

myplace Impact Evaluation Interim Report: Executive Summary

December 2012



Executive Summary

This document presents interim findings from the impact evaluation of ***myplace***.

myplace was launched in April 2008 and has made 63 capital grants of between £1m and £5m each for high quality youth centres which offer young people access to a wide range of activities and support services. The programme aims to place young people in the lead in the planning and delivery of projects and is based on partnership working across sectors to develop centres that respond to local needs and priorities and are sustainable. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is delivering ***myplace*** on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

Introduction

myplace

The ***myplace*** programme has its origins in the 'Aiming High' (HM Treasury, 2007) policy framework of the (then) Labour Government. This laid out a strategy for youth provision which focused on 'helping teenagers to develop important social and communications skills, build their self-esteem and self-confidence and, improve their attitudes to school and help them avoid risks such as experimenting with drugs, being involved with crime or anti-social behaviour. The programme has four outcomes:

- more young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities
- more young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development
- more young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable
- stronger partnership working between local authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and operate financially sustainable facilities with and for young people.

The Coalition Government's priorities for young people and services are set out in the 'Positive for Youth' policy statement (December 2011). Within this context, ***myplace*** investment is intended to drive the on-going reform of local youth provision, including an enhanced role for civil society organisations (CSOs) in delivering publicly-funded services. Projects are expected to focus strongly on evidence-based early interventions for vulnerable young people, to work collaboratively across sectors, to lever in additional resources and to increase engagement with the private sector.

The evaluation

BIG commissioned the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) and the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research (CEIR) at Sheffield Hallam University to carry out an impact evaluation of ***myplace*** between November 2011 and March 2013.

The evaluation is addressing three questions:

- what are **myplace** centres and other youth centres/ facilities achieving and what is best practice in measuring impact?
- what are the on-going costs of provision and how should this inform future investment decisions by local authorities and others considering establishing youth centres?
- how are **myplace** centres and other youth centres/ facilities generating income and what are the lessons for revenue planning in the future by local authorities and others considering investment in youth facilities?

Methods include baseline and follow-up surveys of grant holders, and young people attending **myplace** centres (the participant group) and a 'comparator' group of young people living in areas that have not had **myplace** investment. These surveys will be used to identify relationships between provision and outcome change for young people. In addition, 10 case studies are being carried out to explore aspects of implementation and the ways in which young people benefit from **myplace** centres.

The interim report presents data from baseline surveys of grant holders and young people, along with emerging evidence from case study **myplace** centres. The baseline data provides information on what **myplace** centres are offering to young people and on the characteristics, attitudes and behaviours of young people who are, and are not, attending **myplace** centres.

Follow-up surveys, to be conducted in late 2012, will provide evidence of change. Differences in outcome change between the participant and comparator groups of young people will be used to identify the impact of the **myplace** investment.

Key Findings

Findings are presented in the context of the four programme outcomes.

Outcome: more young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities

Evaluation Findings

myplace centres are located in areas which maximise opportunities for access by young people

Centres are most commonly located in inner urban areas in central locations in towns and city centres and are thus close to local transport hubs, maximising opportunities for access by young people from across (and in some cases between) local authority areas. Central locations are sometimes also places where young people congregate.

The catchment area for 63 per cent of the **myplace** centres within a local authority area. However, over 30 per cent of centres anticipate that young people will travel beyond local authority boundaries to access provision and a small proportion (five per cent) of projects report their catchment area to be the local community: young people living within a one mile radius of the **myplace** project.

Young people are travelling to access **myplace** centres. Fifty per cent of young people attending **myplace** centres (and responding to the survey) live within 20 minutes' walking distance of the centre. Thirty seven per cent of those attending **myplace** centres live more than 20 minutes' walk away.

***myplace* centres typically bring together a wide range of facilities, activities and services to provide a comprehensive offer to young people**

Seventy per cent or more of centres include a café/ restaurant, an area for study, an area to learn practical skills (such as workshop, recording studio, kitchen, or hairdressing salon), an indoor games and recreation area, and indoor sports area, and office or meeting space.

Centres offer a range of opportunities for social, sporting and creative activities. Outdoor space is also common, including gardens/ allotments and outdoor sports areas (available in 46 per cent of centres).

***myplace* centres are attracting large numbers of young people who value the opportunity to meet up with friends in a safe environment, and use the facilities on offer.**

Young people were involved extensively in planning and design of ***myplace*** centres and this has produced buildings which are safe, appealing and welcoming to young people and which offer attractive environments in which to engage young people in activities and services.

One third of projects currently attract in excess of 200 young people each week. These numbers are likely to increase as more centres open and become established.

Young people are attracted to ***myplace*** centres and other youth provision for a range of reasons including opportunities to meet up with friends (68 per cent), having somewhere safe to meet (40 per cent) and to use the facilities (36 per cent).

Centres are responding to community needs

85 per cent of centres have developed activities and services that respond to community needs and 81 per cent carried out community consultation on the location of the project. In 75 per cent of project community members are involved as volunteers and in 61 per cent local community members are involved in project governance.

Outcome: more young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure time activities that support their personal and social development

Evaluation Findings

***myplace* centres are focused on early intervention to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people**

myplace centres are more commonly located in areas with lower than average child well-being and higher than average levels of deprivation, unemployment and truancy, and lower than average educational attainment.

myplace centres are targeting young people with a wide range of needs. Between 60 per cent and 96 per cent of centres are targeting the following groups: deprived/ low income; NEET; young people with learning difficulties; young people with physical disabilities; offenders (or those at risk of offending); young people with substance misuse problems, young people from black and minority ethnic groups, young parents; young people who are looked after or in care; young people with physical or mental health condition. In addition, 37 per cent provide services for homeless young people.

There is a strong emphasis on the social and emotional development of young people

Eighty per cent of centres identify 'provision of personal and social development opportunities for young people as one of their main objectives. The second and third most common objectives are 'provision of a safe and welcoming space for young people (70 per cent), and 'provision of high quality sport and leisure facilities for young people (46 per cent)

Eighty per cent of centres identify 'developing young people's social and emotional skills' as one of their main outcomes. The second and third most frequently identified outcomes are 'improving engagement in education, employment and training' (61 per cent) and 'reducing/preventing crime and anti-social behaviour (33 per cent).

Young people are generally confident and have high levels of self-esteem

Two measures were used to assess the self-esteem and well-being of young people: the Rosenberg self-esteem scale¹, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being² scale. Young people were asked all questions on the scales and individual scores added together (by the evaluation team), using the appropriate methodologies (including for instance taking into account reverse scored questions on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale).

Young people in **myplace** and non-**myplace** areas obtain similar scores on self-esteem and well-being measures, generally scoring highly on both. Young people attending **myplace** centres are more confident and more satisfied with life than their counterparts in non-**myplace** areas.

A minority of young people are engaged in anti-social and risky behaviours

A minority of young people attending **myplace** provision report that they have engaged in anti-social and criminal activities within the last three months. Nineteen per cent of young people attending myplace centres and completing the baseline survey report that they have upset someone with hurtful name calling, 17 per cent report that they have threatened someone with violence and eight per cent have excluded someone from a group of friends or activities. Eight per cent say that they have smashed or damaged property, 7 per cent have stolen something from a shop or business site and 4.5 per cent have damaged another car or vehicle on purpose.

Forty five per cent of young people attending **myplace** centres and 55 per cent in the comparator group report that they do not drink alcohol at all. Thirteen per cent of those attending **myplace** centres and five per cent in the comparator group drink alcohol once or twice a week. Ninety six per cent of young people in the comparator group and 83.5 per cent of those attending **myplace** centres do not take illegal drugs. Three per cent of young people attending **myplace** centres take drugs every day, compared to one per cent of the comparator group.

Young people attending **myplace** centres are more likely than those in comparator areas to report that they are involved in violence against people and property and drinking alcohol on a regular basis. This may be a reflection of **myplace** centres targeting young people who are at risk.

There are higher levels of self-reported engagement in anti-social activities amongst young people aged 8-12 years (when compared to older age groups). This confirms the importance of early intervention to meet the needs of those at risk. Analysis of baseline data relating to

¹ See <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/scoy/research/rosenberg.htm>

² The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh. See <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/population/Measuring-positive-mental-health.aspx>

young people attending ***myplace*** centres reveals that although the majority are in the priority target group (13-19 years, up to aged 25 with additional needs) many are aged 12 years or under (13 per cent of those completing the young persons' questionnaire), indicating a substantial need for provision amongst these younger children. ***myplace*** centres are responding to this need by running junior youth clubs and other activities for younger children.

Outcome: more young people having access to information, advice and guidance services from within places they feel comfortable

Evaluation Findings

There is widespread provision of information, advice and guidance

Advice and guidance has a strong focus on education and work, and health, as well as counselling and financial advice. A majority of ***myplace*** centres responding to the grant holders survey indicated 'careers advice/mentoring' (91 per cent), 'youth health services' and 'vocational training' (89.5 per cent respectively) as services that they are providing. In addition, 70 per cent of ***myplace*** centres indicated that alternative education (for those aged 14 - 16 years) is, or will be, available to young people. Fifty eight per cent of centres provide counselling for young people and 51 per cent offer financial advice.

Eleven per cent of young people report access to advice, guidance and support as a main reason for attending ***myplace*** provision. It is likely that much higher numbers are accessing services which located in accessible and friendly environments. Service providers report that the location of services within attractive and accessible physical spaces has increased opportunities to engage with young people, leading to better access and improved outcomes. Additional data on young people's use of advice and guidance (along with other services) will be collected via follow-up surveys.

Outcome: stronger partnership working between local authorities and their third, private and public sector partners to plan, deliver and operate financially sustainable facilities with and for young people.

Evaluation Findings

Partnership working across sectors is central to the *myplace* programme and is bringing a range of benefits

All centres are working in partnership to deliver services to young people. Benefits to emerge from partnership working include integrated service delivery (often as a result of the co-location of service providers in ***myplace*** centres), leading to improved contact with young people, better outcome, and service efficiencies.

Partnership between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the public sector is widespread: 62 per cent of ***myplace*** centres report that CSOs are involved in the delivery of services or activities, and 60 per cent identify local authority youth services as a main partner.

Some ***myplace*** centres are working in partnership with private sector organisations, although more intend to do so in the future. Across all centres 37 per cent of respondents to the grant holder survey indicated that they worked in partnership with private sector organisations to deliver services or activities and 19 per cent identified private sector organisations as providers of project funding. Forty Four per cent of centres see business sponsorship as a future income source, although 25 per cent of respondents indicate that their project has no involvement from the private sector. Barriers to engagement with the

private sector include lack of knowledge, contacts and skills.

Young people are involved in decision making and have influence

Young people continue to be involved extensively in decision making in *myplace* centres and have influenced the range of activities and services on offer, as well as operational issues such as staffing and resourcing. More than half of the centres have involved young people in decision making processes in relation to income generation, recruitment of staff, conduct and frequency of meetings and business planning. In an additional 40 per cent of responding projects young people have led decision making around activities and services and the design of the facility. In interviews, young people and staff report that young people gain skills and confidence from their participation in decision making.

Most centres are financially sustainable in the short term, and larger centres (in terms of operating costs) and those led by the public sector are more likely to have short-term funding in place

Fifty-five per cent of centres have funds in place to cover operating costs for one or two years: twenty-four per cent have funds in place for three years or more. However, 20 per cent of centres do not have sufficient funds to cover operating costs for the current financial year. These centres are pursuing a range of options, including commercial activities to increase income.

Larger *myplace* centres, in terms of operating costs, are more likely to have secured income in the short and medium term and be confident about securing income in the future. More than 90 per cent of those with operating costs of £750,000 and over have secured funding to cover the next 12 months' operating costs, and more than 50 per cent of these have secured funding to cover the next 24 months. By comparison 67 per cent of centres with small operating costs (£250,000 or less per annum) have secured funding to cover 12 months and only 33 per cent had secured funding to cover the next 24 months.

Local authority grant holders are more likely to have short term funding in place but are less confident about the future. Grant holders in local authorities are more likely than those in CSOs to have funds in place to cover their operating costs over the next two years. 87 per cent of responding local authority centres have funds in place for up to twelve months and 53 per cent have funds secured to cover operating costs for the next two years. The comparative figures for CSO grant holders are 68 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. However, CSO grant holders are more confident in their abilities to generate income in the longer term: 82 per cent of CSO respondents agree that they will be able to generate enough income to cover their operating costs over the next five years, compared to 67 per cent of those in local authorities.

In some cases business plans which had been developed on the premise of public sector service agencies acting as anchor tenants and establishing permanent bases within *myplace* centres have had to be revised as local budgets have shrunk and agencies have been unable to commit to planned activities. In others, local budgets for youth work have been revised, sometimes resulting in the withdrawal or reduction of grant funding for *myplace* centre.

Centres have developed diverse funding portfolios to generate income from a range of different sources

Income from hire of centre facilities, staging of events, general admission charges and sales income were most commonly identified (all by more than half of centres responding).

Public sector grants remain an important source of income. Although less than half of respondents identify local public sector grants and contracts as an income source, they

remain important for those that do. Centres expect that on average grants and contracts from local public sector bodies will make the largest contribution to operating costs (33 per cent). This is followed by hire of equipment, facilities and rooms (19 per cent) and grants from charitable trusts or foundations (13 per cent). The remaining income sources each contributed an average of ten per cent or less towards centre operating costs. This highlights the importance many centres place on local public sector funds to sustain their work compared to other types of income. This is further highlighted by the fact that 18 per cent of respondents (nine centres) expect local public sector funds to cover more than half of their operating costs and for 45 per cent of respondents (22) centres they amount to the largest single source of funds.

Next Steps

There are four main research tasks for the remainder of the evaluation period, to March 2013:

Follow-up grant holder survey

A follow-up grant holder survey in November 2012 will gather standardised information on delivery and will concentrate in particular on collecting updated financial data and information on activities and outputs to inform assessments of sustainability.

Follow-up surveys of young people in *myplace* and non-*myplace* areas

All young people who returned a completed baseline questionnaire, and who also indicated that they were happy to be contacted again by the evaluation team, will be invited to take part in a follow-up young people's survey in December 2012. This survey will be designed to capture evidence of change in attitudes, behaviours and outcomes for young people.

Case Studies

Fieldwork will continue in the case study centres until December 2012. During this period the evaluators will carry out interviews with ***myplace*** centre staff and volunteers, and representatives of partner agencies; and interviews and focus groups with young people. Financial and management information will also be collected and analysed.

Reporting

The evaluation will report in March 2013. Final outputs will contain analysis of all data to report on the impact, costs and sustainability of ***myplace*** provision.