

**BELFAST CITY COUNCIL PARKS & LEISURE  
DEPARTMENT  
PEOPLE IN PARKS INITIATIVE  
DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT**



**October 2011**



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

I. The People in Parks initiative is a pilot project that has formed a part of Belfast City Council's Parks and Leisure Departments Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour Programme. The aim of the Antisocial Behaviour Programme is to reduce antisocial behaviour around parks and leisure facilities, through the provision of programmes and services that make people feel safer. The People in Parks Initiative consists of activities that:

- Involve young people in legitimate use of Council Parks,
- Involves young people in creating safer Parks, and
- Reduces antisocial behaviour.

The pilot initiative has been delivered by Challenge for Youth.

II. The project has delivered youth participation opportunities in hotspot areas in north, south, east and west Belfast. The specific locations based upon evidence gathered by the Safer Belfast Tasking Process and the Parks and Leisure department Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator, were identified as Falls Park, Orangefield Park, Ormeau Park and Alexandra Park.

III. The initiative has attempted to deliver 2 projects in each park as follows:

- Orangefield Park – access to the bowling pavilion for young people and a community fun day to tie in with the Royal Wedding in April 2011.
- Ormeau Park – the design and development of a tourist information board/art piece and the delivery of a community fun day targeted at young people.
- Alexandra Park – access to the football pitches and facilities and a Lark in the Park community fun day.
- Falls Park – the erection of a plaque to a young person that had died and the delivery of a Schools Out for Summer community fun day.

IV. Outputs achieved from the work have included:

- Engaging 110 young people in the activities, 64% of these were male.
- The provision of more than 400 hours direct youth work delivery.
- Engaging the local community in the work being undertaken.
- Young people progressing onto other forms of support including training in child protection and health & safety and leadership programmes.

- V. As a result of the support provided, the People in Parks initiative has achieved the following outcomes:
- A reduction in antisocial behaviour in the areas targeted.
  - An increase in the number of young people that have been engaged with, empowered and supported to change their behaviour.
  - An opportunity for young people to get involved in their local communities and to influence the provision of future services in Council parks.
  - Identifying young people that could potentially be the lead animators for community work in the future.
- VI. As a result of the evaluation process, the following recommendations are put forward for the future delivery of the People in Parks initiative.

#### **Project Planning and Management**

- A project management group should be formed and be attended by key stakeholders including Parks Managers and community representatives. If necessary, a group should be established for each park targeted with minutes kept for each meeting.
- Work should, where possible, feed into other existing groups such as the area based antisocial behaviour partnerships.
- Standard documentation should be established, including templates for monitoring the work.
- There should be more opportunities for the groups of young people to meet with decision makers in the Council.
- Meetings involving the young people should be in a place and at a time that is suitable to their needs.

#### **Outreach, Recruitment and Engagement**

- A balance needs to be achieved between working with existing groups of young people and targeting those individuals that are detached and may be actively involved in antisocial behaviour.
- Detached street outreach work and attendance at community events will be required to identify suitable young people.

### **Timescales**

- Any future contract should be awarded for a 12 month period and factor in times when it is difficult to achieve active engagement, such as school holidays.
- Individual projects should be delivered over 12 months as opposed to 6 months with potentially two groups engaged in each area simultaneously.
- Additional time should be built in to project delivery to allow for development work to be carried out with both the young people targeted and the communities in which they live to ensure active buy in.

### **Types of Projects to be delivered**

- A list of examples of other projects that had been successfully delivered in Parks in the past should be produced to give examples of what would be admissible for support and realistic with the time and resources available.
- Each park area should deliver a community engagement event (fun day) as well as an event targeted at the identified needs of the particular park.

### **Recognition of achievement and media coverage**

- Young people engaged with work such as this should be considered for the Community Safety Partnership's Young People's Awards.
- The work could be better promoted to the local community through the wider media and better use of Council resources such as City Matters magazine, in conjunction with the Council's Departmental and Corporate communications teams

### **Additional support to the young people**

- Young people should be given opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications as a part of the support provided, including volunteering qualifications. This could be done by bringing young people from across Belfast into one group and learn from one another's experiences.

### **Links to other Council initiatives taking place**

- Future delivery should be linked into other Council initiatives operating in those areas to achieve better value for money and reduce any duplication in delivery.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The People in Parks initiative is a pilot project that has formed a part of Belfast City Council's Parks and Leisure Departments Antisocial Behaviour Programme. The aim of the ASB Programme is to reduce antisocial behaviour around parks and leisure facilities, through the provision of programmes and services that make people feel safer.
- 1.2 The People in Parks initiative contributes to the departmental plan by contributing to the specific objective of developing education initiatives involving creative or supportive interventions to model acceptable behaviour around Parks and Leisure facilities. The initiative consists of activities that:
- Involve young people in legitimate use of Council Parks,
  - Involves young people in creating safer Parks, and
  - Reduces antisocial behaviour.

Challenge for Youth was appointed to deliver the pilot initiative.

- 1.3 With the delivery of the initiative now complete, the Council has identified the need for an independent external evaluation of the Project delivery. Brian Stratford & Associates was appointed to undertake this review with a report to be prepared for October 2011. The evaluation seeks to document the processes that have been followed (what has happened), the outputs and outcomes that the Programme has brought about (what has changed) and attempts to establish the longer term impact that the funding will have brought for the young people and Parks targeted and the legacy this will leave for the communities they are in (what has lasted).
- 1.4 The objectives set for the evaluation process are as follows:
- (a) Evaluate the efficacy of the People in Parks initiative within the context of the outputs and outcomes as indicated in the project specification, making reference to the constituency and demographics of the young people involved; the activities they were engaged in; their successes; their visibility within the community and the role of the contractor's community partners.
- (b) Evaluate the efficacy of the contractor in delivering the initiative, making reference to the challenges of working with the constituency of young people

engaged in the programme within the specific park areas used during the course of the initiative.

(c) Provide recommendations for improving the initiative, reflecting on the scope of the outputs and outcomes against the finances made available for the initiative, making comment on whether the initiative should be incorporated into the ongoing work of Belfast City Council's Parks and Leisure Departments Safer Neighbourhoods Antisocial Behaviour Programme.

- 1.5 The methodology employed for the evaluation has combined a range of quantitative and qualitative techniques and has included:
- A desk review of materials generated by the People in Parks initiative, including Council committee minutes, Project Specification and Initiation documents, evaluation forms and monitoring reports prepared by Challenge for Youth.
  - A consultation with Council and Challenge for Youth staff who were involved in the delivery of the initiative.
- 1.6 Having provided some background to the People in Parks initiative and the organisations involved, the report considers the quantitative outputs that have been achieved. This is followed by qualitative analysis of how the initiative has operated to identify the key issues emerging. Finally, the report attempts to draw out the impact that the People in Parks initiative has had before making some recommendations for the delivery of support in the future.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Section provides some background information on the Belfast City Council Parks and Leisure Antisocial Behaviour Programme, the People in Parks initiative, Challenge for Youth and the Outputs and Outcomes established for the work.
- 2.2 Belfast City Council Parks and Leisure Antisocial Behaviour Programme  
The Council established the Parks and Leisure Departments Antisocial Behaviour Programme as a pilot in 2007 with an initial focus on nine locations. This has subsequently been extended to all of the Council's Parks and Leisure facilities with the overall aim of reducing antisocial behaviour around parks and leisure facilities.

The antisocial behaviour programme contributes to the achievement of the departmental vision of providing quality parks, open spaces and leisure environments that people value and use. In particular, it enables the delivery of the departmental objective regarding the provision of programmes and services to make people feel safer.

In line with the departmental plan, the specific objectives of the antisocial behaviour programme are:

- Enhancing the **Environment** around Parks and Leisure facilities.
- Developing **Education** initiatives involving creative or supportive interventions to model acceptable behaviour around Parks and Leisure facilities.
- Defining **Enforcement** as a deterrent against infraction of Bye-Laws and Legislation.
- Developing sustainable **Interagency and Interdepartmental networks** and leading a partnership approach to reducing antisocial behaviour.

Under each of these objectives, there are a range of actions available for intervention. The People in Parks initiative falls within the second objective 'developing education initiatives involving creative or supportive interventions to model acceptable behaviour around Parks and Leisure facilities'.



### 2.3 The People in Parks initiative

Under the theme of Education, the antisocial behaviour programme has initiated a number of projects to create opportunities for young people to be positively involved in the development of safer parks and leisure facilities. The People in Parks initiative, which commenced in June 2010 and was completed during the summer of 2011, sought to engage young people from across the city to:

- involve them in the legitimate use of Council parks;
- in creating safer parks; and
- in reducing antisocial behaviour by using a range of outreach and youth engagement techniques.

The People in Parks initiative has involved four phases:

- Outreach – identification of young people from the antisocial behaviour “hotspot” areas;
- Engagement – appropriate developmental work to motivate young people to participate;
- Education – raise awareness of the impact of antisocial behaviour on the community; using high energy, problem solving and discussion activities; and
- Project work – facilitating the development of better relationships between the young people and their wider community.

The project has delivered youth participation opportunities in hotspot areas in north, south, east and west Belfast. The specific locations based upon evidence gathered by the Safer Belfast Tasking Process and the Parks and Leisure department Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator, were identified as Falls Park, Orangefield Park, Ormeau Park and Alexandra Park.

The project has been delivered by Challenge for Youth, an organisation with extensive experience of engaging in youth outreach work across Belfast and has the appropriate expertise, networks and experience in working with hard-to-reach young people. Challenge for Youth has worked in conjunction with the Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator and in partnership with local community youth providers in each of the areas, to ensure that the work is appropriate and is targeted to areas of greatest needs.

## 2.4 Challenge for Youth

Challenge for Youth was established in 1990 as a result of collaboration between NIACRO and Fairbridge, a youth charity specialising in adventure learning with “at risk” young people. The organisation exists to engage and support young people who for a range of reasons find themselves outside of, or excluded from, mainstream community youth provision.

Challenge for Youth delivers a range of programmes of support, including:

- **Adventure Learning** based on building relationships and engaging in a reflective learning process. Activities include hill walking, camping and survival skills, canoeing & kayaking (training to assessment), bouldering, team-building and indoor climbing. Skills can be gained in navigation, survival, leadership and teamwork.
- **Mountaineering and Expeditions** including preparatory training in the Mourne and expeditions to Ben Nevis.
- **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme** with Challenge for Youth being an Approved Activity Provider.
- **Drop in** facility where young people can make informal contact through the Youth Enquiry Service and drop-in centre in Belfast city centre. We also engage with young people who use the city centre as a recreational space through detached streetwork.
- **Short Courses** where young people are supported through structured ‘games’ that challenge decisions and behaviour in a thought provoking way.

## 2.5 Outputs and Outcomes established

The People in Parks initiative established a number of outputs and outcomes against which the relative success of the work could be measured.

### 2.5.1 Outputs

- At least 10 young people (male and female aged 14-16 years) engaged within each area every six months from north, south, east and west Belfast. (80 young people in total).
- Provision of 60 hours of activity with each group of 10 young people, each year from north, south, east and west Belfast. (480 hours in total)
- Young people taking advantage of further opportunities each year.

- 8 projects to reduce antisocial behaviour developed by young people within a park or leisure facility, with their community or other groups of young people each year.
- At least one story will be run in the local press for each area throughout the year (4 in total).

#### 2.5.2 Outcomes

- Reduction in antisocial behaviour identified through statistics available or through the Safer Belfast tasking report.
- More young people become engaged, empowered and supported to change their behaviour and access opportunities.
- Opportunities for young people to express their concern about their communities.
- Young people informed about their responsibilities.
- Support for young people to understand and fulfil their potential.
- Young people visible and engaged in positive actions within communities.

The next Section will consider the quantitative outputs from the People in Parks initiative, including the projects delivered and extent to which the outputs were achieved.

### **3. QUANTITATIVE OUTPUTS**

3.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the quantitative outputs from the People in Parks initiative.

#### 3.2 Projects delivered

The following provides a brief descriptive overview of the projects that were delivered across the city. Each group was tasked with leading a project which would reduce antisocial behaviour or create a safer park environment.

##### 3.2.1 Orangefield Park

In East Belfast, an emerging community development organisation worked to support a group of young people to influence the development of the Park and to increase the usage of the Park by seeking permission for community groups to access the bowling pavilion in the evenings.

A group of young people were identified and over a series of meetings, it emerged that the main issue they identified was a lack of suitable youth provision in the area. Working in conjunction with a local community worker and the Park Manager and Warden, a 12-week trial use of the pavilion was agreed. Requests were made for lighting near the bowling pavilion to facilitate the safe passage of the pavilion users in and out of the park in the evening.

The group also liaised with a Belfast Education and Library Board youth worker to establish what was required to run youth provision in the area and the steps that would be required, including the development of a constitution and relevant policies, holding adequate insurance, undertaking child protection training, Access NI checks and registering with the Board as a part-time centre.

Leading on from the initial engagement around the pavilion, the young people have engaged in a number of other activities in conjunction with the community worker, including:

- Carrying out a clean up of the Park and the surrounding area.
- Organising a fun day/celebration to tie in with the Royal Wedding, supported by local residents, community workers and MLA's. The young people worked on the day as stewards.

- Organising a day trip to Londonderry involving the young people, their parents as well as older people from the local area.

The work to establish a permanent youth facility is ongoing and the group continue to engage with the Friends of Orangefield Park and other local stakeholders to move this project forward.

### 3.2.2 Ormeau Park

In South Belfast, a group of young people were identified through youth workers from Ballynafeigh Youth Club as users of the Park. Through development activities including team building, survival skills and community identity work, the group identified a possible project around putting together a tourist information board/art piece. The group carried out research into the possible options for the art piece, how this could be used and how the design would look once it was completed.

After an initial positive meeting with the Park Manager, it became apparent that there were issues in relation to their plans. The project would take a long time to come to fruition and would not be completed during the period of the People in Parks initiative. In addition, the young people had wanted to have an element of charitable donations that could be made. There was a concern that this could open the art piece to vandalism if it was thought that there was money inside.

A second project involved planning and delivering a community fun day for young people in the Park. It proved difficult for the youth workers to maintain contact with the group as numbers had dropped as the summer approached and the fun day did not happen.

Whilst maintaining contact with individual members from the group, the youth workers and young people developed a media project exploring antisocial behaviour within the Park as a way to raise awareness of these issues amongst their peers. This production has yet to be completed although progress is being made.

### 3.2.3 Alexandra Park

In North Belfast, a group of young people formed with a view to coming up with ideas for ways in which the facilities and usage of the Park could be improved, both from their own and the wider communities point of view. The group produced a list of issues that they would like to be addressed.

The first project was to carry out work on the football pitch in the park, including cleaning up the area and the provision of goal posts and nets that could be used by local young people. The group worked with the Park Manager and rangers to make this happen and built relations between the two, with the young people able to contact the Park Rangers when they wanted to use the nets. The local youth club was also involved in this.

The second project was to set up and facilitate a fun day (called Lark in the Park) for all the local young people in the area. This was delivered in partnership with the Terry Enright Foundation and the local youth club, with Challenge for Youth helping to provide training, advice and equipment for use in the activities delivered. More than 100 individuals attended the fun day, many of them young people and their families.

This group of young people still exists and they are keen to take on other projects that would benefit the Park and local community. The group has met with the Director of Parks and Leisure and discussed how they might influence the development of Alexandra Park. They specifically asked if they could work with a group from lower Alexandra Park in an attempt to ease interface tensions that have developed in the area over a number of years. There is the potential to work with Groundwork NI to develop a series of interpretive panels to be located on either end of the park recording the history of the park and trace the history of the surrounding community from the perspective of the young people.

### 3.2.4 Falls Park

In West Belfast, a group of young people were engaged with by working through the Intervention Project, a part of the Upper Springfield Development Trust. These young people had been identified as being at the source of antisocial behaviour in the Park and were not engaged with mainstream provision. This work would allow them to give something back to the area and for them to be seen in a more positive light.

Following a series of teambuilding and community mapping activities, the group decided they wanted to erect a plaque to Cory Wisdom, a friend of theirs that had recently died in the Park. Despite initially positive work, the project could not be completed as was planned and the group disintegrated. Staff remain in contact with individuals from within this group and there is the potential for the plaque to be erected in the future.

The second project planned was for a 'Schools Out for Summer' fun day working again with the Intervention Project but also engaging with 24 young people from neighbouring schools. A range of activities would be delivered and the Park Manager was kept informed as to what was being planned. Unfortunately, due to a poor attendance from the young people the fun day was cancelled. A network of organisations that are willing to work together now exists and there is the potential to build upon this again in the future.

Whilst neither of the projects in Falls Park were delivered as planned, feedback from the young people engaged with has been very positive and suggests that they got a great deal from the engagement. Comments included:

'Was great to do something different and have something to do in the area'

'Liked showing the staff around where we hang out and the activities we did with them'

'I loved it every week and the activities we did. I would love to do it again it was brilliant'.

These young people had been identified as being marginalised and it may be that there is more work required with them than was the case in the other Parks targeted.

3.3 Outputs met

The following provides an overview of the outputs established at the outset for the People in Parks initiative and the extent to which these have been achieved.

3.3.1 At least 10 young people (male and female aged 14-16 years) engaged within each area every six months from north, south, east and west Belfast. (80 young people in total).

The following provides an overview of the number of young people engaged with.

Area	North	South	East	West	Total
Numbers	28	19	24	39	110

This shows that the target number of 80 young people was exceeded by 30. The 'core' group of young people engaged on each project was smaller than this, though it can be said that all of those that engaged with the projects will have got some benefit from the work in terms of their personal development.

The age of the young people engaged ranged from 12 to 20 years old with 25% aged 16 and 20% aged 17 years old. 64% of those engaged were male with more males than females in every group except in the Ormeau Park projects.

3.3.2 Provision of 60 hours of activity with each group of 10 young people, each year from north, south, east and west Belfast. (480 hours in total)

The following provides an overview of the number of hours of direct delivery.

Area	North	South	East	West	Total
Hours	124.5	97.5	90.5	104	416.5

This figure is below the number of hours of delivery that was the target but does not reflect all of the preparatory work that was involved with each of the groups including phone calls made, materials produced and facilities set up. If this time was included then the total hours of delivery are likely to exceed the target set.



3.3.3 Young people taking advantage of further opportunities each year.

A number of the young people targeted have been able to benefit from other forms of assistance. This includes progressing on to other forms of support through Challenge for Youth such as the leadership programme that will commence in October 2011. In addition, the group from Orangefield have been able to undertake training in child protection, health and safety and stewarding.

It would require a longer period of time to track the young people that have been engaged to establish what further opportunities have been taken advantage of. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that some of these young people display the potential to be community leaders in the future.

3.3.4 8 projects to reduce antisocial behaviour developed by young people within a park or leisure facility, with their community or other groups of young people each year.

Section 3.2 has outlined the projects that have been delivered in each of the areas. Whilst at least two projects have been attempted in each area and development work undertaken in support of this, not all of the projects have been able to be completed, most notably in west and south Belfast. The reasons for this will be discussed in Section 4.

3.3.5 At least one story will be run in the local press for each area throughout the year (4 in total).

Challenge for Youth has indicated that they found it difficult to get the local press to take an interest in the projects that have been delivered. One example was the Lark in the Park work in North Belfast. Members of staff from local newspapers were in attendance but not working at the event, the newspapers preferring to focus on the negative stories in the local area around the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. The Royal Wedding event in Orangefield did attract interest from the press although this did not reflect the People in Parks initiative in the coverage.

### 3.4 Summary

The quantitative analysis above shows that Challenge for Youth have been relatively successful in achieving the outputs set for the People in Parks initiative. In particular, they have been able to achieve engagement with young people in the areas targeted, provided professional development opportunities for these young people and delivered positive projects that have had an impact on the Park and the community it serves. Some of the difficulties that have been faced will be considered in Section 4 with some recommendations made as to how these could be addressed in the future.

#### **4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

4.1 This Section considers the results of the desk review of materials generated and the consultation exercise carried out with staff from the Council and Challenge for Youth. Results will be presented around a number of key themes emerging.

##### 4.2 Initial aims of the work

Consultees were asked what it was that they had hoped the People in Parks initiative would achieve at the outset. Answers included:

- To identify young people that could define the park as their own place and feel a connection to the Park.
- To have support around connecting the young people to the Park.
- To demonstrate that most young people are not involved in antisocial behaviour and transmit/publicise this back to the community.
- To work where the need is greatest with young people causing the damage.
- To show what it is possible to do in a Park with young people through working with Challenge for Youth and their participatory approach to youth work.
- To try to get informal youth work and engagement into the Parks by using adventure learning and to better utilise the green spaces that exist in the city.
- To have a positive impact on reducing antisocial behaviour through active engagement and to explore ways of doing this.
- To engage young people and to support their personal development.
- To target young people that were attached to a community organisation and add value to that by addressing issues in the Parks.
- As the first step onto other pieces of work between the Council, their parks and the local community.

##### 4.3 Success in achieving the aims

All the consultees have indicated that the work was relatively successful in achieving what was hoped for given the timescales involved and resources available. This initiative represented the first time that the Parks and Leisure department has attempted to engage another organisation to undertake work such as this so it is difficult to quantify the success as there is nothing to compare the work against.

The initiative has been successful in testing whether this type of work can be effective in achieving engagement and having a positive impact on Parks and communities. There is now a history of engagement of the community into outreach work in the Parks and they are less likely to just dismiss young people as has happened before. There has been a reduction in antisocial behaviour as well as changing the perception in the Parks that young people are involved in this behaviour when in fact they were not. In north and east Belfast in particular, the young people have been given a voice and a place in the Park through the work with the Council.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the young people have developed a greater sense of connectivity to the Park. In Ormeau Park for example, the young people have indicated that they used the Park but did not feel any sense of belonging to it. The work has resulted in an increase in their usage of the Park, a greater awareness of what the Park has to offer and a feeling that they want to play a positive role in the future of the Park.

'I learned that the Park is for everyone, not just the older people'.

'I learned that we are not too young to have a voice and make a change in our area'.

Given that the pilot was only really delivered over a nine month period (September 2010 to May 2011), it may have been too ambitious to expect the initiative to achieve all of the issues outlined in 4.2 above. The initiative was successful in laying the foundations for future engagement, both in terms of the Parks and with the young people and to demonstrate that the overall approach can be successful in making a positive change.

#### 4.4 Reasons for the relative success of the work

Consultees identified a number of reasons for the relative success of the work:

- **Approach adopted by Challenge for Youth** – the organisation is experienced in delivering this type of work and are good at achieving and retaining the engagement of young people by adopting creative techniques appropriate to the area and young people being targeted. A generic or single approach would not work in each park location but having a structured approach where the young people meet regularly and follow an agreed

programme is very important. This is reflected in the feedback received from the young people:

‘Any of the young people that were involved seemed to enjoy the programme but also liked Challenge for Youth’s approach. The programme seemed to motivate and focus the group in a positive way’.

‘Staff were really good fun and listened to us and what we wanted to do’.

‘Challenge for Youth have been a great help in pulling together the group and highlighting to us the difficulties faced in setting up a youth club’.

‘I would like the chance to work with Challenge for Youth again’.

- **Flexibility in delivery** – following discussions between the Council and Challenge for Youth, revisions were made to the projects that had initially been envisaged when it appeared these may not be possible to deliver. This helped when achieving the overall targets for the work.
- **Community engagement** – Challenge for Youth used their contacts in the communities surrounding the Parks targeted to bring community representatives on board to support the work. Several of the community workers had previously come through Challenge for Youth and the relationships and trust already existed with them. These contacts also made it easier to identify existing groups of young people and will help to ensure that these young people continue to receive support following the People in Parks initiative. A consultee indicated:

‘It was great to have support from the community organisations staff to help with the young people in some areas, as you didn’t know how many young people you would have had otherwise’.
- **Appropriateness of the projects** – the projects selected were chosen by the young people and reflected issues they were facing and things that they wanted to see happen in the Park. They also took into consideration the resources available and circumstances in the Park. Where possible, the projects were tied into the overall strategies in place for the Parks so that they ‘fitted’ with the Park ethos or management plan being adopted.
- **Added value** – projects were more likely to be successful where the value that the project would bring could be clearly demonstrated and ‘sold’ to the community. It was important that the projects were not seen to be a threat to existing work taking place and that delivery was with and through existing community structures and networks.

#### 4.5 Difficulties experienced and how they were overcome

Consultees identified a number of difficulties experienced in the delivery of the initiative, including:

- **Recruitment and engagement** – trying to engage young people through outreach in a Park is difficult and there is a need to find other ways to engage them. In particular, working with and through community organisations proved to be successful. In south and west Belfast, it proved difficult to maintain the contact throughout the whole period of the initiative and the projects were not able to be completed. One of the reasons for this may have been the nature of the group of young people, with those in west Belfast having been identified as being involved in antisocial behaviour in the past and that difficulties existed between individuals within the group. There appears to be a willingness amongst individuals within this group to engage again in the future but perhaps not with all of the others that were involved here.
- **Methods of working** – young people and how they work can be different to how professional people work. There was difficulty in getting meetings arranged that suited all parties and with the Park Managers in general. There is a need to recognise that the expectations and awareness of young people is different and needs to be considered.
- **Levels of the young people** – the young people engaged with were often at very different levels in terms of their education, maturity and therefore their ability to engage with the projects. This presented problems when managing the group. Several groups were quite young and energetic which made the project a bit over ambitious.
- **Managing expectations** – there is a need to balance what the young people want with what was realistically achievable in terms of time and resources. Young people asked for projects that needed a great deal of negotiation, for example a request was made for a youth shelter in the upper side of Alexandra Park. The young people were very motivated but were not aware of the potential opposition to the idea or the timescale involved in securing resources for this idea in the time available.
- **Speed of change** – young people are regularly asked to get involved in activities such as this but when they don't see an actual change they don't want to engage again. When the money runs out in projects, the young

people end up feeling let down when they haven't achieved what was planned.

- **Community infrastructure** – this is more developed and integrated in some areas than others making it difficult to break into areas with established structures and many leading organisations. For example it was easier to engage with a relatively new group in Orangefield than it was to work with some of the existing organisations in the Falls area.
- **Promoting the initiative to the community** – when an initiative such as this is instigated, there can be a perception that the work and resources are being taken away from locally based organisations that could or should be delivering the work. Whilst this was not actually the case here as Challenge for Youth has a long standing partnership with community organisations across Belfast, there is a need to promote the opportunities within the initiative to locally based organisations and work through existing structures where possible.

#### 4.6 Programme Management

All consultees agreed that whilst the People in Parks initiative had been fairly success in terms of the outputs achieved, there was room for improvement in terms of how the work was managed. Recommendations for how this could have been improved will be made in 4.7 below.

#### 4.7 Future Project Delivery

It was agreed by all of those consulted that work such as this should be delivered again in the future and be incorporated into the Parks and Leisure Departments Antisocial Behaviour Programme. A number of recommendations were made for ways in which this work could be improved upon.

##### 4.7.1 Project Planning and Management

There is the need to form a project management group through which the work would be planned, managed, monitored and evaluated. This group would be attended by key individuals that need to engage with the work and buy into what it is trying to achieve. This would include the relevant Park Manager and other parks staff as required, Council Antisocial Behaviour Officers and other Council staff as appropriate, community representatives and staff from the organisation contracted for delivery. Meetings would have an agenda established and be

minuted with clear actions outlined. This would also provide a good opportunity for feedback to be given on the work being delivered.

If necessary, these meetings would be set up for each Park engaged with and should begin prior to the young people being engaged with to ensure that appropriate planning is in place and the necessary requirements are established. Meetings would probably be required every three months, perhaps more frequently at the outset. It is also important that where possible the same staff would attend each meeting to allow for continuity to be built up in terms of relationships and what was agreed. Utilising other groups, including area based antisocial behaviour partnership meetings, should also be considered.

Once the groups of young people have been formed, there should be more opportunities for them to meet with Council staff to voice their opinions and feed into existing work that is going on in their parks. This worked very well with Alexandra Park during the pilot when the young people met with the Director of the Parks and Leisure department.

In addition, templates should be established for monitoring the work in a clear and consistent way and in line with the outputs and outcomes established for the work. These would be agreed by the Council and the contracted organisation at the project initiation meeting and would be consistent with the information that is required when reporting to Council committees.

#### 4.7.2 Outreach, Recruitment and Engagement

When targeting young people for involvement in the work, a decision is required as to whether to target an already formed group of young people (that may exist through a local youth club or community group) or to target individuals that will be seen in the Park and may be directly involved in antisocial behaviour. The former option is much easier to identify and engage with and the young people are more likely to be willing to work together. The latter is a greater challenge and is likely to require additional work but these may be the young people an initiative such as this should be targeting and the impact that can be made on the individuals could potentially be much greater.



Once a group was formed, Challenge for Youth proved to be very good at maintaining engagement with the young people keen to get involved and wanting to know when the next session was going to be. Where the group does not already exist, there can be a considerable period of time required to build up the trust and understanding required to achieve active engagement and this would need to be factored in to future project delivery. This time was not available during the pilot delivery.

Challenge for Youth staff carried out detached street outreach work both in the Parks and in the areas immediately surrounding them. Attendance at community events at which young people were in attendance also proved to be a useful technique in identifying individuals.

#### 4.7.3 Timing of the People in Parks initiative

The tender for the delivery of the initiative was awarded in June but delivery of the work did not commence until September 2010 due to existing work commitments for Challenge for Youth. Any organisation that is involved in youth work is likely to be involved in activities over the summer as are the young people that are to be targeted. Therefore a longer period of lead in would be required with a start for the work at Easter being perhaps more realistic.

Staff involved in the delivery have indicated that 4 Park locations should have been targeted over the course of 12 months with 2 projects delivered in each Park. This would allow for a longer period of time to identify and engage with the young people, form a larger core group and to allow for greater flexibility in delivery to accommodate other activities taking place, such as school holidays. This is particularly the case when working with young people that have not been exposed to youth work before. It may be possible to engage two groups simultaneously in each Park and work with them on different projects over a 12 month period rather than devoting 6 months exclusively to each project.

#### 4.7.4 Community Engagement

As well as having the time to work with and achieve engagement with the young people, consultees also indicated that they would have welcomed additional time to work with the communities that were being targeted to lay the foundations for the work that was being undertaken, to outline what they hoped to achieve and

hopefully to achieve buy in for this. As has been indicated above, there were several community organisations that showed some reticence to support the work and additional time to promote the work may have helped to bring these organisations on board. Additional community consultation would also gather opinions regarding any developments in parks and this could have been reflected in the projects that were undertaken, resulting in greater support for the work in the future.

#### 4.7.5 Types of Projects to be delivered

There would be value in presenting the young people with examples of other projects that had been successfully delivered in Parks in the past and that would be admissible for support from the People in Parks initiative. An analysis of the types of projects delivered was completed as a part of the evaluation of the Community Safety Partnerships Small Grants scheme and this may be a good listing to use. This would also help Challenge for Youth in the provision of resources and ensuring a range of projects that could be delivered. Each Park could potentially undertake an activity based project (such as Lark in the Park) and another project identified by the young people specific to their park.

#### 4.7.6 Outputs and outcomes established

With the timescales and resources available for the pilot, the outputs were quite ambitious particularly given this was the first time that work such as this had been attempted. These outputs would be much more realistic now that the relationships have been built in the communities and if the work was delivered over a longer period as was recommended above.

The outcomes set were more visionary and likely to be achievable in the longer term and not directly through a pilot project such as this. The initiative has made a contribution to addressing antisocial behaviour, the extent of which will be considered in Section 5 below.

#### 4.7.7 Recognition of achievement and media coverage

There is the need to better promote the success of the work, both at an individual and at a community level. There is an opportunity to recognise individual achievement through the Community Safety Partnership's Young People's Awards. It is important to recognise young people for the work that they have

done both to increase their own confidence but also to promote this to the local community that they live in. This did happen to an extent in north and east Belfast but there is scope to improve upon this in the future.

More could also have been done to promote the positive work of the projects in the local press, perhaps through the Council City Matters magazine. In addition, Challenge for Youth would have benefited from closer liaison with the communications department in the Council to better promote the work being undertaken.

#### 4.7.8 Additional support to the young people

As well as undertaking projects that have developed the young people and their self-confidence, there is the potential for additional skills development work to be undertaken. The group in Orangefield were able to undertake some training in child protection. There is the potential for accredited training to be offered to all of the young people engaged with as well as other support that might be of benefit to them in the role that they could play in the community such as first aid training and volunteering qualifications that would benefit them in the future.

In addition, there may be benefit in bringing the groups of young people together into one forum where they could benefit with learning to be gained from one another. This would particularly be the case where there were similar types of projects being planned, such as fun days in the parks.

#### 4.7.9 Links to other Council initiatives taking place

There is the need to ensure that any work such as People in Parks is carried out in conjunction with other Council initiatives taking place and that duplication of effort does not take place. Other relevant Council initiatives may include:

- Community Safety Partnerships small grant and youth outreach programmes.
- Peace III youth intervention programme.
- Good Relations Unit's bonfire management programme.
- Culture and Arts community festivals fund.

If Council initiatives can be integrated, better value for money can be achieved with resources pooled to achieve a greater impact.

## 5. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED AND ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

5.1 The previous sections of the report have looked at how the People in Parks initiative has operated. This Section considers the outcomes established for the work and seek to identify the likely benefits that the work will bring and the lasting changes that may have been made.

5.2 Consideration of Outcomes established

5.2.1 Reduction in antisocial behaviour identified through statistics available or through the Safer Belfast tasking report.

Statistics available for incidents of antisocial behaviour reported in parks show a decrease in the total number of incidents, with an increase in only two months (April and June) year on year.

Year	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2009	110	138	140	138	191	152	118	90	75
2010	174	126	172	86	64	109	80	48	29

Not all of the decreases in reported incidents can be attributed to the People in Parks initiative but the projects have clearly made a positive impact on the positive changes evidenced. There is a need for closer analysis of the types of antisocial behaviour being recorded and the seriousness of these incidents to build up a true picture of the impact that is being made by initiatives such as this.

5.2.2 More young people become engaged, empowered and supported to change their behaviour and access opportunities.

With this being the first time that an initiative such as this has been delivered, it is difficult to establish if there were more young people being engaged with as a baseline figure does not exist to make a comparison. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that many of these young people had not been engaged in mainstream youth provision in the past. Feedback from the evaluation forms would also suggest that their behaviour may have changed as a result of the support:

‘I learned to respect our Park more, and clean up after us’.

‘Lots of people use the Park so we need to look after it better and stop writing all over it’

'We want to be able to use the Park better and stop people thinking we are trouble makers because we aren't'.

5.2.3 Opportunities for young people to express their concern about their communities.

The People in Parks initiative allowed the young people to come up with ideas that they believed would benefit the Park and the people using it. This has been very successful in several areas, most notably north and east Belfast where the wider community engaged with the work and the young people continue to play a positive role in their communities. Even where the projects could not be completed, the young people were given the opportunity to express their concerns and come up with possible ways to address these.

'I learned that we are not too young to have a voice and make change in our area'.

'I learned more about the community and how things could be changed'.

5.2.4 Young people informed about their responsibilities.

The opportunities to identify, plan and deliver projects have given the young people the opportunity to take responsibility in a way they may not have done in the past. The education and development work carried out in conjunction with Challenge for Youth will also have challenged many of their existing behaviours and the anecdotal evidence drawn from evaluation forms would suggest that the young people intend to change their behaviour as a result of the support.

'I see the Park now as somewhere for me and my friends to use but to respect it and the wardens'.

'I have more respect for the Park and the people looking after it. They have gone out of their way to help us'.

5.2.5 Support for young people to understand and fulfil their potential.

It will take a longer period of time to truly see whether the young people engaged with will have changed as a result of the support and gone on to truly fulfil their potential. Challenge for Youth staff have indicated that a number of the young people display the skills and commitment to go on to become the community leaders of the future. A number of these young people have expressed an interest in undertaking future leadership training whilst some could go on to be employed in the parks that have been targeted.

5.2.6 Young people visible and engaged in positive actions within communities.

As was mentioned above, the People in Parks initiative could have done more to promote the success of the work, both to the local communities and to Belfast in general. Young people did get considerable credit for the role that they played in making a change, most notably in north and east Belfast and this has led to these young people continuing to engage in community work beyond the programme. Delivery of events such as Lark in the Park is an excellent way of allowing the young people to be visible and demonstrate the added value they can bring.

5.3 Impact of the work

5.3.1 On the young People engaged with

Clearly the biggest impact of the work has been on the young people engaged with. The immediate impact can be seen from the changes in these young people from before and after they were engaged with. The initiative has given them something to do as well as showing that they mattered enough to be listened to. Comments from the young people show that they are taking much more of an interest in their parks than before and are more interested in how it will develop. The activities, teamwork and group support will have made a positive contribution to their personal development although it will take a longer period of time for the real impact of this to be seen. Some of the young people have gone on to other forms of support and the staff have indicated that there has been a general increase in the self-confidence of those involved and an increased willingness to open up and engage in general.

5.3.2 On the Parks and staff

There has not been a major impact on the Parks and their staff from this pilot initiative but the groundwork has been laid for future engagement work. Physical changes have been affected in several Parks, including clean ups and improved facilities, and several Park Managers have been willing to actively engage with the projects being delivered. The impact on parks can be much greater where initiatives such as this can link in with other work taking place.

The success of initiatives such as this can feed into the future development of Council facilities and provide an excellent opportunity to target resources to maximise their benefit in reducing antisocial behaviour. This would include more pursuits in parks for those aged 12+.

### 5.3.3 On the local community

Projects that managed to achieve active engagement from the community have had a positive impact and there has been some success in achieving community engagement in each of the areas targeted. In particular, where the young people were involved in the running of an event, such as the Royal Wedding party, the role played by the young people was much more visible.

The consultation has highlighted that there is more work required in some communities to further build these relationships and trust to ensure the active participation of all key stakeholders and reduce the perception of this work being 'parachuted' in or that it should be delivered by other existing community organisations. This will require additional time and planning to ensure that any future work links in with the existing community infrastructure in those areas.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the future delivery of the People in Parks initiative as a result of the findings of this evaluation.

### 6.1 Project Planning and Management

- A project management group should be formed and be attended by key stakeholders including Parks Managers and community representatives. If necessary, a group should be established for each park targeted with minutes kept for each meeting.
- Work should, where possible, feed into other existing groups such as the area based antisocial behaviour partnerships.
- Standard documentation should be established, including templates for monitoring the work.
- There should be more opportunities for the groups of young people to meet with decision makers in the Council.
- Meetings involving the young people should be in a place and at a time that is suitable to their needs.

### 6.2 Outreach, Recruitment and Engagement

- A balance needs to be achieved between working with existing groups of young people and targeting those individuals that are detached and may be actively involved in antisocial behaviour.
- Detached street outreach work and attendance at community events will be required to identify suitable young people.

### 6.3 Timescales

- Any future contract should be awarded for a 12 month period and factor in times when it is difficult to achieve active engagement, such as school holidays.
- Individual projects should be delivered over 12 months as opposed to 6 months with potentially two groups engaged in each area simultaneously.
- Additional time should be built in to project delivery to allow for development work to be carried out with both the young people targeted and the communities in which they live to ensure active buy in.



6.4 Types of Projects to be delivered

- A list of examples of other projects that had been successfully delivered in Parks in the past should be produced to give examples of what would be admissible for support and realistic with the time and resources available.
- Each park area should deliver a community engagement event (fun day) as well as an event targeted at the identified needs of the particular park.

6.5 Recognition of achievement and media coverage

- Young people engaged with work such as this should be considered for the Community Safety Partnership's Young People's Awards.
- The work could be better promoted to the local community through the wider media and better use of Council resources such as City Matters magazine, in conjunction with the Council's Departmental and Corporate communications teams.

6.6 Additional support to the young people

- Young people should be given opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications as a part of the support provided, including volunteering qualifications. This could be done by bringing young people from across Belfast into one group and learn from one another's experiences.

6.7 Links to other Council initiatives taking place

- Future delivery should be linked into other Council initiatives operating in those areas to achieve better value for money and reduce any duplication in delivery.