



## Development Department

Your reference: Consultation on the Draft Action Plans of the CYPSP Regional Sub Groups

Our reference: #135674

Being dealt with by: David Purchase

Date: 30/8/12

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Dear Andrew,

### **RE: Consultation: CYPSP Various plans**

Please find attached our provisional response to this consultation document. Please note that this is still subject to final ratification by full council.

## **Provisional Response**

### **1.1. General comments**

- 1.1.1. Thank you for asking us to comment on these plans.
- 1.1.2. Children and young people are a priority for the Council as can be seen by the substantial resources allocated to play and leisure services. In terms of play alone, Council invests some £1m annually in the inspection, maintenance and equipment replacement in 78 playgrounds across the city. Council deploy 16 play workers in 6 dedicated play centres and other sites across the city, representing a further investment of £650k per annum. Council also employ a Play Development Officer (PDO) to co-ordinate and develop play work practice; provide training, support and resources and manage a city wide play service. The PDO has links both nationally and internationally, being on the board of the International Play Association UK branch. In addition we operate and maintain 10 leisure centres and all the city's parks.
- 1.1.3. The Plan's objectives also align with the 3 key thrusts of the European Active Inclusion Strategy- Opportunity, Access and Solidarity, which in relation to CYPSP would provide quality public services and an inclusive labour market.
- 1.1.4. Therefore we welcome the development of these action plans.
- 1.1.5. Many of the plans refer to volunteering opportunities. Belfast City Council (BCC) and particularly its Community Services have many volunteering schemes in place and may be able to contribute in these areas.
- 1.1.6. However Belfast City Council (BCC) thinks there may be some additional issues to include. For example, BCC regards the arts as a vital tool to improve the quality of life – promoting enjoyment, learning and achievement – and for economic wellbeing. The contribution of arts should be acknowledged in the action plans.
- 1.1.7. The draft action plans are missing direct linkages to the contribution that physical activity, sport and recreational activities has in achieving the six high level outcomes of:



- Healthy
  - Enjoying, learning and achieving
  - Living in safety and with stability
  - Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing
  - Contributing positively to community and society.
  - Living in a society that respects their rights
- 1.1.8. It is evident and well documented that the: usage of parks and leisure facilities and sites; participation in sporting and physical activities; and participation in health and outreach programmes or events contribute towards healthy living, and improved mental wellbeing while also enabling enjoyment, learning and a sense of achievement. This is missing from each of the draft action plans.
- 1.1.9. The plans may also benefit from further and ongoing dialogue with experts in the public and voluntary sector (hence this consultation is welcomed). In particular we feel that there are existing mechanisms that have not been fully considered in how they could support these plans (for example the BCC Youth Forum).
- 1.1.10. Reference is made in the plans to young people expressing their wish to be seen for the potential contribution they can bring to society rather than focusing on the negatives. While we appreciate the difficulty of getting the balance right in these actions plans, we feel that the balance is still slightly towards the medical model of supporting young people with disabilities.
- 1.1.11. We appreciated that the action plans very detailed though some staff sometimes found them a bit hard to follow. We suggest that high level priority areas are identified for each of the outcomes, which may help focus and streamline activities.
- 1.1.12. Delivery dates for most of the activities are not clearly defined as they just state 2011-2014. This would not be effective for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Additionally it would be useful to know how achievement of the outcomes will be measured, as this is not always clear from the action plans.
- 1.1.13. The quantitative information at the start of each section illustrates performance indicators. These would be more useful if performance data was provided. There is some useful information detailed within the qualitative information but it would be useful to know how this information was collected.

## **1.2. Children and Young People with Disabilities.**

- 1.2.1. While the research in the Children and Young People with Disabilities Draft Action plan demonstrates that there is a need for more accessible arts provision, there is no response to this in the priorities.

### **2.1 Healthy**

- 1.2.2. It is not clear as to how some of the actions detailed within this section of the action plan will contribute to attaining the outcome of healthy.
- 1.2.3. This section is missing direct linkages to how the usage of parks and leisure facilities and sites; participation in sporting and physical activities; and participation in health and outreach programmes or events contributes towards healthy living. For example a total of 80% of 'Grow your own' respondents have cited increased health and wellbeing benefits from working on their allotment plot.

### **2.2. Enjoying, learning and achieving**

- 1.2.4. There is perhaps too much focus on the medical/integrated model.
- 1.2.5. More use might be made of voluntary organisations with disability specialism.



- 1.2.6. Reference is made to access for early years and local activities organised through the community. We would like to see more information on how this will be measured and whether there are any partnership already established or proposed new structures.
- 1.2.7. In relation to the action of promoting the 'enjoying' aspect, the Parks and Leisure Department ensures that children and young people with disabilities are able to enjoy using its facilities and sites, actively participate in sport and physical activities and participate in health and outreach programmes and events. This is evident through the following services and facilities that the Parks and Leisure Department provides:

### **2.2.1 Parks and leisure facilities and sites**

- 1.2.8. Our leisure centres, parks facilities and sites, playgrounds, playing pitches, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo, community gardens and the City's Therapy Garden are DDA compliant and accessible to all.
- 1.2.9. When installing or replacing play equipment from playgrounds we identify and address the needs of children and young people of all abilities, installing equipment that can be used by all children and not specifically for children with a disability therefore providing 'inclusive play equipment'. We currently have 216 items of play equipment suitable for inclusive play. It is also our policy when replacing broken play equipment, where practical to replace it with 'inclusive play equipment'.

### **2.2.2 Activities and programmes**

- 1.2.10. We have run a number of programmes at the Urban Sport Parks involving the Harberton and Clarawood special needs schools.
- 1.2.11. Our summer schemes are accessible to all and we will make reasonable adjustments to support all children and young people with disabilities who wish to take part.
- 1.2.12. Our 'Make a Splash' swimming programme and all our swimming classes are inclusive.
- 1.2.13. Our 'Watch this Space' Parks Education Programme in parks is accessible to all and we will make reasonable adjustments to support children with disabilities who wish to take part.
- 1.2.14. We also run a Bike Club which has targets to provide cycling participant opportunities for young people with limited mobility or a disability e.g. Special Schools Bike Club at Ormeau Park, a central resource shared by Fleming Fulton, Glenveagh, Tor Bank and Park Schools
- 1.2.15. Our Active Communities Programme is a Sport NI lottery funded initiative that aims to increase participation in sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. As part of the programme, 20 coaches are employed, 3 of which have a specific remit for the provision of activities for people with disabilities. The current participation rate for people with a disability is 18%.
- 1.2.16. The Parks and Leisure Department is currently working with Sport NI Disability to provide 2 full time multi skills coaches plus a further 2 in the coming months
- 1.2.17. We also run a Teenage Kicks programme with participation from 2 special needs schools – Glenveagh and Harberton and wheelchair tennis for young people twice a week at the Ozone Tennis Centre.

### **2.3 Living in safety and with stability**

- 1.2.18. Bullying is referenced in terms of schools but it is not clear if other areas have been considered – play and leisure facilities, playgrounds, etc.
- 1.2.19. Reference is made to rolling out training in local communities and ensuring that there are consistent standards. We would like to see more information about how this will be done and whether any consultation has been undertaken with current providers and



stakeholders. For example, all our parks and leisure centres are DDA compliant and all our staff receive mandatory disability awareness training which is refreshed every 2 years. The Parks and Leisure Department also has a Disability Action Plan which is updated and reviewed annually.

## **2.4 Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing**

- 1.2.20. For the indicator '*% of children attending play and mainstream leisure services*' we would like clarity as to whether all services will be measured or just those registered with H&SS. We suspect the latter but this should be made clear. There were 116 children who attended summer schemes in BCC community and play centres in 2011.
- 1.2.21. Reference is made to the difficulties of accessing and participating in mainstream play and leisure services. We think there is value in further talk with providers who have addressed these issues.
- 1.2.22. A link is suggested to Early Years to improve access to mainstream services while supporting parents to continue in employment. It is important to balance a child care focus with that of play for play's sake.
- 1.2.23. The Council's Community Services has an established approach to volunteering and may be able to support the efforts to provide volunteering and mentoring for young people with disabilities.
- 1.2.24. The Parks and Leisure Department would be keen to know how the qualitative information presented on Page 16 was gathered, in particular the following information: "Play and leisure opportunities available to children and young people are limited because of difficulties associated with accessing and participating in mainstream play and leisure". More effort is needed to empower service providers to accommodate these children and young people and provide extra support.
- 1.2.25. The Council's shared space agenda means that our leisure centres, community centres, parks facilities and sites, playing pitches, playgrounds, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo are shared spaces accessible for all and we encourage participation by everyone in our range of local activities and programmes, this is evident above in the previous section where we listed some of our 'Activities and programmes.'
- 1.2.26. We also support children and young people with disabilities to play outdoors e.g. in parks so that families can use a local park and tackle the 'invisibility' of disabled children. A Therapy Garden has been created in Musgrave Park which is a landscaped area incorporating planted and built features aimed at addressing the therapeutic requirements of children with physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties within a healthy play environment. When designing the Therapy garden we consulted with a range of schools including Fleming Fulton, Glenveagh, Harberton, Forest Lodge Respite Centre and Oakwood Assessment Centre. A range of workshops were held with teachers and pupils including art and horticulture workshops. We have also put a new path in the adventurous playground to allow wheelchair access to the lower children's level.

## **2.5 Living in a society that respects their rights**

- 1.2.27. The qualitative information says that young people need to be recognised for their potential contribution to society. The plan still seems to be biased towards the medical model and what young people with disabilities can't do.
- 1.2.28. BCC agree with the action of establishing a self checking mechanism for the participation of children and young people. Formal structures already exist within the Council including consulting with the Council's Youth Forum and the Section 75 Consultative Forum when developing strategies such as Playing Pitches and Growing Communities Strategies. As part of the refurbishment of parks and open spaces we carry out consultation and engagement with the community and we encourage and seek the active involvement from all sections of the community.



### **1.3. Transition to Adulthood for Young People with Disabilities.**

- 1.3.1. More use could be made of existing mechanisms such as the Belfast City Council Youth Forum.
- 1.3.2. With regard to diversity and disability awareness training, we would like more information on how this will work and who would provide the training. Has there been any consultation or proposed working agreements and has reference been made to the relevant professionals or the community sector? It may be that BCC may be able to contribute to this area.
- 1.3.3. It may be worth identifying how organizations currently include consideration for disabilities within their plans.

#### **4.1 Living in safety and with stability**

- 1.3.4. The Parks and Leisure Department would be keen to be involved in the training for service providers and policy makers on how to communicate effectively with adolescents with disabilities in order to help them identify their needs and aid participation, which will help complement existing formal mechanisms and structures that exist within the Council.

#### **4.2 Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing**

- 1.3.5. BCC currently employs people with learning difficulties through the New Horizons Programme in Woodvale Park, Waterworks, Musgrave Park and the Belfast Zoo. The Council would be keen to explore the development of further employment opportunities with the CYPSP.

#### **4.3 Contributing positively to community and society**

- 1.3.6. All our parks and leisure centres are DDA compliant and all our staff receive mandatory disability awareness training which is refreshed every 2 years. The Parks and Leisure Department include persons with a disability in our annual planning cycle, by developing a Disability Action Plan which is updated and reviewed annually and sent to our Equality Officer within the Council.
- 1.3.7. The Parks and Leisure Department would consult with the Council's Youth Forum and the Section 75 Consultative Forum when developing strategies such as Playing Pitches and Growing Communities Strategies. As part of the refurbishment of parks and open spaces we carry out consultation and engagement with the community and we encourage involvement from all section of the community.

#### **4.4 Living in a society that respects their rights**

- 1.3.8. BCC would be keen to know how the qualitative information presented on Page 20 was gathered, in particular the following information: Recreational services are often inaccessible to young disabled people in their local area. This information is highlighted but yet there are no specific actions to help address these inadequacies.
- 1.3.9. BCC believes that its leisure centres, community centres, parks facilities and sites, playing pitches, playgrounds, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo, etc are shared spaces accessible for all and we encourage participation by everyone in our range of local activities and programmes, this is evident from the information detailed in the earlier Section '*Activities and programmes*'.

### **1.4. Children and Young People with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.**

- 1.4.1. There is a focus on learning and early intervention. Perhaps more emphasis could be placed on the child's need to play and the positive benefits this can bring.
- 1.4.2. The Council may be able to support the work on Family Support Hubs.



## **1.5. Young Carers.**

- 1.5.1. The Parks and Leisure Department would like to highlight that as part of our current pricing policy, carers are admitted free to our facilities when accompanying a person with a disability.

Thank you for asking us to respond to the proposals. We hope our feedback is useful.

Yours sincerely

David

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