

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Education Pandemic Recovery Update

September 2021

This report looks at short term progress of elements of the Council's plans for a Child Friendly Recovery in Cardiff.

It focusses on three key areas from the Education directorate perspective on activities that have taken place throughout the summer period to engage young people across the city and focus on their re-engagement and wellbeing.

Over the medium to longer term, the directorate will work in partnership with children, young people and families to refresh and publish a new, post-pandemic, Child Friendly Strategy in the autumn of 2021, inclusive of detailed shared commitments and a 3-year plan as well as a refresh of Cardiff 2030.

Short Term – A Graduated Response to Need

Re-engagement and wellbeing

An inclusive, innovative and joined up response to the re-engagement and wellbeing of children and young people is at the core of the Council's Child Friendly Recovery agenda. This report focusses on three key areas delivered across the Education Directorate to support this.

These activities all took place throughout the school summer holidays to prepare young people for a return to full education in the September as well as to continue to focus on young people's mental and physical wellbeing. All activities were specifically targeted at the most vulnerable young people and their families identified by schools. The rationale behind these activities was that there must be opportunities for children and young people to recover lost social, recreational, sport and leisure experiences, to simply 'be' with their friends and to enjoy some return to life as it was before the pandemic.

A Citywide Children and Young People's Festival – 'Summer of Smiles'

The Summer of Smiles Festival was developed as a way to help young people to reconnect, have new experiences and make new friends. The underlying values of treating young people with dignity and respect and recognising their skills and abilities were integral in the development. Young people were at the heart of consultations when developing the plans.

Activities took place throughout the city and built on the resources of being a capital city. The focus centred around two city centre venues outside county hall and in the city centre to host a range of engaging activities for young people and their families. To ensure that the most vulnerable young people were involved the following groups received early bird free passes to activities:

- Specialist Teaching Teams
- Young Carers Provision
- Foster Care and Looked After Teams
- Cardiff Youth Service
- Early Help and Family Gateway

- Play Service Disability Officer
- Hostel and Supported Housing Team
- Youth Justice Team
- EMTAS and Closing the Gap Team

Festival Outcomes

It was clear from feedback from young people that engaged with activities that wellbeing was enhanced. Over 18,000 visitors came to the city centre venues building back confidence in travelling across the city. The vast majority of these visitors came from families that would not usually receive this provision. This confidence was also shown as groups interacted in groups and wider social settings and there were no recorded issues related to COVID. The profile of Cardiff as a child friendly city was increased and the links with partner organisations enhanced. The festival also received positive, wide ranging media attention and helped to generate a opening up of the city centre feeling.

Visitors felt safe across all the activities and commented that all venues were welcoming, relaxed and well managed and that they were confident to enjoy the events safely. Whether indoors or outdoors Summer of Smiles gave safe spaces for new experiences, for developing important social skills and just having fun.

As well as engaging young people in the participation of the events they were also identified and trained to volunteer to work across the festival sites.

Enhanced Youth Service Provision

Despite the challenges presented over the last year, summer 2021 has seen young people out and about, enjoying themselves whilst participating in a diverse range of youth provision. Staff have worked extremely hard for the duration of the summer to ensure an exciting and engaging summer programme was delivered across the city. These are some of the highlights:

Roadshows

Throughout the summer youth service teams along with a variety of supporting partners in each community have delivered 10 roadshow events across the city. Venues included Splott Park, Ely Recreational Ground, Pentwyn Muga/Skate Park, Eastern Leisure Centre and Butetown, Grangetown & Riverside. Neighbourhood teams worked with local partners to ensure each event was targeted, meaningful and engaging for the young people in that area. Each event provided a range of activities and opportunities for further support. The Post 16 Team delivered 5 bespoke roadshows focused around education, training and employment.

Neighbourhood area teams

Neighbourhood youth centre provisions all delivered a full 6 week engaging and exciting summer programme which included some centre-based activities including arts, cooking, life skills and music. Local trips to surrounding areas included bike rides, day walks, DofE expedition, go-karting and picnics. Young people really enjoyed the adventurous outdoor activities including mountain biking, gorge walking, sup boarding provided by the Urdd and Storey Arms Centre. Young people had an opportunity relax and meet their friends in a safe space, try new activities, gain new skills and experiences and just enjoy the summer.

The Inclusive Team provided 5 weeks of activities for young people who attend groups such as Young Carers, Inclusive Youth Clubs and Girls Group. Through sports, cooking and outdoor activities, young people were able to make new friends, grow in confidence and overcome barriers such as social anxiety. 26 young people completed their Bronze DofE Award, an amazing achievement this year.

Summer of Smiles

With the support of the Digital Team the newly formed Young Creators group reported on the Summer of Smiles activities across the city. A number of films are available on view on YouTube.

Neighbourhood and specialist youth provisions supported a large number of young people opportunities to attend various activities provided by Summer of Smiles. This added huge value to our summer programme and enabled young people to gain new experiences and try out new activities.

Grassroots city centre youth project supported the Summer of Smiles Festival.

Summer transition year 11

The Pre 16 Youth Mentors have been extremely active this summer, making an offer of support to every Year 11 leaver. Despite the challenges presented due to Covid, youth mentors have contacted, engaged and supported young people throughout the summer to attend appointment and interviews with Careers Wales, Into Work service, training providers and colleges, to overcome personal barriers to engagement and/or progression such as transport, mental health, financial and confidence. Neighbourhood teams have also provided weekly drop-in sessions which have been well attended.

Post 16 provision

Over the summer, the Post 16 team have delivered a range of bespoke projects which targeted young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) in neighbourhood communities across the city. All young people who attended a project have been linked to a youth mentor for ongoing support. A highlight has been the 'Recipe for Life' project, enabling young people to gain real-life experience of the hospitality industry whilst improving confidence, developing new skills, gaining an accreditation and securing employment or training at the end of the course.

Street Based & Youth Bus

Throughout July and August, the Street Based team have been delivering youth work across the city, supporting neighbourhood programmes and events. As a response to presenting needs, community engagement and partnership work has been very positive resulting in some very exciting projects/developments for ongoing work in areas such as Grangetown, St. Mellons, Caerau and Adamsdown. The team are also supporting the City Centre Skaters project enabling young people to have their voices heard on safe places to skateboard as well as issues they are passionate about.

The Youth Bus team have been out and about 6 days a week covering many communities across the city and supporting many events. A highlight has been regular weekly support for the 'Fit n Fed' projects with Fairwater and Western Leisure centres building good relationships with young people in these areas.

New pop-up provision

Consultation carried out prior to and during the summer highlighted presenting areas in need of youth provision. Additional funding has enabled opportunities to create a number of new pop-up youth provisions with other partners in the community, two are highlighted below:

The Girls Group in Grange Gardens has formed during the summer providing young females a safe space to meet weekly, to socialise with friends, gain new experiences and feel supported with their personal development and progression routes.

Caerau was identified as an area needing further support directly after school. A twilight provision has been developed with various partners across the area to provide activities and youth work support to young people in the area, linking up youth support services and providers.

Emotional Health & Homelessness Team

Over the summer the Emotional Health & Homelessness Team supported roadshow events in Ely, Llanrumney, Pentwyn, Splott and Riverside. Resilience Workers delivered targeted interventions using the iCare Programme with 87 young people. The iCare programme has been developed with young people to help support and build emotional resilience and well-being through self-care activities. A journal focuses on building self-care activities, looking at personal strengths, identifying support networks and reframing our outlook on life. Initial feedback from evaluations completed was very positive with 98% found the activities within the programme interesting and helpful and 100% felt valued and listened to.

Digital youth work

The Digital Team have been working with young people at some of the roadshows and at various projects to record young peoples' experiences; from white water rafting, DofE expeditions to interviewing young people, the group have edited the footage and created really interesting films, some of which are available on view on the Cardiff Youth Services YouTube channel.

The team also partnered up with Techno Camps to provide a 4-day computer science programme for young people aged 11-16 to learn how to code and programme. Cardiff Commitment representatives from Microsoft and Admiral also joined sessions to discuss coding and programming in the workplace. As a result of this project the Digital Team will now be working with a group of young people and Techno Camps to develop a digital space with lots of opportunities for young people.

Our newly developed website gives a more detailed view of our youth support services and provisions across the city www.cardiffyouthservices.wales

School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP)

This summer, Food and Fun was delivered in 28 schools across the city (2 English medium secondary schools, 1 Welsh medium secondary school, 1 pupil referral unit, 1 special school, 1 Welsh medium primary school and 22 English medium primary schools).

This summer additional Welsh Government funding was provided to enable the programme to be extended to include communities beyond the traditionally Welsh Government funded targeted areas, to help make sure as many children as possible could access the provision.

Over 1200 children accessed the provision which provides a healthy breakfast and lunch, and nutrition and food sessions each day, as well as enrichment activities provided by a range of city-wide partner organisations, enabling children to learn new skills in a fun and safe environment. Each school was supported with physical activity sessions delivered by Sport Cardiff.

Education catering teams served over 22,000 healthy breakfasts and lunches, with 46 school staff trained in Nutrition Skills for Life to enable delivery of fun nutrition education sessions to children to promote healthy eating and encourage up take of school meals.

Pre pandemic families of children attending Food and Fun sessions would be invited into school to eat lunch together. This year more than 5000 family food bags, including ingredients and a step-by-step recipe developed by dieticians from Cardiff and Vale Health Board, were distributed to Food and Fun families across the city. This enabled families to prepare, cook and eat together.

Over 30 partner organisations supported the delivery of fun enrichment activities which included visits by the emergency services, dance, music, football, cricket, rocket launching, drama, gardening, water safety, rail safety, internet safety, science, construction, flying drones and many more. These activities all contribute to #makingmemories ensuring children have had a fun summer!

The Impact of Covid-19 on Children & Young People: Update Position for operation of schools

Guidance and Risk Framework

Background

The latest guidance from Welsh Government details that the country is in a phase of transition moving from pandemic to an endemic phase. In this transition phase dynamic changes will continue and where rising numbers occur challenges will continue.

As society and schools continue move to a business-as-usual basis, or as close to, the approach applied needs to be balanced whilst maintaining approach to mitigate against spread across communities and into schools. In this period of transition, we need to continue to adapt and respond accordingly but in a way that is also proportional. Over this Autumn term Covid will need to be managed in the context of responding to other respiratory viruses – particularly in the autumn and early spring terms.

Move from Operational Guidance to a Control Framework

From September 20th, the Operational Guidance from Welsh Government that has been issued and regularly updated over the preceding academic year will be replaced with a control framework. This will be directed by local PHW teams with schools seeing mitigations either being increased or decreased in response, depending on the spread of the virus and the controls needed to manage its transmission.

The overall alert level is set at a national level. However, at a local level Incident Management Teams will meet weekly to agree local risk ratings and the mitigations that need to be in place to manage them. The Local authority will work with schools to manage this process.

The hierarchy of controls and risk assessments will inform what reasonable measures will required as well as those activities undertaken in schools. Additionally, LFD test results will inform the rates of infection and what proportionate responses are required (so for example, if a rate is high and/or rising a decision may be taken not hold assemblies as a response). This reinforces the importance and need for the continued use of LFD testing, and reporting of those tests, for staff and secondary learners during this period.

The Local Authority will continue to communicate to schools any changes to risk levels and mitigations appropriate to local contexts. Already this term Cardiff guidance has been shared with schools and there have been online webinar sessions to clarify guidance as well as weekly catchup sessions to provide updates.