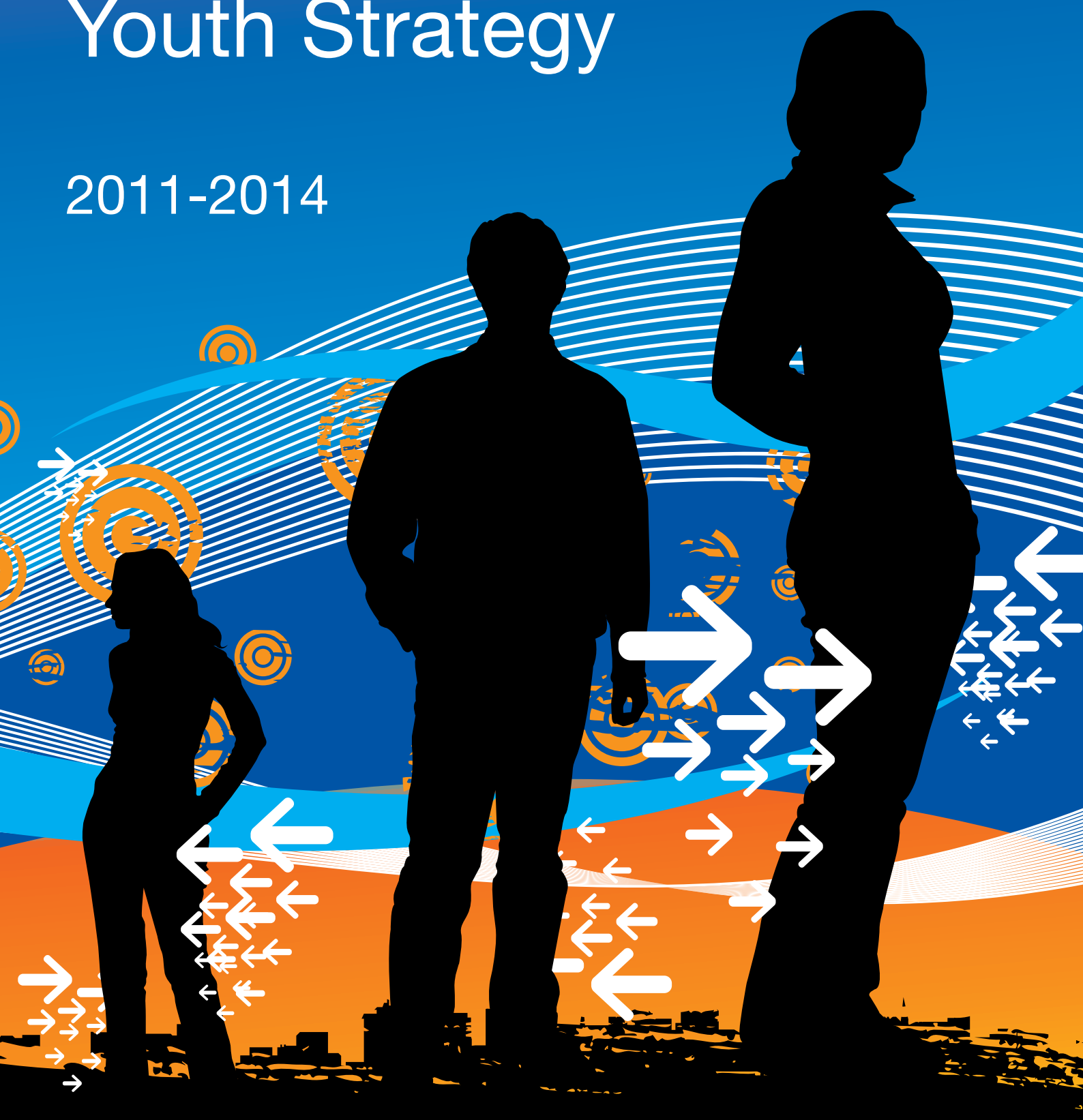




*Basingstoke
and Deane*

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Youth Strategy

2011-2014





Contents page

Section 1

What's it all about?

Why a Strategy	4
Young People	4-5
Local Demographics	5
Strategic Links	5
Consultation	5

Section 2

What's being said?

Increased Involvement	6
Improved Awareness	6
Extending Access	6
Having things to do	7
Getting to places	8
Having a say	9
Safer communities	10

Section 3

What's next?

Action Plans	11
Monitoring and review	11





Section 1

What's it all about?

Why a Strategy?

The purpose of this Youth Strategy is to tackle the common needs of local young residents within the borough. The strategy aims to provide an overall framework that can influence how the council can best focus its efforts so as to make the most of our resources, ensuring maximum benefits to local young people.

It is recognised that the needs and aspirations of local young people can only effectively be met by partnership working between a range of different agencies in the public, voluntary and community sector. This strategy aims to influence the council's contribution to this collaborative approach and it complements other local youth policies that look at particular themes, for example those young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), health and crime etc.

Young People

In the 21st century young people experience a very different society to past generations. The economy, society and technology have all changed leading to a whole host of additional opportunities being available to them.

Young people also have more pressures upon them, not least from the media. The availability of new media technologies such as the internet and mobile communication devices have revolutionised the way they can communicate and interact with the world.

Many young people are committed to succeeding and work hard at school/college and then on to university, vocational courses and/or work. They are interested in the community that surrounds them, be that on a local or global scale, and are passionate about their friends and family.

Young people, like most of us, want to make the most of life, gain new experiences, travel, take risks, 'push' boundaries and be responsible for their own decisions. However we must bear in mind that, for many, puberty is a time of transition where young people also face a vast number of challenges (money, relationships, employment, health, self-esteem, etc). The way the borough's young people feel has been included in the findings section of this document.

The council is aware that some local young people experience difficulties in their life that mean they need more support than others. Tackling the range and complexity of problems faced by the minority who are at risk goes beyond the remit of this strategy, but it does complement other strategies employed by partners to address these issues.

Local Demographics

Population within the Basingstoke and Deane is expected to grow by 3.1% between 2010 and 2013 from 164,000 to 169,100, with the largest growth being on the northern fringe of Basingstoke's urban area and around the town centre. Despite this growth and in line with the rest of the country, the borough has an ageing population.

Young people aged between 11 to 19, currently make up 10% of the borough's population. It is forecast that the number of 11 to 19 year olds is set to fall from more than 18,300 to fewer than 18,000 (a 2% decline) between 2010 and 2013.

Strategic Links

By focusing the views of local young people and the need for partnership working, this strategy links to the Community Strategy, Council Plan and the work of the Local Children's Partnerships in the borough.

Over the next three years one of the priorities for joint action by the Basingstoke Area Strategic Partnership is 'Focussing on young people'. The current Council Plan has a commitment to improve the provision of facilities and activities for children and young people and the aim of the new Local Children Partnerships is to promote integrated action designed to strengthen delivery of services to local children and young people.

Consultation

In February 2010 young people were asked for their views in order to inform the development of this strategy.

The council surveyed local young people, aged 11 to 19 to understand what matters to them – their issues, needs and desires for the borough now and into the future. The questionnaire *Your Big Say* included a wide range of subjects: transport, crime, sexual health, library services, sports, arts and leisure, youth clubs and careers.

Over 1200 questionnaires were completed by young people from eight of the borough's secondary schools. Respondents were in the main from the 12 to 15 age group. The results were analysed and a summary of the findings is available as an appendix to this draft strategy.

'Your Big Say' concluded that respondents want to be involved in deciding what's available and how it's run and they have lots of ideas about how to improve things.

Prior to the strategy being finalised, some focus groups are planned to particularly target more vulnerable young people who were less likely or able to complete the questionnaire, to ensure that their views are adequately represented.



Section 2

What's being said?

Common areas of concern emerged from *Your Big Say* are:

- having things to do
- getting to places
- having a say
- safer communities

The similarity to the five key outcomes in Every Child Matters (being healthy, stay safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, economic well-being) reaffirms the common needs of young people.

The following pages summarises issues raised via the *Your Big Say* consultation.

Each section includes the following information:

- *Your Big Say* findings
- Ideas for new projects to do something positive to address each issue.
- Existing projects are included to help give some context and ensure future ideas do not result in duplication.

The range of ideas and solutions put forward over the next pages can be seen to relate to 3 underlying principles, as described below.

Increased involvement

Young people want to get involved and influence what is provided. Communication channels need to be improved to allow young people to inform delivery. Better use needs to be made of channels that young people use: text, websites, blogs, and social networking sites.

We need to get young people more involved in neighbourhood and local decision-making.

Improved awareness

What is clearly apparent throughout the survey is that young people feel that they do not receive enough information and generally don't know what is out there.

How service providers market services and facilities must be driven by new media and reach young people in a format and language they associate with.

Coordination of local marketing needs to be addressed.

Extending access

This is about providing a range of new positive activities and encouraging active participation.

It includes how new facilities are shaped and how young people will easily access activities and leisure provision using different modes of transport, discounts and providing more choice.



Having things to do

Having things to do covers activities and facilities in young people's communities. It can be free activities, such as informal skate parks, youth shelters and open spaces, or local youth, sports and arts clubs in a range of different community facilities. The important factor is that it is activity near to home.

Whilst the borough has a wealth of local activities and facilities there sometimes seems to be a lack of awareness amongst young people about what opportunities actually exist. There is also the issue about whether this provision actually matches needs.

Providing the right kind of activity can contribute to improving young people's life chances, particularly helping with personal and social development as well as their health.

There is also evidence that being involved in diversionary activities helps prevent teenagers from being drawn into anti-social behaviour and crime. Survey findings often highlight parents' views that there is not enough for young people to do in the area they live. Over half of young people do not take part in any form of positive activities during the summer, and we must ask ourselves 'why?' There is a strong link between the issue of being not interested with not knowing what is available. Young people clearly need better information on existing activities and continued engagement in shaping what is on offer.

Pilot schemes for some form of youth provision in Basingstoke town centre resulted in low numbers attending, yet negative perceptions are often heard regarding traditional community youth clubs. However a modern twist on youth clubs with a more informal approach has proved very successful in school holidays - facilities for relaxing and socialising, the use of technology, indoor activities with street cred run by relaxed fun staff appear to be popular.

Young people find it hard to overcome certain barriers when joining in, be they cultural, financial or simply that they have a lack of confidence or support from friends. The voluntary and community sector has a key role here given they are a core provider of "things to do" for young people in their local community. The council needs to build on the sector's strengths and commitment and tackle a range of difficulties hampering their efforts such as trustees' concerns, lack of trained volunteers, short-term project funding and poor equipment.

YBS stats

- 44% of young people attend school holiday activities
- 16% more young people in rural areas attend school holiday activities than in urban areas
- 45% of young people attend more informal provision
- 52% of young people cited cost as a barrier to participation.
- 55% of young people highlighted they prefer to hang out in their local park versus 8% who favour their local community centre

Current examples

- Summer Streetz
- Establishing local youth clubs
- Leisure Initiatives Fund
- Youth work training projects
- Pilot of Hatch Warren Youth Project initiative.

New projects

- Targeted training for trustees of community centres and village halls
- Development of a step-by- step guide to establishing a youth club
- Establishing a Voluntary Youth Worker Forum
- Development of an equipment bank for youth clubs
- A communications campaign focused on encouraging use of in new youth activities and facilities (both targeted at young people and parents/carers)

Delivery challenges

- Willingness of community building trustees
- Resources for paid staff
- Volunteer capacity

Getting to places

Transport problems can be a barrier to participation/ social inclusion and a lack of adequate transport could impact upon young people's quality of life. It can prevent young people from participating in school clubs, work or learning and leisure activities.

The *Your Big Say* survey highlights that often young people rely on the goodwill of parents and friends to take them to and from places of education and leisure in the car.

Of course, some facilities may be reached by cycling or walking but *Your Big Say* found that safety and distance was a major barrier to overcome for many. Nevertheless, an important aspect for the future is to ensure that any new development includes adequate facilities for young people, together with good footpath and cycle route connections to surrounding areas.

Transport needs to be reliable and timed to the needs of young users. For some the problem is simply the cost of a bus fare home, but for others there is no service available at the right time. Solutions need to be identified to provide young people with safe and affordable travel or to bring activities and services closer to where young people are.

It is acknowledged that public and private transport operators operate in a commercial (demand-led) or subsidised (provision for special groups/purposes) environment, and that there are many challenges to overcome.

The rural area within the borough could develop a young people's transport group to push the agenda forward and help work with transport operators and forward planners.

In partnership with agencies and the private sector they could also tackle issues highlighted in the *Your Big Say* survey such as discount schemes and reliability of services.

YBS stats

- Walking is the preferred way to get to school (51%) but the car was preferred for getting to and from leisure pursuits (69%)
- 50% of young people said they would travel up to 15 minutes to leisure pursuits
- In the main the quality of roads and footpaths were rated highly by young people but cycle paths were rated poor by most
- 52% of young people cited cost of travel as a barrier to participation whilst 48% stated they could not get to an activity they wanted to do

Current examples

- Shuttle Bus
- Off Peak travel discount rates

New projects

- Establish a Transport Youth Advisory project
- Ensure that youth transport needs are taken into account in Local Development Framework (LDF)
- Explore taking a 'safer routes to school' approach to routes to leisure activities?

Delivery challenges

- Most transport initiatives are costly
- Not in council control as involves private operators



Having a say

From the *Your Big Say* survey it is clear that young people want better information and a chance to shape the services they receive, but they feel that they can't influence decisions.

Having a say is more than just consulting with local young people. It is about giving them a real voice in decision making.

The council needs to ensure that young people are given a voice to actively encourage them to support and contribute to their local community.

Basingstoke and Deane Youth Council was set up in 2004 to do just that - it aimed to increase local young people's active involvement with decision-making agencies. Although it initially grew in numbers and strength, more recently it has become unrepresentative of the widest range of backgrounds and communities. In fact, the *Your Big Say* survey shows there is low awareness of the youth council. A range of more effective and modern techniques need to be employed, hand in hand with more effective promotion in order to gain wider participation. As part of this, it is important that young people can see some tangible outcomes from their efforts, in order to combat cynicism and apathy from those who could take part.

Generally, the gathering of young people's views to influence the council's services and facilities is inconsistent and not always effective. One idea is an annual event to promote activities and facilities and be used to give young people an opportunity to have their say, encouraged to attend by a 'fun' activity element. A coordinated approach is necessary to encourage local young people to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and their community. By combining marketing activity and flow of information to local young people, we can provide more creative and distinctive ways to engage young people.

There should also be a range and choice of ways young residents can interact with decision makers and get feedback. Options such as a Youth Participation Group (shaping specific projects); revamping the youth website as a source of information; linking into events like Basingstoke Live, online participation via Facebook page creation for specific projects; councillors and officers visiting schools promoting citizenship; and trying to overcome the notion that young people can't influence decisions should all be built upon.

YBS stats

- 77% of young people use Facebook
- 71% of young people use text messaging
- 93% of young people have access to a computer
- 44% of young people had heard of the Youth Council but only 2% had been involved.
- 58% of young people said having a say in the area they live in was of interest to them with only 36% having an interest in the Borough as a whole.

Current examples

- Summer Streetz on Facebook
- Your Big Say
- Local Democracy Citizenship in Schools
- Youthlife.co.uk
- Ad hoc project consultation

New projects

- Youth Participation Group
- Summer Streetz App
- Re-vamped Website
- Project specific Facebook pages in line with the council's social networking communications policy
- Youth Participatory Event

Delivery challenges

- Active partnership sign up
- Resourcing to maintain interesting content
- Problems with responsibility of local authority for not having inappropriate comments and therefore need to heavily moderate

Safer communities

Of all the issues that affect the well being of young people and their community, the most important is crime and the fear of crime.

However, in general, crime is lower in Basingstoke and Deane than most other districts in Hampshire, and statistics show that the situation is improving. Crime figures are relatively low, and *Your Big Say* showed that many young people feel safe in the borough. However there is still the perception among some that the streets are not safe.

Reducing crime and disorder is a high priority for the Community Safety Partnership and is a statutory duty for the council. The Community Safety Partnership is delivering on a plan which responds to crime and young people. It focuses on preventing young people from entering the youth criminal justice system and tackles antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime.

The council and others are also involved in delivering and promoting positive activities that aim to divert young people from crime and anti-social behaviour, through participation in interesting activities, some traditional and some more informal.

However, there is a continued need to address the perceived fear of crime that exists among some young people, which can effect participation in local activities.

There is also a need to deal with the often held perception that all youths that congregate in the local street or park are a threat. Young people are far more likely to be blamed for crime than any other sector of the population. Local young people believe they are stereotyped as troublemakers. This does little to encourage them to be good citizens. Young people feel that adults perceive them as a troublesome sector of the population who have little or no respect for adults or their communities. However, the *Your Big Say* survey shows they care about their local environment. They want improved living conditions such as cleaner streets, less vandalism, safe roads.

As part of the citizenship curriculum in schools, young people could bring forward solutions for their local area on, for instance, cleaner streets and crime prevention which could feed into the work of the council and its partners.

YBS stats

- 50% of young people feel safe in the Borough
- 17% of young people have been threatened by others
- 16% have been bullied by another young person
- Hate crimes, theft and drug use was what young people wanted to see more emphasis on preventing.
- 52% of young people said Festival Place security were less fair to young people than older people
- 68% of young people had a lot of respect for the Police.

Current examples

- Streetz Initiative
- Safety Awareness Events
- Think Safe

New projects

- Looking for opportunities to promote 'positive Images' of young people in the media through publicising projects they are working on
- Devise a series of citizenship challenges for schools
- Cyber bullying awareness

Delivery challenges

- Gaining media buy-in by having strong stories as 'hooks'.



Section 3

What's next?

Action plan

This Strategy is accompanied by an action plan, based on the ideas and priorities arising from the consultation on the original draft document.

Quick wins are included in the action plan, together with longer term projects. The strategy will be formally launched later in the year with a youth participation group and shorter version of this strategy targeted at young people will be produced once adopted.

Collaborative working both between different units of the council and with external partners is essential to make the best use of current resources.

Monitoring and review

The strategy will cover a three year period and actions arising from it will be reviewed for effectiveness and relevance on an annual basis.

Progress will be celebrated every year at a Young People's Event.

Year 1 of the action plan will be used to establish baseline performance standards against which meaningful targets will be set in future years.

