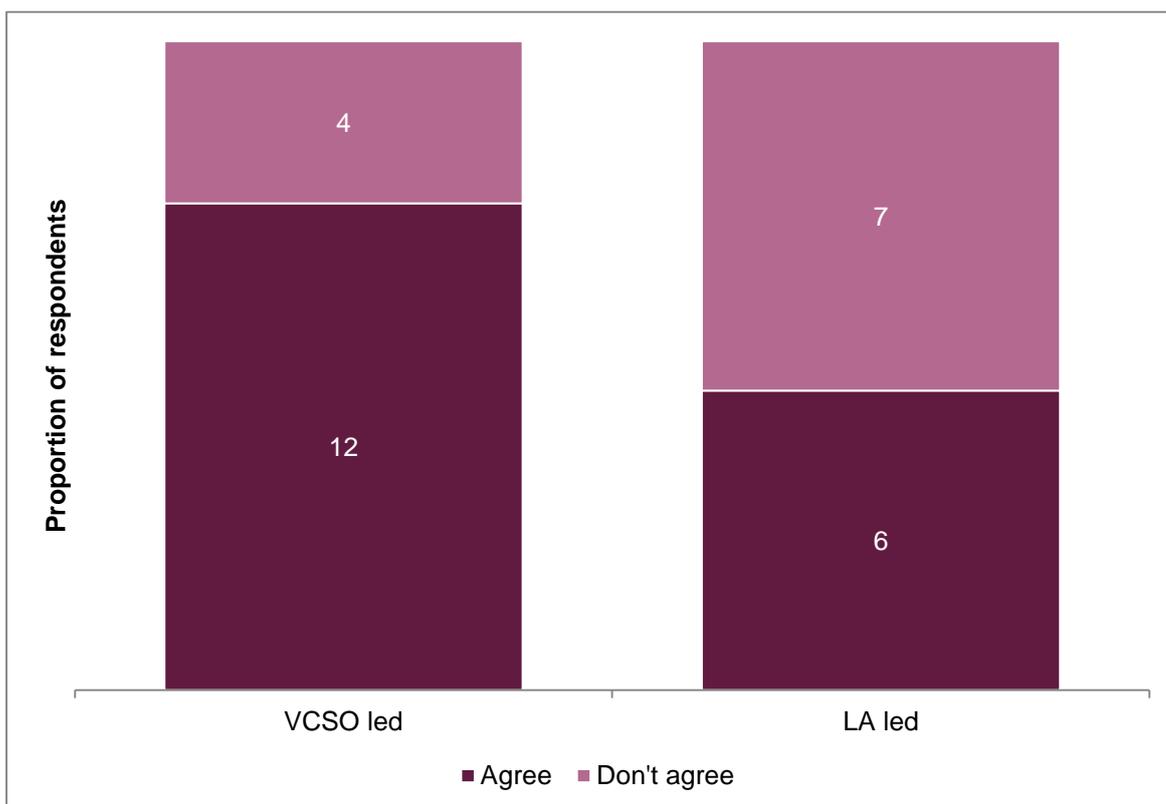


Source: ***myplace*** provider survey two (December 2012)
Base: 29

11.42. Collectively Figures 11.7 and 11.8 suggest that ***myplace*** centres being led by voluntary and community sector organisations are most likely to be struggling to generate sufficient income in the short term when compared with local authority led centres. However, they also indicate that VCSO-led centres are more likely to be positive about their longer term financial sustainability than local authority led organisations.

11.43. This finding, along with the earlier finding about centres in receipt of a large proportion of their income from local authorities, is likely to be linked to public sector budget cuts and uncertainty about the future of local authority spending priorities: although many local authorities have been able to support the costs of ***myplace*** centres in the immediate future (i.e. the next year), they are unable to commit to providing this level of support in the longer term (i.e. two years hence). Indeed, there is evidence from the case studies that local authorities have already indicated to centres that they will be able to provide less revenue funding in the future.

11.44. Evidence from the case studies suggests there are a number of other factors associated with the financial sustainability of ***myplace*** centres.

11.45. Some centres appear to have realistically predicted their operating costs while others reported that there had been **unforeseen costs associated with the buildings such as repairs, on-going maintenance, high utility bills and snagging**. For example, one centre reported that although the project feasibility study suggested the centre would be cost neutral and sustainable the project changed during development and many of the income generating ideas did not materialise. In particular the loss of proposed hostel accommodation as a hostel was detrimental to

income generation potential. In addition, business rates and utilities are expensive and bills are being received that were not considered. The building current budget is not sufficient to sustain the building, thus the centre has to make a £100,000 saving in the first year.

11.46. Another centre reported that a key challenge is maintaining the high quality facilities – which are crucial to attract private sector investment on which sustainability depends. Although a substantial funding stream for maintenance and repair of centre and facilities is built into funding model running costs have been higher than anticipated and it will be challenging to maintain dedicated resources. Issues have included wear and tear on building and furnishings and need for frequent replacement of equipment.

11.47. However, not all centre underestimated their operating costs during the planning stage. For example at one centre the building running costs are high as it is an old listed building but the initial budget provided an inflated estimate of the first year costs of operation. This therefore afforded a degree of movement in the budget.

### *Wider sustainability*

11.48. Both *myplace* centre provider surveys asked respondents a range of questions about the wider long term sustainability of their centre. Their responses to both surveys were largely positive. More than nine out ten respondents were confident that over the next five years they would:

- maintain or increase the involvement of young people in activities
- be able to run and maintain the building(s) in good working order
- establish or develop relationships with the local community
- be at the forefront of youth service provision in the area.

11.49. Fewer respondents were positive about the likelihood they would establish or develop relationships with private sector organisations with a view to attracting funding (provider survey 1 - 75 per cent; provider survey 2 - 62 per cent) and only a small minority said they would use loans or other forms of social investment to finance the running of the centre (provider survey 1 - 10 per cent; provider survey 2 - 21 per cent), although this evidence suggests that views on this are changing.

11.50. This chapter has presented evidence on the approaches that different centres have taken to generating revenue income and on their prospects for (financial) sustainability. The evidence suggests that centres are pursuing a range of strategies to generate income and that these are relevant to local contexts and are dependent on what is offered by centres, and what is available locally. Public sector funding remains important for the sustainability of centres and although most centres are optimistic about their sustainability prospects, those that have most control over income sources - i.e. those that generate substantial proportions of income from charging for services or business sponsorship - are the most likely to report confidence in their financial sustainability.

The final chapter of this report contains the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

# Conclusions and recommendations

<span style="color:crimson">**12**</span>

12.1.    This report has presented evidence on the development, delivery, impacts, costs and sustainability of youth centres funded through the ***myplace*** programme.    The evidence is mixed. There is little doubt that the programme has delivered high quality youth facilities, which offer young people the opportunity to engage in positive out of school activities and which have succeeded in attracting young people who have not previously attended this sort of provision. Young people also attend ***myplace*** centres more frequently than other centres. Importantly, young people value the centres and they are a highly symbolic demonstration of a commitment to provision for young people at a time when investment in youth services is declining.    Young people report a range of benefits to emerge from their attendance at youth centres but the evidence suggests that impact of the centres has been limited on the measures tested through this evaluation, with the exceptions of exercise and enjoyment of school, where there is clear evidence of programme impact.    The non-statutory nature of youth provision means that financial insecurity is not new for the sector, but ***myplace*** centres face specific issues in relation to the generation of revenue monies, which are made particularly acute by the need to maintain the buildings, and the evidence presented here suggests that some are better equipped than others to face tasks of meeting the needs of young people whilst also pursuing commercial activities.

12.2.    It is important to place these findings in context: the centres are the product of a programme developed in a very different political and fiscal climate. The business models for some ***myplace*** centres have changed dramatically since inception, and a key theme to emerge from this evaluation is the effect that the current economic climate has had on the centres' trajectories. Cuts in public sector budgets have meant that in some cases local authorities have not been able to give the level of support they may have previously anticipated, contributing to difficult financial challenges, and in others service restructuring and budget cuts have led to redundancies or fear of job losses which have made it more difficult to respond to the priorities of young people.

12.3.    The conclusions and recommendations emerging from the evaluation are presented under four headings: delivering provision through youth centres; costs of provision; revenue planning; measuring impact.

## Delivering provision

12.4.    The ***myplace*** centres provide examples of open access youth centres which have successfully attracted young people to participate in positive activities. Open access provision, with an emphasis on sport and social activities is popular with young people and contributes to outcomes such as improved levels of exercise.

12.5.    However, not all centres are providing access to information, advice and guidance in the ways in which they originally anticipated. Youth workers are supporting young people informally but the objective of the programme, to deliver access to services for young people seems to have been only partially met, possibly because in some areas cuts to public sector services have reduced the capacity for services to engage in *myplace* provision. Relatively small numbers of young people (as a proportion of those attending overall) are engaging with services through *myplace* centres. This has important implications for the impact of the programme. Where services are located within provision evidence from the case study sites is that this can lead to efficiencies in delivery, with potential for improved outcomes for young people. There is no doubt that individual young people have benefited enormously from service interventions and there are examples within this report of young people whose lives have been changed substantially as a result of the support they have received through *myplace* provision (including some of the most severely disadvantaged young people, such as those with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness). There are currently not enough of them for that to translate into improved outcomes at the programme level, but it can be anticipated that engagement with service will increase as the numbers of young people attending *myplace* centres continues to rise.

12.6.    The possible exception is around support for education.  *myplace* centres have provided a range of alternative curriculum services, and support for those disengaged or excluded from mainstream provision (often linked to funding streams which provide for provision for children not in mainstream education).  Evidence from our case studies is that *myplace* centres provide stimulating and engaging environments in which to deliver this support, and the evidence around improved outcomes in the education and learning theme suggests that young people benefit from services which improve their attitudes towards school.

12.7.    The evaluation has revealed evidence on some of the factors associated with successful provision. These are not especially innovative, but provide important lessons, both for improving existing provision and for future investment. Having the right set of skills (which include working with young people, but also enterprise, income generation and facilities management) in place early, and having a 'champion' in place to drive forward project development are key. Balancing the priorities of young people with building functionality (and cost) and potential for commercial activity needs to be considered at an early stage. And building a high profile locally, and providing flexible activities which appeal to young people, and over which young people have genuine influence, are important in encouraging young people to attend youth centres.

12.8.    Partnership working is integral to the programme but it has been adversely affected in some centres by changes in the external climate.  And the degree to which young people are involved in decision making varies enormously across centres, and across the programme as a whole young people report that they would like a greater degree of influence in decisions about the centres. There is scope in  particular to involve young people more in discussions around opening times and commercial activities.

12.9.    A number of recommendations emerge from this evidence:

- open access provision offers the potential to deliver targeted support to young people, and providers and commissioners need to consider the balance in youth centres between social activities, which attract young people to provision, and access to services, which may help young people to achieve improved outcomes

- centres need to develop marketing strategies which promote their activities to young people and provide opportunities for them to engage informally in activities and events: these might include engagement with local schools and other youth centres (for instance, offering open days or taster sessions), use of social media to promote and review activities; and involving young people in promotion events and activities

- centres need to be able to respond flexibly to the priorities of young people: this will sometimes mean changing activities, or varying opening hours according to the needs of young people

- centres need to have in place a range of skills which include not only working with young people, but also skills in partnership working, enterprise activity and facilities management. It is inappropriate for youth workers to take on all of these tasks and the scale of *myplace* provision demands that specialist skills and resources be in place

- centres need to review their strategies for involving young people in decision making, with a view towards sustained and meaningful engagement of young people in decision making across all aspects of provision, including potential commercial activity. Good practice examples include those which offer a range of opportunities for young people to be involved and supported in decision making through informal discussions as well as formal representation on management groups and boards

- young people report that the relationships they develop with adults at *myplace* centres are important in creating positive and welcoming environments in which they feel respected, and they value the support they get from *myplace* centre staff. The role of youth workers in these centres is vital. However, some centres are not fully staffed, and there is a need for centres (and their funders and commissioners) to ensure that their staffing strategies support continuity and stability in these relationships

- volunteers are vital for project viability but should not been seen as a cheap option. Strategies for attracting, and managing, volunteers need to be in place and resourced to ensure that volunteers are supported to deliver positive experiences for young people.

## Costs of provision

12.10. The analysis of the costs and value of *myplace* centres suggest that the current costs of operating the centres are high, when compared to current values, although there is no comparable evidence on the costs of other provision. In some ways this is to be expected: the programme was not designed for economy. The ambition to develop 'world class' youth facilities has been interpreted in this capital programme through ambitious architecture and high quality specifications. There is evidence that these factors are important, in attracting both young people and investors to the centres, and it can be anticipated that costs per head will fall as the numbers of young people attending the centres continue to grow. There are also likely to be additional impacts for young people in the longer term which this evaluation has not captured, and the assessment of value does not capture aspects such as the values associated with volunteering or regeneration impacts.

12.11. Additionality is high, but operating costs have been higher than expected for some centres and there are widespread issues in relation to lack of staffing because of resource restrictions.

12.12. The recommendations in this theme relate to monitoring the on-going costs of provision and considering aspects of economy in future capital investments:

- local authorities should recognise the potential for open access provision to offer positive activities to large numbers of young people and maintain a commitment to contributing towards the costs of open access youth centres as part of wider strategies to deliver the Positive for Youth agenda

- centres need to be able to demonstrate the on-going costs of provision to potential investors; this requires that they collect robust data on the numbers of young people engaging in activities

- close scrutiny of the on-going costs of maintaining the provision would be beneficial, in particular in determining the impacts of increases in user numbers, the costs associated with maintaining the buildings, and the unit costs associated with centres when they run at full capacity.

## Revenue Funding

12.13. The evidence from *myplace* is that centres are pursuing a range of strategies to generate revenue. There is no golden bullet, or 'ideal' type of income generation strategy or funding model, and the strategies that centres pursue are relevant to context: what youth centres offer and what else is available locally, and priorities of the public and private sectors. However, those centres with the most 'control' over their income generation, through for example charging for the use of centre facilities or business sponsorship, emerge from the evaluation to be more confident that they can cover the costs of centre operation in the long term, and it is in these areas that there is scope for youth centres to develop strategies.

12.14. The evaluation has also highlighted the importance of public sector funding to the sustainability of youth provision. Most centres are unlikely to be sustainable without long term financial commitment from their local authority. This message emerges strongly from the case studies and is reinforced by responses to the provider surveys. There is also some evidence from case studies that public sector investment can provide a strong basis from which to lever in additional funds (for instance from the private sector, as in the Onside centre, Blackburn Youth Zone).

12.15. The long term sustainability of centres is therefore linked to local public sector funding priorities and in particular a commitment to open access youth provision. Local commissioning strategies need to consider the role of open access provision in meeting the needs of young people, and in the context of the Positive for Youth Priorities.

12.16. Recommendations to emerge from this theme include

- centres need to develop innovative and robust strategies for generating revenue and diversifying income; charging policies offer some scope for raising revenue but are dependent on the nature of facilities and activities on offer, and subsidies are crucial in attracting young people to provision

- centres need to further explore the prospects for engaging private sector investors; some centres have developed skills in this area and there is potential for sharing best practice across the *myplace* centre network and beyond

- local authorities need to consider maintaining a contribution to open access youth centres, in the context of an overall mixed portfolio of funding; and local strategies for youth provision should support *myplace* centres in their efforts to generate revenue income by brokering engagement with schools and other statutory providers.

## Measuring Impact

12.17.   The evaluation has also revealed some useful evidence in relation to best practice in measuring the impact of youth centres. One issue has been lack of practice in relation to impact measurement.  It also highlights the methodological challenge of measuring the outcomes associated with youth centres and there are a number of lessons providers such as ***myplace*** centres, and funders and commissioners such as DfE and BIG, should consider when evaluating the impact of youth centres in the future. These are associated with practice and practicalities of measuring outcome change with young people as well as which outcomes are actually measured:

- there is a need for policy makers to continue to develop the evidence base on the impact of youth centres, particularly in relation to the longer term impacts of engagement.  A longer term longitudinal study would be valuable in increasing understanding of the relationships between short term attendance at youth centres and longer term benefits such as improved attainment; we would caution against assuming these longer term benefits accrue for all young people attending youth centres as on the basis of the evidence presented here the numbers benefitting are likely to be small. There is also a need to understand better the factors affecting a young person's life beyond their engagement with youth provision, including engagement with other statutory and voluntary services, and there is a need for more robust evidence on the monetary values associated with the outcomes of open-access provision. One option may be to explore the contribution of these outcomes to social well-being

- youth centres need to develop systems for gathering accurate data on the numbers and characteristics of young people attending, and on the activities and interventions that they are exposed to. Understanding more clearly the types of intervention a young person receives in youth centres (outputs), and the link with desired outcomes is vital to robust impact assessment. There are a range of frameworks and tools available, which are relevant to the impact of youth centres, and which will help centres understand the impact of their work[30]. Centres need to consider which are relevant to their needs and take account of the starting points for the young people they are working with

- centres should consider looking at the relationships between particular interventions taking place in youth centres and a smaller number of specific outcomes. It may be preferable to make a robust case to investors for contributing to some Positive for Youth outcomes than to present less reliable evidence across a wide range of outcomes

- a baseline needs to be established as soon as possible following a young person's engagement with youth provision. This might involve embedding standard data collection procedures into registration processes for all young people accessing youth centres

- outcome change should be measured at regular intervals and over longer time periods: improving outcomes for young people is not a linear process, and young people's views and experiences may alter at different points in time. It is important to look at trends in outcomes, particularly in relation to issues such as confidence and well-being

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[30]   These include the Young Foundation framework of outcomes for young people (http://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people/), and New Philanthropy Capital well-being measure for young people (http://www.well-beingmeasure.com/) and Impact Measurment in the NEET's sector (http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/impact-measurement-in-the-neets-sector-2/)

- on-going sharing of best-practice across the ***myplace*** network would help centres to develop impact measurement. This might include examples of the application of particular tools and frameworks, and examples of innovative ways to collect data, particularly those which involve young people in determining (and evaluating) approaches.