

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Children's & Education (DCS)
DATE:	9 th September 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED:	Children, Young People and Education
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL WARDS
KEY DECISION:	NO

SUBJECT:

Strategic Youth Alliance Update

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 FORMATION OF STRATEGIC YOUTH ALLIANCE (SYA)

The Strategic Youth Alliance was first convened and chaired by the Head of Adolescent Services in May 2019. The purpose of this report is to share with the Executive Board an update on the developments of the first two years of the Alliance and future plans.

1.2 FIRST COLLABORATIVE FUNDING BID

At its inception the SYA was presented with an opportunity to bid for BwD Integration Funds. Five members of the SYA put together a bid and were awarded the contract to deliver the 'Youth Ambassadors' Programme.

1.3 SYA GOVERNANCE

Approximately 12 months into its development the SYA developed a Terms of Reference document, to manage membership and set out aims, roles and responsibilities.

1.4 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The SYA are currently examining a range of infrastructure and/or organisational models that may improve the capacity, funding opportunities and strategic oversight of the Alliance.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 THAT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD:

- Notes the report and continues to offer support to the SYA
- Continue to support the local youth sector via commissioned funding

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 PRIOR TO THE SYA

The SYA was established in response to national and local financial reductions which led to the youth sector becoming significantly at risk. Additionally, young people were presenting with increasing challenges which in turn increased the demand on services. This affected the Local Authority's capacity to deliver and commission, and the Voluntary, Faith and Community sectors were unable to bridge the gap in funding. A previously uncoordinated youth sector offer was patchy, mismatched and wasn't allocated according to need or demographics.

Prior to the SYA there was a Youth Collaboration Network, chaired by the Head of Adolescent Services, with a membership much wider than the SYA. Due to the complications of size, the network lacked strategic direction and focus on the core business of the local youth offer.

Alternative models to the network were explored to maintain neighbourhood youth work delivery and engage partners to better coordinate and facilitate a comprehensive youth work offer and this led to the formation of the Strategic Youth Alliance. The initial aims were:

- To bring senior leaders of youth organisations from all sectors together in a regular forum
- To build trusting, cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships
- To map provision against local need
- To source and maximise external funding opportunities
- To shape BwD commissioned services (Blackburn Rovers Community Trust / Blackburn Youth Zone) to ensure they are needs led and are considerate of other local providers' offers.

3.2 SYA GOVERNANCE - PURPOSE, PRINCIPLES AND AIMS.

Purpose

To enable collaborative working and identify shared priorities for youth work in Blackburn with Darwen to develop and increase opportunities and positive outcomes for young people.

Principles

- **Trust** – Organisations across Voluntary, Faith, Charitable, Social Enterprise and Public Sectors working together to maximise opportunities for young people.
- **Transparency** – Open and honest discussions, organisations and individuals taking responsibility for decision making.
- **Capacity building** – identifying opportunities to support each other through training opportunities, joint working, intelligence sharing and collaborate on funding.

Aim of the SYA

- To provide leadership and a strategic direction for all member youth organisations (local authority, voluntary, charitable, faith & social enterprise sectors)
- To enable collaborative working and identify shared priorities for youth work in Blackburn with Darwen to develop and increase opportunities and positive outcomes for young people.
- To share the following principles and objectives
- To provide meaningful opportunities and support to local young people.
- Listen to the voice and experiences of young people to shape local services and provision.
- Shared approach to workforce development
- To support and promote equality and diversity; to champion diversity, to improve our process and protocols, to support equality and cohesion amongst our communities and to improve equity for the communities we serve

SYA Strategic Plan

The SYA developed a series of priorities and a programme of work with an accompanying action plan. The priorities listed below will inform funding applications and organisational strategies. The action plan will underpin these 4 priorities with these being standing agenda items on each SYA meeting.

1. Emotional Health and Mental Wellbeing

Working together to provide support, programmes and resources to ensure young people have access to the right support, at the right level and at the right time.

2. Increase Access to Skills, Training and Further Education

Using our collective ability to ensure young people are supported to develop skills, gain access to training and attend education to provide them with the best opportunity to gain employment, develop resilience and motivation, and reach their full potential.

3. Reduce the Impact of Poverty

Ensure that young people who are identified as living in poverty have equal access to participation, opportunities and equitable outcomes.

4. Address the impact of Racism and Discrimination

Recognise the impact of institutional and individual racism, exclusivism and discrimination on education, employment, crime, health, and finance by addressing unconscious bias, open challenge and developing services through the lens of race and ethnicity, to ensure that they are inclusive.

Overarching aim of the SYA

To work together to maximise leisure time opportunities for children and young people to socialise in safe and supportive environments that enable them to access positive activities, advice support and guidance from appropriately trained staff.

3.3 MEMBERSHIP

Over the last two years the SYA has continued to evolve its membership.

The following organisations are full members of the Strategic Youth Alliance:

1. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council – Young Peoples Services (Chair / convenors / organisation lead) (YPS)
2. Blackburn Youth Zone (BYZ)
3. Blackburn Rovers Community Trust (BRCT)
4. Child Action North West (CANW)
5. Youth Action (YA)
6. Innovate Motivate Overcome (IMO – formally Inter Madrassah Organisation)
7. Newground Together (NT)
8. Family and Community Enterprise (FACE)
9. One Voice (OV)
10. Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Living (HL)
11. United Communities Organisation (UCO)

One organisation (SWITCH) stepped down from membership due to persistent non-engagement.

3.4 OTHER 'IN KIND' BENEFITS FROM THE SYA

The development of trusting professional relationships has been key to progressing the SYA. Given that these organisations regularly contest for funding opportunities – the development of these relationships has proven challenging but ultimately very rewarding.

Recruitment

SYA organisations have shared senior management resources and have supported recruitment processes outside of their organisation.

Training

Workforce development is a key priority and the following training opportunities have been sourced, developed and shared over the last 2 years:

Training Details	Delivery Partner
Safeguarding for Young People Today	UK YOUTH
Working with Young People – Masterclass	UK YOUTH
Introduction to Youth Work Practice	BwDBC Young Peoples Services
Pause for Thought Facilitator Training	LCC Violence Reduction Unit
KOOTH Support Training	KOOTH NW
Level 1/2/3 Youth Work Practice	Youth Focus NW
Numerous Bespoke Holiday Activity Fund	Spring North

3.5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Government has launched new funding commitments for the Youth Sector over the last 2 years. These include a commitment to release significant new funding to support local/regional youth infrastructure and partnership developments.

The SYA is already a significant way along this path – but to ensure that it is in a position to attract further development funding a SYA Working Group has been tasked at examining alternative structures:

Option 1: Young Peoples Foundations

A Young People's Foundation (YPF) is a member-led charity comprised of organisations that work with children and young people in a local area including the public, private and voluntary sectors. Each YPF adapts to meet the needs of the youth sector in their local area, however they all share the same common values.

Option 2: Youth Mutuals

A public service mutual is an organisation that has left the public sector but continues delivering public services. There is a significant degree of employee ownership, influence or control in the way the organisation is run.

Option 3: Local Partnership Alliance Model (Most Similar to SYA)

A local partnership that brings together key organisations supporting children and young people in a local authority.

Further detail on these options is contained in Appendix A.

3.6 COVID RESPONSE

COVID hit the youth sector very hard with all universal youth club provision halting instantly in March 2020.

BwDBC Children's Services delivery (Children's Social Care, Youth Justice Team, SEEDS, ENGAGE and Young Peoples Services) continued to work throughout the pandemic and have ensured that the most vulnerable children and young people were still supported, but nevertheless children and young people were still without any open access leisure time offer at all.

The Youth Sector is represented nationally by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the SYA has met immediately following the release of any new youth sector Covid guidance.

Supported superbly by BwDBC Health and Safety Colleagues, SYA organisations have tailored their offer to ensure that children and young people were able to access the best offer possible, whilst ensuring the highest possible standards of care were in place.

Risk Assessments were shared between organisations to ensure that Covid mitigation and controls were consistently high and organisations also supported each other via the sharing of online offers or by sharing technical/creative support solutions.

Over the period of the pandemic, SYA organisations have developed a flexibility and continuous innovation that will serve the sector very well in the future. The SYA has delivered continuous detached youth work opportunities during the pandemic – and in the current detached project (running until the end of August 2021) 10 SYA organisations are delivering at least one weekly sessions per week. This enables the SYA to use its community strengths to great effect with staff offering advice guidance and support at street level when Covid regulations prevented the work taking place in venues. The SYA is committed to retaining some detached youth work post Covid.

The SYA now has an offer that can accommodate and adapt to the individual needs of children and young people better than ever before. Organisations can now all offer services ranging from telephone support to large online and face to face delivery sessions – and everything in between. The leadership and support shared throughout the Covid period is testament to the relationships and common aims of the sector and needs to be commended.

3.7 SUMMER OFFER

Given the unprecedented loss of leisure time activities and support, the SYA is looking to offer as comprehensive an offer as possible during the summer holidays of 2021.

The SYA will be a key delivery partner for this summer's Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) Scheme (managed by BwDBC) and a number of SYA orgs will be delivering large HAF programmes during the month of August. BwDBC YPS and SEEDS are delivering comprehensive HAF offers targeted at the vulnerable young people on their caseloads. YPS is also delivering a HAF Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) project too – working closely with the Disability Team to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are prioritised. Additionally the MHCLG funded Covid work continues throughout summer and this

moves into a new phase with partners delivering in venues to groups of young people, leading informal discussions around Covid safety, testing and vaccinations. The aim is to help young people to access support and opportunities and to make better choices for themselves and their families.

3.8 PERFORMANCE OF THE YOUTH SECTOR COMMISSIONS

Blackburn Youth Zone (BYZ)

- The BYZ Commission is quite a mature commission and will reach 10 years in June 2022. Membership from Darwen and Rural areas and weekly attendances have been areas for development over the last few years.
- A revised and more focussed commissioning framework document is capturing quantity and qualitative data.
- BYZ have been very proactive in managing Covid and have looked to open up as quickly as possible – whilst remaining within restrictions.
- Recent appointments at Blackburn Youth Zone have helped the organisation to progress.

Blackburn Rovers Community Trust (BRCT)

The BRCT is in the third year of the initial commission period. BRCT have an established reputation around Sports development sessions (via their KICKS programmes) and have previously delivered all the Sports offer at BYZ too.

- Delivery of a programme of Neighbourhood Youth Engagement opportunities is a relatively new venture for the Trust and as such support from BwDBC Young Peoples Services was built in from the start. Relationships with senior leaders at BRCT have been positive and open from the beginning.
- Year one saw BRCT establish a mixed programme of Sports and Youth Club activities across the borough and attendance targets were largely all hit. Areas for development from year 1 revolved around quality of youth work practice and delivery of informal education in sessions.
- BRCT have taken more gradual steps out of lock downs and have remained delivering online offers and detached work, leaving some youth clubs closed. BRCT have stated that they considered their approach meticulous and careful whilst local rates remained high.
- Staff retention has affected the BRCT summer offer, affecting youth club activities for the 11+ cohort.

KEY ISSUES & RISKS

WITHOUT THE SYA:

- Local children and young people would not benefit from maximised and coordinated local offer
- External funding opportunities would not be exploited fully
- The local Youth offer would be imbalanced and not spread across wards/prioritised to wards with greatest need and demographic challenges
- The youth sector would become polarised with the larger organisations, with greater back office staffing resources, securing more of the external funding at a detriment to some of the smaller organisations leading to a reduced offer, losing some key specialisms and localised community offer

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 BWDBC LED CONSULTATIONS ACROSS THE LOCAL YOUTH SECTOR

The SYA works as a consultative body and contributes to a number of local and national consultations to inform decision makers and funders.

4.2 DECISIONS AROUND YOUTH SECTOR COMMISSIONING

Decisions around size and nature of the two BwDBC youth sector commissions can be affected by organisational performance, individually and in the context of the Strategic Youth Alliance.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO THE 2 X BWDBC COMMISSIONS

There are financial implications for the Local Authority in regards to the 2 x youth sector commissions:

Blackburn Youth Zone **£170k** – Universal Town Centres offer
Blackburn Rovers Community Trust **£150k** - Neighbourhood Youth Offer

5.2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Since the inception of the SYA approximately **£500k** of direct additional funding and resources have enhanced the local BwD youth work offer, with approximately another **£300k** in indirect funding.

A key priority of the SYA has been to drive up external funding – in particular for areas of unmet need. Below are some examples of SYA led externally funded programmes, with further detail contained in Appendix A:

Example 1: Youth Ambassadors - Value £140k.

This was funding awarded by the National Government's MHCLG Integration funding.
SYA contributors: BYZ, BRCT, YPS, HL, IMO, OV

Example 2: Covid Detached Programme 1 - Value £20k.

Funded via BwDBC Public Health

SYA contributors: YPS, IMO, BRCT BYZ, YA, OV

The programme delivered 13 detached sessions per week with additional sessions delivered over the October half term holiday and around Bonfire Night festivities.

Example 3: Covid Detached Programme 2 (ongoing) - Value £60k.

Funded via Ministry for Housing, Communities and local Government

SYA Contributors: YPS, BYZ, BRCT, YA, OV, IMO, UCO, FACE, NT, CANW

The programme delivers 15 sessions per week between April and August 2021. Also includes the delivery of 10 multi-agency family fundays which will be delivered over the summer holidays

Example 4: Covid SEND Engagement (ongoing) - Value £10k.

Funded via Ministry for Housing, Communities and local Government

SYA Contributors: BRCT, YPS, IMO, YA, FACE

Example 5: Youth Ambassadors 2 - Value £100k.

This was funding awarded by the National Government's MHCLG Integration funding.

SYA contributors: BYZ, BRCT, YPS, IMO, YA

Example 6: Onside DCMS Step Up Funding - Value £116k.

Due to Covid restrictions Onside had an underspend on their regional Step up programme. The SYA, via BYZ, bid for the funds and set up a process to allocate the funds to SYA organisations to deliver 'Step up' type projects - Education, Employment and Training (EET) courses, Signposting and support.

Example 7: Indirect funding

Over the last 2 years SYA organisations have benefitted from Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) funding and other small funding bids of approximately £300k. The SYA was approached as a body to contribute to the HAF programme.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None

8. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 CONSULTATION WITH SYA PARTNERS

Each SYA member org has been consulted on current progress of the SYA.

What do our partners think are the benefits of the SYA?

- **BYZ** “We have been able to establish trust amongst partners and had relative success in delivering a varied offer across universal and targeted services at grassroots”
- **BRCT** “The opportunity to build relationships with other likeminded local organisations and offer a consortium approach to strategic opportunities”
- **CANW** “We feel that the SYA meetings provide a platform to inform and be informed of what is being considered/delivered across the Borough. It allows delegates to share good practice, explore and problem solve, and discuss trends and issues that may be affecting young people in the Borough whilst discussing what can be done collectively”
- **FACE** “Collaborative working and wider understanding. Young People are more open to integrate and diversify, not feeling stuck to only one organisation / group”
- **HL** “The main benefits is that there is a uniformed development and delivery strategy for the borough. Having the opportunity for partners to provide input strategically is invaluable. Working in partnership to support partner strengths when applying for funding”
- **IMO** “Increased collaboration and partnership working between organisations. Increased sharing of resources. It has enabled the Local Authority to consolidate engagement and support with SYA organisations especially during Covid response e.g. emergency food aid, detached youth, HAF”
- **NT** “Opportunity to share good practice, ensure services for young people are delivered within our areas of interest & play a part in the borough-wide offer but on a local level. Ability to keep abreast of developments & opportunities in the sector, and be part of the conversations at a strategic level regarding future needs, direction and priorities”
- **OV** “The SYA is a collection of organisations who can work collectively to support young people in Blackburn with Darwen. Some of the benefits include: partnership working, collective approach to youth work, sharing of ideas”
- **UCO** “The SYA has enabled us to connect with other organisations operating across Blackburn with Darwen and be part of the bigger strategic vision and also receive the infrastructure support from some of the larger organisations and rather than being pushed aside with the power from the bigger Orgs we have been welcomed on the table to have a voice and share the needs of the communities we serve”
- **YA** “Partnership approach, Collaboration of ideas, A place for partner orgs to meet, To get updated guidance and info, Project proposals”

10. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance.

11. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

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DATE:	20 th July 2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Appendix A – SYA Future Developments & Funding Secured