

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

18 March 2019

Subject:	Play and Youth Services
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Simon Hackett - Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
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DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. Considers the report, particularly:
 - The role and purpose of Go Play, the Youth Service, and the relationship between those Services;
 - The interface between Go Play, the Youth Services and SHAPE.
2. Makes any comments and recommendations as necessary.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The agenda setting for the 2018/19 meetings of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board identified that the Board would like to receive a report about Play and Youth Services. Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 7 January 2019 recommended that a report on Play and Youth Services be presented to this Board.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 High quality Play and Youth Services improve the life chances of children and young people and acknowledge that children and young people have a right to enjoy their childhood as well as enabling them to develop the confidence and aspirations for a successful adulthood. The Services benefit whole communities, local neighbourhoods, families and individual children and young people.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 All children and young people should be given the opportunity to develop the confidence and skills they need to live, learn, work and achieve. The right to play freely and have access to leisure and other positive activities is an essential part of the wellbeing, social and emotional development of children and young people. This is recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which declares that we all must: "recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities".
- 3.2 The provision of parks and other outdoor spaces, playgrounds, leisure centres, sports and arts clubs, and other wide-ranging services and activities provide opportunities for children and young people to access positive activities. However, in modern society families with younger children do not always access provision, and the interests of young people are often not provided for. Young people often report feeling unwelcome in their neighbourhoods and feel they are often seen as a nuisance by adults. Sometimes, children and young people need bespoke activities, groups and spaces that enable them to make sense of their own lives and find their place in society.
- 3.3 In August 2018 the national Children's Commissioner published a report on the importance to children of play and physical activity. The local area recommendations from this report called upon local areas to:
- think strategically about how to promote play, and work locally to maximise the use of existing facilities. Given its importance to health and wellbeing, play provision should be strategically planned as part of each area's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Local Authorities should begin conversations to identify ways of enabling wider use of spaces for children's play for free.
 - ensure that adequate space for children's play is factored into new residential facilities, to enable children to get outside in a safe space next to their home.

- focus on parks and other areas being safe, child friendly spaces, as well as ensuring parks and playgrounds are properly maintained. Local areas should also work with parents and communities to open up spaces closer to home for example street play initiatives.

- 3.5 Sandwell has continued its commitment to play by providing a basic level of funding for a creative, diverse Play Services offer and these are described in the following section of this report. The Impact Report for 2017/18 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 In October 2018, the All Party Parliamentary Group published its report about Youth Affairs. It concluded that “open access or universal youth services have all but disappeared from some communities (leading to) concerns for ‘overlooked’ young people who do not meet the threshold for agency or targeted interventions.
- 3.7 The report identified that the reduction in funding for Youth Services, in order to distribute more resource towards statutory areas such as safeguarding, is short-sighted and that there should be recognition of the value of qualified youth work that supports young people’s mental health and wellbeing and life chances, and reduces demand on more expensive services.
- 3.8 Sandwell has continued to provide some youth services, although these have been significantly depleted in past years. A report on the work of the services during 2017/18 is attached at Appendix 2.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 **Go Play Sandwell** is a partnership approach working with both the voluntary and community sector and others. Thriving and successful communities are places where all children have the affordances to be active and visible in the public realm. The amount of time children spend playing outdoors; their ability to navigate their communities independently or with support; and their level of contact with their peers are strong indicators of how successfully a community is performing, not just for children but for everyone.
- 4.2 Go Play Sandwell is funded through a core budget from SMBC and secures around one third of its overall expenditure through external income from a range of sources including schools and Sandwell Children’s Trust.
- 4.3 The programme offers a range of skilled support through a range of different roles that are described below:

a) Play Facilitators

Go Play Sandwell delivers playwork through centre-based programmes, bespoke programmes, outdoor learning, detached peripatetic work, mobile provision and targeted work. Play Facilitators work closely with a range of partners, particularly the voluntary and community sector, local community groups and schools targeting 0-11yrs but not exclusively.

b) Play Activators

Go Play Sandwell works with local partners and organisations to facilitate play where there are gaps in local provision through a number of mechanisms: Providing the commissioning function for the Go Play grant funded partners and the Go Play Holiday grant programme: working with schools to develop positive play influences throughout the school day and partnering with local communities to develop play opportunities which they can adapt and sustain in the future for themselves.

c) Play Educators

The role of Play Educators is to support all children, young people and communities in the creation of a space in which they can play and be visible; the approach is underpinned by a professional and ethical framework based on the recognition that children and young peoples' capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities. Go Play Sandwell delivers a menu of training to a range of partners, parents and community groups to broaden and extend their knowledge around the importance of play for Sandwell's children and young people.

d) Play Champions

Go Play Sandwell advocates for children for their right to play and be the voice in their absence to: raise awareness, challenge, debate and champion every child's right with all members of the Sandwell community. Equally important is the need to create time and space for spontaneous play, recreation and creativity and the promotion of societal attitudes that support and encourage such activity.

e) Play Drivers

Go Play Sandwell works across Directorates and with external partners to embed Article 31 at the heart of policy and practice through informing policy development and advocacy on behalf of children and identifying good practice and challenging poor practice.

- 4.4 Go Play Sandwell's approach to service development is informed by a continued dialogue with children and families and communities relating to their real or perceived play needs. The child's voice is at the centre of all that is offered, and there exists a uniquely elevated level of stakeholder engagement due to these everyday conversations. Currently there is limited work capturing the voice of the younger child and without our continued engagement with this age group there is a high possibility that they will become unheard and further underrepresented.
- 4.5 The Go Play Sandwell programme ambitions for 2018/19 can be seen in the document attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.6 Sandwell's **Youth Service** delivers youth work through centre-based programmes, bespoke group work, outdoor learning, detached/street-based work, mobile provision, and 121 support, as described in Appendix 2. Youth workers usually work with young people aged between 11 and 25 years old, although they may sometimes work with younger children too. The Youth Service works closely with a range of partners, particularly the police and schools. The Youth Service is also regularly asked to provide a presence at local neighbourhood events.
- 4.7 Youth work is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person's understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live. It develops their confidence and enables them to believe in themselves and make positive choices and it is underpinned by a set of values, the first of which is that young people choose to take part.
- 4.8 Skilled youth workers build relationships that support young people to explore their personal, social and educational development. Youth work enables young people to develop their voice, influence and place within society. At a 'place' level rather than an individual level, Sandwell's Youth Service staff enable the SHAPE programme to be delivered, and this is further described below.
- 4.9 Youth Work is not about simply being in spaces where young people are, or may be, and providing something for them to do. This distinction is very important to recognise when making decisions about the purpose and functions of Sandwell's Youth Service.
- 4.10 The Youth Service is funded through an SMBC base budget and income generated from a variety of sources as described in the document at Appendix 2.
- 4.12 Both **Go Play** and the **Youth Service** work closely with SHAPE and provide the capacity for a large majority of the SHAPE programme.

Currently, Go Play, the Youth Service and SHAPE are located in separate parts of the organisational system. There may be some efficiencies in bringing these services together into a single arrangement. These efficiencies would not be focused on financial savings but might provide a more coherent organisational arrangement.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 There is no content within this report that requires any further consultation at this stage.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 There are no current considerations.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 There are no current considerations.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 The Youth Services provides targeted group work relevant to protected characteristics.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 There are no current requirements for a data protection impact assessment to be carried out relevant to this paper.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no crime and disorder risks specifically relating to this report, however, it must be noted that the impact of engagement in positive activities has implications for crime reduction.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 The sustainability of services is reliant on the continued provision of funding for services, some of which are directly funded through government grants or traded income.

12.2 There continues to be increasing demands on both Services to support community and borough wide events. In particular, the Youth Service is

called upon to provide support to local activities by providing the Climbing wall, youth buses and provision of live music from Coneygre Arts Centre. In addition, there is pressure to deliver the Youth Offer in some towns where there is a shortfall in voluntary sector provision.

- 12.3 Enhanced Youth Support has proven to be an integral part of the Youth Service offer. This service provides support to both individuals and groups through targeted interventions and referrals are received through a number of partners including schools, COG's, Police and Childrens Centres. The success has been such that demand is beginning to exceed capacity.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 Play and Youth services that benefit the wellbeing of children and young people are a vital component of successful lives and contribute to social value within Sandwell's communities.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 There are high demands on the youth buses. The double decker bus is 20 years old and given its age is prone to regular breakdown during the winter months. To replace the bus and fully kit it out would require an investment of up to £200,000.
- 14.2 The Youth Service has operational management responsibility of Coneygre Arts Centre and Malthouse Stables Outdoor Education Centre. These centres both have income targets which contribute to the core budget of the Service.

15. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 In spite of recent years of austerity and the impact on local government budgets, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has managed to maintain some important services for children and young people that many other local authorities have not managed to protect. The services offered are high quality, work with large numbers of children and young people, and work closely in partnership with other agencies.
- 15.2 Recognising and protecting the future of these valuable services is important for the children and families of Sandwell but it is also important to note that in an environment of increasing demand but, over past years, reducing resources, the services cannot be 'everything to everyone' and some prioritisation is needed.

15.3 The services work well alongside each other but are not currently linked together organisationally, nor strategically or operationally, and there may be some benefit to creating a single service approach that would clarify the Council's intent and the purpose of the overall service offer across Play, the Youth Service and of young people's engagement through the SHAPE programme.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

17. APPENDICES:

17.1 Appendix 1 – Go Play 2017/18 Impact Report
Appendix 2 – Youth Service 2017/18 Report

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