

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

WESTER HAILES YOUTH AGENCY

JULY 2007

◆ EDINBURGH ◆
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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2 IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

3 POLICY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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THE ORGANISATION IN CONTEXT

Wester Hailes Youth Agency (WHYA) was established in October 1997 following a merger of local youth work projects in the area.

Due to funding difficulties the project underwent a major staffing restructuring in mid-2006, resulting in a reduction of full time posts from four to two; a project co-ordinator and a senior youth worker. The project co-ordinator post had also been vacant for a period of seven months and was filled in August 2006. The project administrator post was removed and a team of ten sessional youth workers was established to deliver much of the project's face to face youth work. Human resource management, financial administration and cleaning were contracted out to independent companies. The project employs a maintenance assistant for ten hours per week.

The organisation receives an annual Revenue Grant from the City of Edinburgh Council Children and Families Department. This totalled £107,884 in financial year 2006–2007. The project was also in receipt of annual funding from the local Community Planning Partnership regeneration fund of £52,196 in 2006–2007. Additional project funding had been obtained from successful applications to grant giving bodies and charitable trust funds including Scottish Natural Heritage and The Robertson Trust. These funds are scheduled to terminate at the end of financial year 2006–2007.

The project operated a varied weekly programme of activities. These included drop in sessions, groupwork, streetwork, environmental education, work in schools and individual support. Project provision targeted children and young people in the age range eight years to twenty five years.

The project's offices are situated in the Dumbryden neighbourhood of Wester Hailes on the boundary of the historically significant Quarry Park. In addition to being the main office base for project staff, this building is also used for small group activities and

one to one work with young people. The project also owns the Pyramid Youth Centre which is closely located to the office base and is used by the project for work with groups of young people and weekly evening and weekend 'drop-in' sessions, it is also available for hire by other organisations.

The project had produced a three year development plan for the period 2004–2007. Restructuring of the project had resulted in some areas of the development plan being superseded. At the time of the review the project co-ordinator and senior youth worker had started the process of reviewing the existing plan and identifying areas of work and new developments for inclusion in a new three year plan.

The main aims and objectives of the project detailed within the development plan are:

'Wester Hailes Youth Agency strives to promote, establish and operate sustainable services and facilities, which integrate environmental, social and economic factors for the benefit of young people aged 8–25 within Wester Hailes and the surrounding communities of Broomhouse, Sighthill, Parkhead, Longstone, Juniper Green and Baberton'; 'We believe that the needs, abilities and aspirations of young people should be recognised, understood and met with within a supportive environment which encourages them to achieve their goals and make real measurable progress.'

REVIEW REMIT

The remit for the review was agreed with the project co-ordinator and confirmed at a meeting of the management board.

It was agreed that the review would focus on the authority themes of impact on service users, impact on the local community, policy development and planning and partnership working.

The quality indicators from *How Good is our Community Learning and Development 2?* were used as the basis for the review and the six point Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) evaluative scale was used.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

The project co-ordinator provided comprehensive background information to the review team. This included project programmes, development plan, annual reports, staffing details, management board membership, project reports, publicity, annual accounts and participant evaluations. A self evaluation was also conducted and submitted in line with departmental review procedures.

The review team interviewed project staff, the management board, young people, representatives from partner organisations and the local elected member.

The majority of groups and activities involving project staff were also observed. A small survey of service users who were unable to meet with the review team was also undertaken and 14 returns were received.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW

1 IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS

Impact on service users was very good overall. Programmes offered a wide variety of activities and opportunities to children and young people. These included open access weekend and evening drop-in sessions for primary and secondary school aged children and young people. They also offered traditional youth work activities including a Saturday morning breakfast club. Streetwork and groupwork with an environmental focus were also included in the weekly project programme.

The project worked with local primary and secondary schools offering activities that responded to needs identified or that related to the curriculum.

These included:

- ✿ lunchtime drop-in sessions run by project staff for young people who were identified as vulnerable in school;

- ✿ training and supporting peer educators to deliver alcohol and drug education sessions;
- ✿ sexual health education sessions for senior students;
- ✿ developing and facilitating John Muir Award groups that were included in environmental studies modules within geography courses;
- ✿ ‘Buddy’ support where senior students had been trained to support and mentor first year students who were isolated or vulnerable in the high school environment.

Enabling students to undertake the introductory ‘Discovery’ level of the John Muir Award had enhanced the learning experience of some and had impacted positively on others who experienced behavioural difficulties in the school environment.

The majority of participants engaged well in project activities. However some young people displayed challenging behaviour and attitudes that occasionally resulted in their exclusion from drop in provision or other groups. Overall, relationships between project staff and young people were very positive. Young people who had been excluded from project provision were encouraged to meet with staff individually to discuss the circumstances around their exclusion and to negotiate re-entry to the group or club.

The project had attained the necessary criteria to become a c-card outlet. Some staff had undertaken sexual health and relationship education training (SHARE) and were able to give sexual health advice and access to contraceptives to young people. This facility was regularly used by young people reflecting the positive and trusting relationships that existed between project staff and young people. One sessional worker also contributed to providing a weekly sexual health drop in session for young people at the local health centre. This initiative had been developed by Healthy Respect, a Scottish Executive funded project that aimed to make sexual health services and advice accessible to young people across the city

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through partnerships with health professionals and local youth work providers.

More recent initiatives established by the project included the 'Think Twice' programme. Young people who had committed offences and had been charged by the police were referred to this group by the police Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) via the Pupil Support Group (PSG) at a local high school.

The programme aimed to enable young people to think twice about the consequences of their behaviour and actions. Not all participants successfully completed the one week course. Those that did received a certificate and continued to receive individual support from a WHYA project worker for a six month period. Workers used a variety of methods that enabled young people to continue to explore issues around choice and behaviour and the outcomes of their actions with the aim of reducing the likelihood of them committing further offences. It was planned to deliver this course again with a new group of referred young people prior to the Easter school holidays. The project co-ordinator had undertaken to redevelop course materials and activities at the time of the review and utilised evaluations by previous participants and staff from partner organisations to inform this process.

Evaluations completed by young people highlighted learning they had experienced from participation in activities or groups. Some young people said their experiences had increased their confidence, made them feel safer. They had used some of these in other situations, for example in interviews or when making vocational choices.

Each session was also recorded by staff on a computer based system 'Quad' that had been developed for the project. All staff used this tool which enabled quantitative data and other information about each activity or group to be recorded. Issues that had arisen during sessions or tasks that required to be undertaken before the next session were also recorded and actioned.

2 IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Impact on the local community was good. The project had responded effectively to specific issues in different neighbourhoods within the community. For example, local community police officers and local residents had expressed concern about the impact young people engaging in anti-social behaviour were having in the Longstone neighbourhood. By allocating resources to this area, project staff engaged with these young people through a programme of streetwork. The outcome of this intervention was the development of new youth work provision within the area by the project in partnership with the local Community Learning and Development (CLD) youth work team. The local community police confirmed that this development had resulted in a considerable reduction in anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood by young people.

Environmentally focused work undertaken by the project with local schools had contributed to the achievement of Eco School status by one high school and a primary school.

Project restructuring had enabled continuation of many programmes and activities. However, notification about changes within the project had not been clearly communicated across the area. Many partner organisations and other stakeholders were unclear about work the project continued to undertake since its restructuring. Some partners intimated that local people were unclear about the opportunities still available to young people within the project.

The project website gave details of weekly programmes. However it required updating and also required to be publicised more widely.

It is recommended that the project uses local mediums, for example the *West Edinburgh Times* to publicise its programmes and re-launch its website to highlight its work. The project staff were participating in a review of youth work in the area jointly with other agencies.

Funding agreements that existed between the project, the local authority and local community planning partnership ensured WHYA contributed to strategic developments in the area. Targets set in funding agreements for the financial year 2006–2007 had been met. Project staff required to make a greater and more consistent contribution to strategic groups that focused on youth work in the area. This would ensure the profile of the project increased and ensure they kept abreast of and contributed to, strategic changes or developments within the community planning partnership area.

Provision for young people from Longstone had also been developed one evening per week in the Pyramid youth centre as part of the project’s funding agreement. Uptake by the target group had not been successful despite the best efforts of WHYA staff. This initiative was not a good use of project resources. One major factor that impacted on young people’s uptake was the strong territorial culture that existed across the area between young people living in different neighbourhoods. This often prevented young people participating in provision outwith their own neighbourhoods and added to local concerns about youth issues across the area.

It is recommended that this provision is terminated. The project should identify how these resources can be used to contribute to addressing other youth work priorities within the area. This requires to be agreed with the departmental link officer.

There were eight local people, all under twenty five years of age working as volunteers in the project. They had undertaken a variety of relevant training and were working with young people in various project youth work provision.

The project management board consisted of a group of four local people and met monthly. Meetings were well structured and the co-ordinator and senior youth worker reported to the board at meetings. However, board membership was just within the quorum detailed in their articles of association. Board members were clearly committed to the work of the project

and also contributed to other local community groups and forums. They acknowledged the need to strengthen their membership and were keen to attract professionals with appropriate skills onto the board that would enhance their own experience and be of further benefit to the project.

It is recommended that relevant members of the local CLD team work with the project co-ordinator and board members to identify a strategy to enable the project to increase membership of the management board.

3 POLICY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This was good overall. All sessional staff underwent a structured induction process when they commenced work with the project. Induction was complemented by a staff handbook that contained policies and procedures. The handbook was of a very good standard and was updated regularly. All staff were aware of policies and procedures and applied those relevant to service delivery within their work. Staff had also undertaken training in these areas including child protection, first aid and health and safety.

Planning of programmes developed by the project was very good with aims and objectives clearly linked to activities contained within each session. These sessions were also consistently recorded and evaluated by staff on the Quad system.

Young people completed evaluations of each session they had participated in. Staff from partner organisations also contributed to the evaluation of programmes. For example teachers whose pupils attended environmental education groups completed mid and end of programme evaluations.

Continuous improvement planning and further development of ‘issue specific’ programmes was evident through the use of these evaluations.

Open access drop in sessions in the Pyramid youth centre were not subject to the same degree of planning. The nature of this work was considerably different to other provision delivered by the project.

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Staff were unable to predict numbers of young people that would arrive at each session. The need for such provision in the community was recognised by the project and many partner organisations. However numbers of young people attending some sessions tended to be low which was confirmed by nightly recording sheets.

Staff engaged positively with young people who attended drop-ins. Activities available tended to be the same at each session and included indoor football, pool and use of computers.

A computer usage policy had been developed and was displayed in the building. Young people undertook an induction 'test' before being able to use the machines. In spite of the safeguards that were in place, staff did not constantly monitor young people's computer use which was observed to mainly be accessing on-line messaging services. This required to be addressed due to its unsuitability as a youth work activity and the potential risk posed to young people from engaging in on-line messaging.

More creative and educational use of computers was required. Greater monitoring of young people's computer use should be implemented until alternative activities are developed.

Some young people tended to lose interest towards the end of evening drop-in sessions and became disruptive. The overall quality of these sessions would be enhanced by staff engaging more effectively with young people. Young people should be more involved in planning activities and decision making for these sessions.

Quality indicators were not used within the project when evaluating areas of work. Full time staff acknowledged the need to enhance evaluation by incorporating relevant quality indicators into existing evaluation processes including the 'Quad' system.

It is recommended that the Children and Families Quality Improvement team assist the project with this task.

All sessional youth workers received regular support and supervision from the senior youth

worker. A system of annual appraisal was also in place. Sessional staff valued the support and supervision they received and were encouraged to attend training opportunities that were available from a variety of sources to enhance their personal and professional development.

The project co-ordinator line managed the senior youth worker and was responsible to the management board, no formal supervision arrangement was in place for the co-ordinator.

It is recommended that the management board in conjunction with the co-ordinator identify and implement a suitable professional supervision arrangement for the current post holder.

4 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working was good overall. The project engaged with a variety of partners within and outwith the area including: the countryside ranger service, local primary and secondary schools, Community Learning and Development, Community Police officers and Healthy Respect. Many partner organisations commented on the positive working relationships they had with the project and the added value it brought to various aspects of their work. By promoting and running the John Muir Award project staff had developed skills and expertise in environmental activities that was not available elsewhere in the area which had clearly been of benefit to participants and other organisations alike.

Partner organisations highlighted the project's willingness to contribute to addressing youth issues that arose within the community. This included enabling project resources to be used or working directly in partnership with other organisations.

Various organisations drew attention to the high level of territorialism amongst young people living in different neighbourhoods within the community. Attempts had been made to address this issue with little success. The project had, as part of its funding agreement, developed provision for young people from a particular neighbourhood in the Pyramid

Youth Centre. This initiative failed to attract significant numbers of young people, in spite of the project utilising other methods to increase numbers attending. This was not effective use of project resources.

It is recommended that continuation of this provision is renegotiated with the funding department to redirect resources for use in addressing other youth work needs within the community.

The project programme was a good balance of partnership work and their own provision. It ran six days per week with morning, afternoon and evening sessions provided on most days. Increased project profile and greater highlighting of opportunities available to young people would contribute to increasing numbers of participants, particularly in open access drop-in sessions.

SUMMARY

Commendable features

- ✦ Following major project restructuring, Wester Hailes Youth Agency continued to deliver very good quality youth work provision.
- ✦ The full time and sessional youth work staff team worked well together and had very good working relationships with young people who participated in project activities and groups.
- ✦ The project offered a good quality programme that included morning, afternoon, evening and weekend sessions six days per week.
- ✦ The project had good working arrangements with a variety of partner organisations.
- ✦ Project policies and procedures were of a very good standard that all staff applied in their practice. Sessional staff were also well supported and had undertaken a variety of training relevant to their work.

Areas for development by the organisation

- ✦ It is recommended that the project uses local mediums, for example the *West Edinburgh Times* to publicise its programmes and re-develops its website to highlight its work and increase its profile within the area.

- ✦ Full time project staff required to make a greater and more consistent contribution to strategic groups that focused on youth work and related issues within the community planning area.
- ✦ It is recommended that provision specifically developed in the Pyramid youth centre for young people living in Longstone is terminated and the project identifies how these resources are used to contribute to other youth work priorities within the area. This requires to be agreed with the departmental link officer.
- ✦ It is recommended that staff initiate additional activities using available resources to engage young people more in drop-in sessions. Young people should also be more involved in planning activities and decision making for these sessions.
- ✦ More creative and educational use of computers was required. Greater monitoring of young people's computer use should be implemented until alternative activities using these resources are developed.

Areas for development by the authority

- ✦ It is recommended that relevant members of the local CLD team work with the project co-ordinator and board members to identify a strategy to enable the project to increase membership of the management board.
- ✦ It is recommended that the Children and Families Quality Improvement team assist the project to incorporate relevant quality indicators into evaluation systems.

The criteria for judgements made in this report are as follows:

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| Excellent: | outstanding performance |
| Very good: | major strengths |
| Good: | strengths clearly outweigh weaknesses |
| Adequate: | strengths just outweigh weaknesses |
| Weak: | some important weaknesses |
| Unsatisfactory: | major weaknesses |

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