



Consulting with young people in the South West on Youth Matters

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Appendix 1: Outline of the consultation sessions

1. Background to the consultation

1.1 Aims

The purpose of the consultation exercise was to solicit the views of a range of young people on issues relating to the Youth Matters green paper. Specifically, we were interested in finding out about the young people's participation in arts-related activities, their relationship with libraries, museums, archives and other arts venues and their ideas around safer communities, citizenship and volunteering.

1.2 Format

There were three consultation exercises carried out on the same day, each lasting for approximately 90 minutes and following a similar format, with some open questions, some restricted (card-sorting) options and an element of free discussion. It was stressed to the young people that there were no right answers and that their views would be extremely valuable to SWMLAC, The Reading Agency and Arts Council England, and ultimately to the government. Attempts were made to ensure that all of the young people were able to contribute to discussions although, inevitably, some voices were heard more than others. A detailed description of the consultation format is attached as Appendix 1.

1.3 The groups involved

Group 1: The group consisted of 6 boys and 10 girls who were all white and of mixed ages. They were mainly from local (somewhat deprived) areas and participants in TR2's outreach programme – The Obstacle Race. A few of the group members were part of a photography club. Some of the group members were siblings (2 teenage sisters with their brother; one younger brother and sister).

Group 2: The group consisted of 7 boys and 2 girls who were all white and aged between 10 and 15. 2 had been to TR2 before for Obstacle Race activities and 4 young people were involved in a teen reading group. The group were of mixed socio-economic backgrounds.

Group 3: The group consisted of 7 girls and 6 boys. 10 young people were white, 3 girls were black. Most of the group were 15-18, with a few much younger children. Most of the group were involved in the Barbican Theatre and TR2's drama groups. 3 were involved in Munchbunch (a museum activity group). 3 were home educated. 2 were dyslexic.

2. Results of the consultation

2.1 How young people spend their time.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<p>Relaxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to music • Playstation • Friends • Watching TV • Going to the park with mates • Computer games – if it's a new game they spend a lot of time on it • Shopping • Going to (heavy metal) concerts <p>Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing rugby • Skateboarding • One boy played football every Saturday • Ice skating <p>Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singing • Dance and drama at TR2 especially break dancing and street dancing • Art 	<p>Relaxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching TV • Playstation • Meeting friends/ hanging around • Playing on the internet <p>Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All involved in some kind of sport • 6 people played football • Riding bikes • Basketball <p>Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing art • 3 liked reading • Breakdancing • Playing keyboard • Acting • Singing in a band 	<p>Relaxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanging around with friends • Barbecues on the beach • Computer • Talking to people • Hanging round shops • Playstation • Eating • Relaxing/chilling out • Watching TV <p>Sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body boarding • Skating • Rock climbing • Skateboarding • About half were involved in sports <p>Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piano • Theatre • Reading • Acting • Performing Arts • Dancing / musical theatre / jazz • Projects with the museum – fossil display; photography project • Singing – including in choirs • Painting • Photography • Collecting things • All involved in arts

2.2 Current use of cultural services

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<p>Libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 people go to the library – to relax, do homework; “to get away from the madhouse at home” (A young man who was 1 of 7 children) • Several had been involved in Summer Reading Challenge – certificate and medal <p>Museums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people had visited a museum – they went with a youth club – they didn’t think it was a very interesting activity for young people <p>Archives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-one had heard of archives 	<p>Libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 people visit the library • 4 people take part in a reading group • They use the library for the computers, to do homework research and to read <p>Museums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 people had visited a museum – they had been to a Dinosaur exhibition, an exhibition of a cousin’s artwork and a Walking the Beast exhibition. <p>Archives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was some awareness of archives and a few people had used them for homework. 	<p>Libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All but 3 use the library • They mainly use the computers to do research • One young man does his homework there – finds it quite peaceful and not distracting • They were disappointed that libraries don’t always have the books they would expect them to have – e.g. books on communism • Some young people go to read plays before taking acting exams • They listen to tapes for drama • They hang out in the school/public library • One young man who is home educated uses the library to study • They borrow CDs and DVDs <p>Museum experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed living history / what it used to be like would be good • They had been to the Science Museum in Leicester, IMAX Theatre in Bristol, Royal Albert Memorial Museum

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2.3 Things that stop young people being involved in extra-curricular activities

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who go there • Cost • Timings • Friends • Homework • Transport • Location • Laziness • Influence of parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure from parents • Cost • Friends • Homework • The people who go there • Transport and location and timing (all interlinked) • Laziness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost • Location and transport and timing • Homework • Family pressure • Pressure from friends • People who go there • Can't be bothered

2.3.1 Peer pressure

The role of others in determining how young people spent their time was clearly a significant factor. Several young people mentioned the role of bullies in putting them off attending various groups, in addition to other conflicts, such as one young man whose sister was having a fight with the daughter of a group leader. They also felt that often people in clubs and activities were cliquey and not keen to let newcomers in.

Generally speaking the young people felt more nervous going to groups when their usual group of friends were not attending:

“It’s probably one of the first things that goes through your mind – ‘will my friend go with me?’”

Some also said that if their friends didn’t approve of the activity it would stop them from going. In each of the groups, though, there were young people who recognised that friends shouldn’t have the power to determine how they spent their time:

“Some people are very sheepish and won’t go but you shouldn’t care about what they think.”

The young people who were involved in drama appeared more able to resist peer pressure, claiming that you had to be confident to get on a stage, although one young man said it was difficult to be one of the only boys involved in a dance class. They also mentioned that competitive spirit in sport could be off-putting. One girl who regularly visited the library mentioned that she might be embarrassed going into the library if, for instance, a nice-looking boy saw her.

2.3.2 Transport, location, timings and cost

Transport, location, timings and cost were usually seen to be quite important in affecting whether young people were able to attend activities. It was clear that some parents were

prepared to be a 'taxi service' for their children, while others were not. The numbers of children in the family and the income bracket was also important; families with more children were unable to get all of their children to different activities and having no car obviously prevented some parents from providing this service, thus penalising their children. One young man was forced to give up singing in the cathedral choir when the person who gave him a lift ceased attending.

Public transport was generally felt to be expensive. One young man mentioned that it cost £2.10 for him to catch the bus to the library. There was also an issue concerning parents' perceptions of the safety of an area where the activity was taking place and whether it was dark when the event took place. Generally it was felt that 5.30pm was the best time for an event to take place as the young people preferred to be able to go home and get changed first. The young people consistently felt that the closer the activity was to home, the more likely they were to attend.

The cost of activities was clearly important, although a lot of the young people said that they were able to take part in some activities for free. Parents were seen to prioritise activities that they had invested a lot of money in (e.g. music lessons).

2.3.3 Homework

Attitudes to homework varied widely, depending on age and commitment to schoolwork. Parental attitudes were also important; some parents insisted the young people completed homework before going out, by which time they would miss any extra-curricular activity. They felt that if they had just one weekly activity e.g. on a Saturday morning, then they would be likely to prioritise this over homework. The young people who were doing GCSE coursework and those with dyslexia found homework particularly demanding.

2.4 Where young people spend their free time.

The method: Young people each had (roughly) 10 stickers to distribute on a map to represent where they spent their time.

Place	Number of stickers allocated (Group 1)	Number of stickers allocated (Group 2)	Group 3 (stickers not used)
Church	13	3	11
Park	28	13	13
Sports Centre	17	25	13
Museum	2	2	8
Library	4	8	9
Youth Club	26	4	2
Café	7	1	2
Shops	46	19	35
Arts Centre	7	5	5

Theatre	6	4	32
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The results of the map exercise confirm that young people are active consumers who spend a lot of time shopping. Taken together, the young people consulted in this exercise spend significantly more time involved in arts activities than in sports activities; however libraries and museums clearly need to do more to attract this age group.

2.5 What young people want from cultural services

	Probably	Possibly	Not likely
All three groups in agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch bands and go to music festivals • Take part in a film club • Go to the cinema • Take part in art activities • Take part in sports • Take part in music workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be involved in a reading group • Meeting historians and scientists • Make a magazine • Visit art galleries • Take part in archaeology projects with a local museum 	
Two out of the three groups in agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in photography workshops • Re-design spaces in museums and libraries • Be involved in circus skills workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer in the library or museum • Work with authors and illustrators • Research your family history • Put up exhibitions • Take part in theatre productions • Take part in writing groups • Build websites • Take part in dancing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help older people with IT • Visit a museum • Visit National Trust properties • Be involved in local history projects • Take part in a homework club

A lot of activities depended on the context e.g. what the exhibition in a museum was about, which books were being read in a reading group and which authors and illustrators were involved in events. The young people also felt that the content of the websites being built would affect whether they would like to be involved in their creation. Subjects that were of clear interest in relation to museums were pathology and wildlife.

The first group commented that they would be more interested in visiting stately homes at night when they would be more atmospheric/spooky. The third group also suggested that they would be interested in poetry readings.

Some young people commented that there was no need to go to a library because they had their own resources at home. They also felt that “librarians are scary.” One person thought that the benefit of a homework group was that you could ask for help if you were stuck.

Young people (particularly those in Group 2) felt that older people were not pleasant to work with.

“they say ‘in my day’; they tell you off – we do help them in many ways but they still don’t like us”

Some young people felt that the venue itself was relevant e.g. “it’s just the word museum that puts you off”, but most said that if interesting things were happening in museums and libraries, they would be happy to go. They felt that taster sessions would be helpful in giving young people the opportunity to find out what they enjoyed. They felt that libraries shouldn’t be so quiet and that museums should be smaller with more exhibitions about the future and high impact exhibits being strategically placed to get people in.

2.6 Safe and enjoyable spaces for young people

There were mixed responses to whether there were enough safe and enjoyable places for young people to go, although the majority of the young people felt there were not. They commented that there were lots of opportunities for younger children but very little for teenagers. Generally young people in Plymouth felt that if they wanted to have a good time they had to pay a lot for leisure facilities, specifically the aquarium.

There was also an interesting discussion (particularly in Group 2) about whether young people knew about all of the opportunities that are available and how they found out about them. They felt that marketing of the arts was very poor. They were keen that arts venues should advertise on television and said that negative stereotyping of museums and libraries had a big impact on people’s perceptions.

“People say don’t judge a book by it’s cover – so if you go there – it might be good.”

They also suggested that maybe MSN technology could be used for marketing purposes. The young people were generally more aware of sports opportunities than those in the arts, even though most of them were involved in some form of arts activity. The young people were keen to exchange ideas about the various arts activities they were involved in with each other.

Young people mentioned that the pavilion swimming pool was notorious for crime and that they were likely to receive abuse in the city centre.

2.7 Perceptions about the impact of positive activities on crime

The young people consistently suggested that there would be less trouble on the streets if there were more positive activities to engage them, particularly if these were local and appealing e.g. break dancing. They suggested that there would be less clashes between groups of young people e.g. skaters v Goths if they had specific leisure venues. They mentioned that the break dancing group which they attend is run by staff who are young and approachable and they suggested that libraries (for instance) could learn from this.

However, they also felt strongly that there would still be a proportion of young people who would be on the streets, stating that being disengaged was part of their identity. They worried about these young people trashing positive facilities with graffiti.

“More theatres won’t stop the people that want to hang around the streets.”

2.8 Volunteering

2.8.1 Current involvement in voluntary work

One young woman (aged 16) volunteered at a youth club while a young man (a churchgoer) said that he had been involved in scrubbing graffiti off public places. One young person volunteered in the Oxfam shop, another worked with animals and a third helped with a scout group. One young person was an active member of the UK Youth Parliament.

2.8.2 The benefits of volunteering

The young people generally felt positive about voluntary work, saying that it made them feel valuable and positive to be helping others and also that it was helpful for future career prospects. They were clear that involving young people in their communities, projects and buildings would make young people feel proud and more respectful of public spaces.

2.8.3 The kind of volunteering

The young people suggested that they would be particularly interested in helping other smaller children, animals and disabled people. The Munch Bunch group already helped out in the museum and found this enjoyable. Several (but by no means all) young people said they would enjoy volunteering in the library through buying books, redesigning spaces and working on the counter.

2.8.4 Rewards from volunteering

Most of the young people valued the idea of certificates and awards, recognising that they could assist them in finding careers. Being appreciated was important to them; however they were generally less positive about receiving ‘payment’ in terms of gifts, feeling that this detracted from the point of doing something purely to help others. They showed a generally altruistic streak in this sense, believing that the good feeling that volunteering provided was reward enough. Most of the young people were not keen on big award ceremonies unless celebrities were to be involved but they did mention that a trip out would be appropriate reward. They felt strongly that young people could be encouraged to volunteer but they should not be forced.

“When you say you should do this, the rebel in you comes out – so you shouldn’t force young people to volunteer.”

They also commented that it wouldn't change the way young people were viewed by the public as the media persisted in portraying young people in a negative light.

2.9 Information, advice and guidance

The young people had mixed views about the information services that are currently available to them. They were complimentary about the 'Yes' Service in Plymouth, the 'Tic Tac' service in schools and some were positive about the role of Connexions. Some young people, however, felt that the Connexions centre was intimidating and that the advice they received there was not sufficiently personalised or adapted to their specific needs.

Generally they felt that face-to-face advice was the most useful, believing that phone lines may be expensive and considering that the internet wasn't always reliable. They claimed that some young people didn't understand that you couldn't believe everything that you read on the internet.

Several young people said that they would turn to parents for advice unless it was about something particularly embarrassing and they said that talking to people who were anonymous (e.g. on Health Awareness Days at school) had some advantages. Librarians were not seen as people they could ask for help, although they acknowledged that library staff could sometimes be helpful for homework. A significant number of young people said that they would use the library independently for information and guidance purposes, finding the relevant information in books and on the internet.

2.10 Opportunity Cards

About half of the young people already benefited from Plym Cards, mainly using them to receive discounts at swimming pools. However, several of the young people hadn't encountered the Plym Card and others didn't think it particularly useful.

Generally the groups were positive about Opportunity Cards and some felt that parents would top up the cards. One young woman pointed out that it might be more sensible just to make all activities cheaper rather than spending a lot of money on the gimmick of the card.

There were mixed responses to the idea of taking away the privileges of young people who were involved in negative or criminal activities. Some young people felt that it might teach people a lesson but others felt that this kind of sanction would have no impact on the kind of people who were likely to get into trouble and that they would have less to do and would therefore be out causing more trouble. They felt it was important that young people could earn back their privileges through positive actions such as volunteering.

The young people suggested that they would like to receive the following perks as part of the Opportunity Card offer:

- Discounts on swimming and sports
- Shopping discounts
- Free entry to museums
- Bus passes
- Money off group activities

- Free books
- No library fines
- Discount at theatres
- Free dance lessons and facilities
- Cheap concert tickets
- Football tickets
- Wrestling tickets.

3. Conclusion

Arts and cultural facilities have a lot to offer to young people, although the venues need to improve their staffing profile, programming and general atmosphere. Young people would be willing to be involved in the process of updating cultural venues and would be happy to work in them as volunteers; they perceive that if they had more ownership of these spaces it would improve the image of museums, libraries and archives. It is clearly very important to these young people in Plymouth that arts and cultural activities have a higher profile than sports activities in the context of the new Opportunity Card.

Appendix 1: Young people's consultation plan

Background

This document outlines the approach taken during the consultation sessions, which took place during October 2005 in the North West and South West regions. The format of the consultation varied slightly depending on the needs of the group. Specifically, groups in Plymouth were asked more general questions about the arts, where the groups in the North West focused on provision provided by museums, libraries and archives.

Outline Plan of the Consultation Sessions

1 Introduction

Introduce concept of Youth Matters. Youth Matters is about how young people spend their time and feel about their local communities at the moment and how the future will look. Government are thinking about what kind of activities should be provided for young people, how they should be paid for and how young people could be encouraged to feel better about where they live and their place in society.

I am paid by MLA North West/SWMLAC (as appropriate) and The Reading Agency (explain) to find out whether you think the government's ideas are any good. Particularly want to hear about how we could use libraries, museums and archives to improve your feelings about community and as places where you could take part in activities.

2 Section focused on Things to do and places to go.

1 In an average week what proportion of your time do you spend:

- watching TV
- using computers for games, chat rooms, msn etc
- doing homework
- playing sport
- doing arts activities
- hanging out with friends
- other

(Format: Pie chart)

2 What other things do you do in your spare time?

3 If you're involved in activities in library etc do you also use arts centre, theatres etc. Would you like to be?

4 How important are these things in putting you off being involved in activities at the moment? (Format: Card sort – order from most likely to least likely to put you off)

5 Where do you spend your free time?

Stick stickers on map with park, shops, sports centre, library, museum, church, cafe

- 6 Have you been involved in activities at library, museum or archives? (Arts centres, theatres etc)
- 7 Would you like to be involved in any of these kind of activities? (Format: Card sort, Probably, possibly, not likely)
- 8 What puts you off being involved in activities in museums, libraries and archives?
- 9 Should there be more safe and enjoyable places for young people to spend time outside of school?
- 10 If there were more safe spaces and activities what would be the impact on you and your friends? Do you think less young people would get into trouble?
- 11 What would museums, libraries and archives have to do to be seen as safe, enjoyable places for young people to hang out? (Also Arts centres, theatres etc for Plymouth consultation)

3 Section focused on Volunteering/being involved

- 1 How do you feel about your local community? Do you like where you live? Do you feel safe? Do you feel connected to other people? Like you belong? Feel welcome in most public spaces?
- 2 What would make you feel more positive about your local community?
- 3 Do you volunteer/help out in any way at the moment? Coaching kids, visiting old people etc
- 4 Was it good? What do you think the benefits of volunteering are? Would volunteering help you feel more involved in your community?
- 5 How do you feel in museums and libraries? (Arts centres, theatres etc)
- 6 Which of these things would you like to be involved in at museums, libraries, arts centres etc? (Format: Card sort. Probably, possibly, not likely)
- 7 How would you feel if you were involved in these ways?
- 8 What else would make you feel more involved in your community?
- 9 Could being involved in making local history projects, interviewing old people, making exhibitions of photos etc make you feel more like you belong, improve relations?

- 10 What kind of recognition/award would encourage you to help out in your community more? Certificate, cds, top-ups, big events, other. Art displayed in gallery/museum, prize giving etc

4 Section on Information, advice and guidance

- 1 If you need information about the following things where are you most likely to get it? (Format: Card sort – put each issue with the source of information - can go in more than one place)
- 2 Is it better to get information from people or written sources? Pros and cons?
- 3 What role could libraries play in this? Pros and cons of getting information from library?
- 4 Have you ever been involved in an arts activity that helped you to explore personal issues in your life? Could arts be important?

5 Section on Opportunity cards

Explain what an opportunity card is.

- 1 Would a card that gave you discounts and money to spend on activities encourage you to do more activities in your spare time?
- 2 Would parents top it up?
- 3 Should young people who commit crimes not get their cards topped up?
- 4 What things should be available on the opportunity card? What museums, libraries and archives (Arts) things could we do eg free reservations, more IT time, special events, free cds and dvds, free entry to museum and theatre etc
- 5 Would working towards a recognised qualification eg Young People's Arts Award encourage you to do more arts activities?

6 Wrap up

Thank you and distribute gift vouchers.