



Blackpool Youth Provision Review: Summary of Final Report

NYA
National Youth Agency



The National Youth Agency (NYA) conducted a review of youth provision across the Blackpool footprint. The NYA engaged key stakeholders to collect views and data to inform the review in partnership with Youth Focus North West (YFNW) and with the support of the Youth Provision Review Steering Group (YPRSG).

The following report analyses quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus groups) engagement and consultation with young people, parents and carers who live in Blackpool, as well as organisations that provide youth provision in the town. Stakeholder consultations, as well as desktop and effective practice research, will be used to inform a development plan outlining the future potential of youth provision in Blackpool.

In this review, youth provision is defined as informal education for children and young people aged seven to twenty-five years.

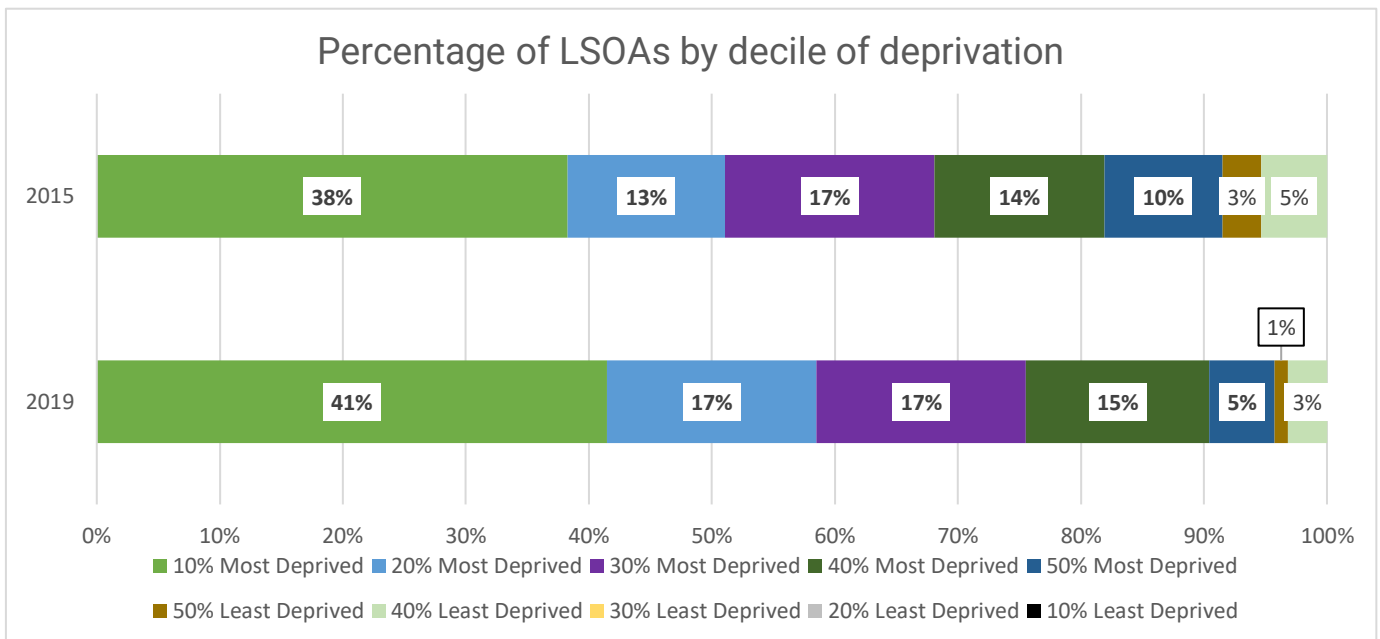
Blackpool Profile

Blackpool is an upper-tier local authority district (LAD) on the Fylde Coast in England’s North West region. Blackpool has a resident population of approximately 139,400 people and a population density of 40.7 people per hectare, which is the third highest in the North West behind the major cities of Manchester and Liverpool, and the seventh-most densely populated borough in England and Wales outside Greater London.¹

The LAD encompasses just under 14 square miles and is divided into 21 wards, all of which are classified as urban. Aside from any accessible coastal and beach areas, there is limited open space, particularly within and around the centre.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, Blackpool is the most deprived upper tier local authority district (UTLA). It was ranked as the fourth most deprived UTLA in 2015. The data suggests that deprivation is uniformly distributed across Blackpool (i.e. it is evident across the LAD), but that there are some areas with particularly high concentrations of relative deprivation at the neighbourhood level.

Blackpool has eight of the ten most deprived lower layer super output areas (LSOAs) in the country, as well as the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived centile (22 LSOAs out of 94, or 23%). Relatively, Blackpool has more deprived areas in the lowest decile than in the previous IMD in 2015, increasing from 38% to 41%.



The publicly available data used to profile Blackpool’s population does not allow for an individual level correlation of disadvantages. However, it is clear that a large proportion of Blackpool’s young people face at least one disadvantage, and many face multiple disadvantages. When compared to its nearest neighbours, Blackpool often has significantly worse measures, and in several cases has the worst indicators nationally. Where the data permitted ward-level comparisons, it showed that a few of the wards that are clustered around the town centre have comparatively worse measures (Bloomfield, Claremont and Talbot).²

¹ Nomis: QS102EW

² IMD

Youth Provision Enhancing Life Chances

According to the 2010 Marmot review, reducing inequity in social determinants of health among children and young people is the single most important factor in reducing health inequalities across the life course. As part of this overarching position, it was identified that developing capabilities is one of the essential components to supporting greater equity. Ten years later, the review panel revisited progress on the report's recommendations between 2010 and 2020, specifically recognising the significant role youth services have in supporting health equity and greater equity throughout life.

Quality youth services are important for supporting life outcomes, and they are a part of and contribute to a wider eco-system of services that support and develop young people's capabilities. Youth work is a statutory service, as stated in the 1997 Education Act (updated in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act), and it is significant for this review that the NYA expects the government's current review of the 508B guidance to clarify local authorities' legal responsibilities.

Youth Involvement, Engagement and Participation

Young people's engagement and involvement was a core element of the review, and the findings from the consultation with young people are central to informing the development plan's recommendations. Quantitative (mass and targeted questionnaires) and qualitative (targeted focus groups) methodologies were employed to ensure a comprehensive consultation. This approach enabled consultation with both those who are already engaged in youth provision and those who are not.

The importance of engaging and involving young people in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of the services intended for them should not be underestimated. Participation facilitates a sense of ownership, which increases the likelihood of an initiative's success.



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The review identified the need to develop a coordinated Blackpool-wide participation strategy. It would help to inform programme/activity and support service design and development. The development and implementation of an effective participation strategy underpins the other recommendations identified in this report. Successful implementation of the participation strategy would increase the probability of young people feeling ownership of the provision and services, help raise the profile of youth provision among them and improve coordination between support services.

Recommendations to consider:

- Co-produce a youth participation strategy to support young people's involvement in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of youth provision.
- Adopt a framework to support Blackpool-wide young person participation.
- Coordinate a young person group to oversee the implementation of the development plan that will support the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool.

Coordination of Youth Provision

Most of the youth provision in Blackpool is provided by the voluntary community sector (VCS). Blackpool Council, in collaboration with the VCS, provides targeted provision and support services for young people. However, the lack of awareness of how young people can access provision and services demonstrates the need for improved communication, which should be coordinated by one agency.

The report's findings indicate the need for centralised coordination to support infrastructure, youth voice, research, insight and funding. The prominent VCS youth provision, Blackpool Council's commitment to reviewing youth provision (in addition to their statutory duty to secure an offer of youth provision) and Blackpool's unique leisure-oriented businesses all suggest that a coordinated collaboration could support improved outcomes for young people living in Blackpool.

In addition to youth voice and participation, the development of a cohesive coordinating body is critical for the successful implementation of the development plan and the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool. The first step in advancing the development plan will be to identify and commit to the most appropriate model for supporting central coordination of youth provision across Blackpool. One example of how youth provision could be more effectively coordinated is the Youth Partnership Foundation model, which is summarised in the full report.

Recommendation to consider:

- Explore a model to support central coordination of youth provision across Blackpool.



Accessible Provision

Youth work is impactful because of the voluntary engagement of young people. The focus group discussions found that the voluntary engagement aspect of their participation was valued by the young people attending youth provision. The sense of membership and belonging, young people felt towards their provision, related to easy accessibility (locality) and the voluntary relationships formed with those adults who deliver the provision. Suggesting relationships and easy access were the important criteria for those attending youth provision. The recommendations reflect the importance of well-resourced local services informed by young people and delivered by a skilled workforce.



Relationships and easy access were the important criteria for those attending youth provision.

Recommendations to consider:

- Coordinate the delivery of high-quality provision by a youth work trained workforce in each of the 21 wards. All young people should have the right to youth provision that is within a 15-minute walk of their homes.
- Ensure that the measurement framework monitors the impact of youth work on feelings of belonging.

Youth Sector Workforce

The review did not capture all youth workers that were operating in Blackpool. However, analysis of the data from providers suggests that full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified youth workers and youth support workers are under-resourced. An audit would identify gaps and enable targeted intervention to correct the imbalance.



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The evidence appraised as part of the literature review demonstrates the importance of the transformative relationships fostered by youth workers. It is important not to underestimate the expertise required to facilitate an environment where complex group dynamics exist, in which young people can develop and where relationships with adults are less power led. The skills and traits required to manage this dynamic are complex, with a need for reflexivity that should be part of all staff training for those who work with young people.

The information collected in the review was insufficient to make specific recommendations for a workforce training programme. However, quantitative data analysis suggests that training is under-resourced, and thus a wide-ranging development programme would benefit the workforce. A comprehensive audit of youth provision's recruitment, training and professional development needs could inform the development plan.

Recommendations to consider:

- Coordinate a workforce recruitment and training needs assessment that includes both paid and unpaid workers.
- Include colleagues who provide broader young people services in the recruitment and training needs assessment.
- Develop a support programme based on the recruitment and training needs assessment findings.³
 - Reflective practice should be promoted and supported, and peer observations could be coordinated.

• ³ This could include access to level 2 and 3 youth work training and support to increase the number of qualified youth work staff in Blackpool.

- Implement the NYA's recommendation to provide two FTE JNC professional youth workers per secondary education establishment, as outlined in the sector's [Ten Year Vision for Youth Work](#), to ensure sufficient community-based youth provision for Blackpool's young people.
- Adopt and adapt an evidence framework aligned with youth work principles to measure the transformative power of youth work.

Youth Work Supporting Wider Social Outcomes

Youth work can be an asset in contributing to wider outcomes for Blackpool's young people if the voluntary nature of the relationship between the youth worker and young person is safeguarded. Examples outlined in the effective practice literature review demonstrate the potential for youth work principles and practice to support outcomes in collaboration with partners in health, sport and youth justice.

Understanding where youth provision currently supports wider outcomes and how this can be expanded into other disciplines would support broader positive outcomes for Blackpool's young people. Once the gaps have been identified, expanding the training programme to other disciplines and exploring how youth work can support wider outcomes should be investigated.

Recommendation to consider:

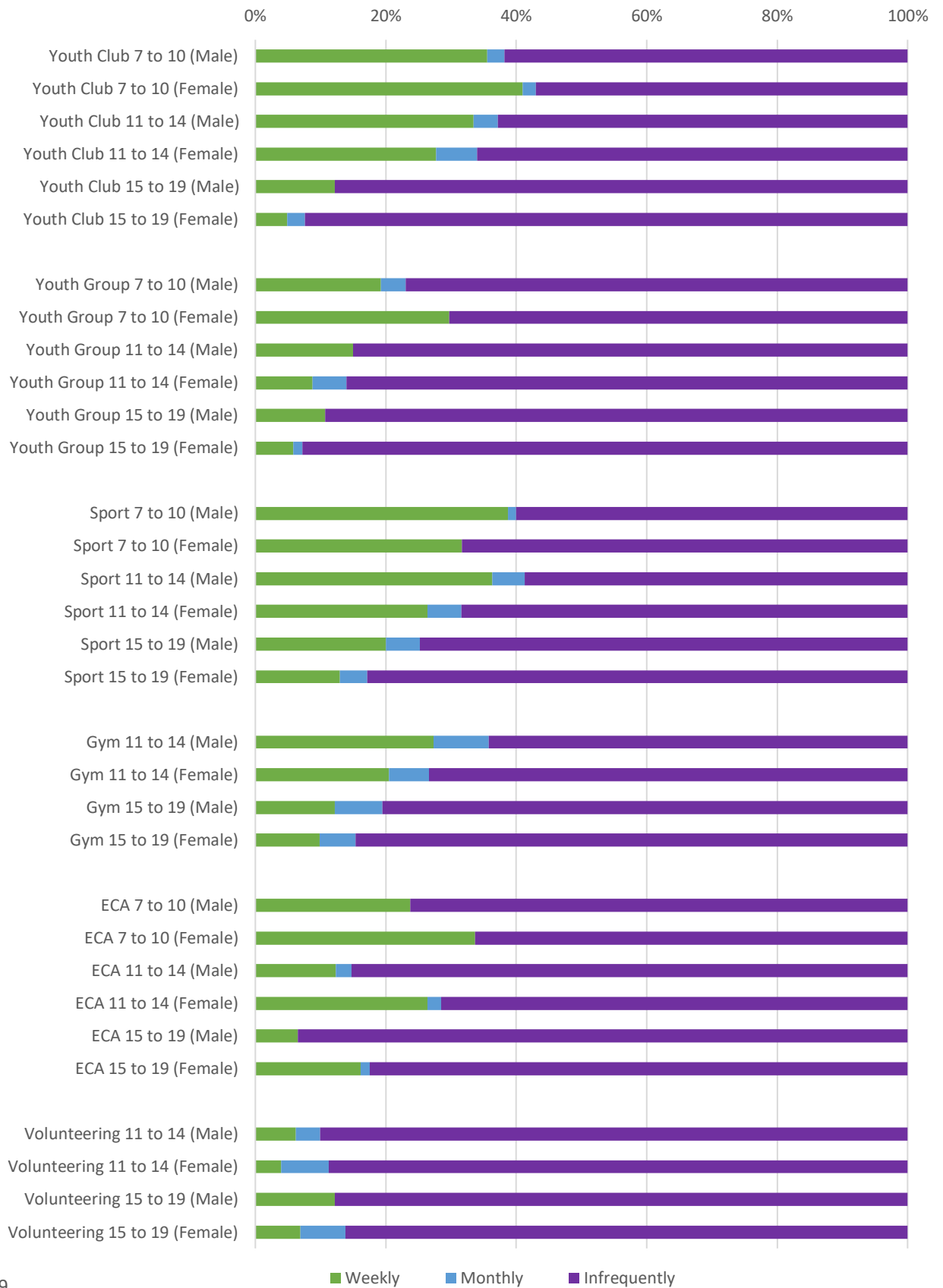
- Explore opportunities where youth work can contribute to the wider community outcomes.

Attracting and Retaining Young People to Access Youth Provision

Significant numbers of young people are choosing not to participate in youth provision. Although it was found that younger age groups (7–14 years) are participating or open to participating in youth provision, this notably declines with post 14 age groups.



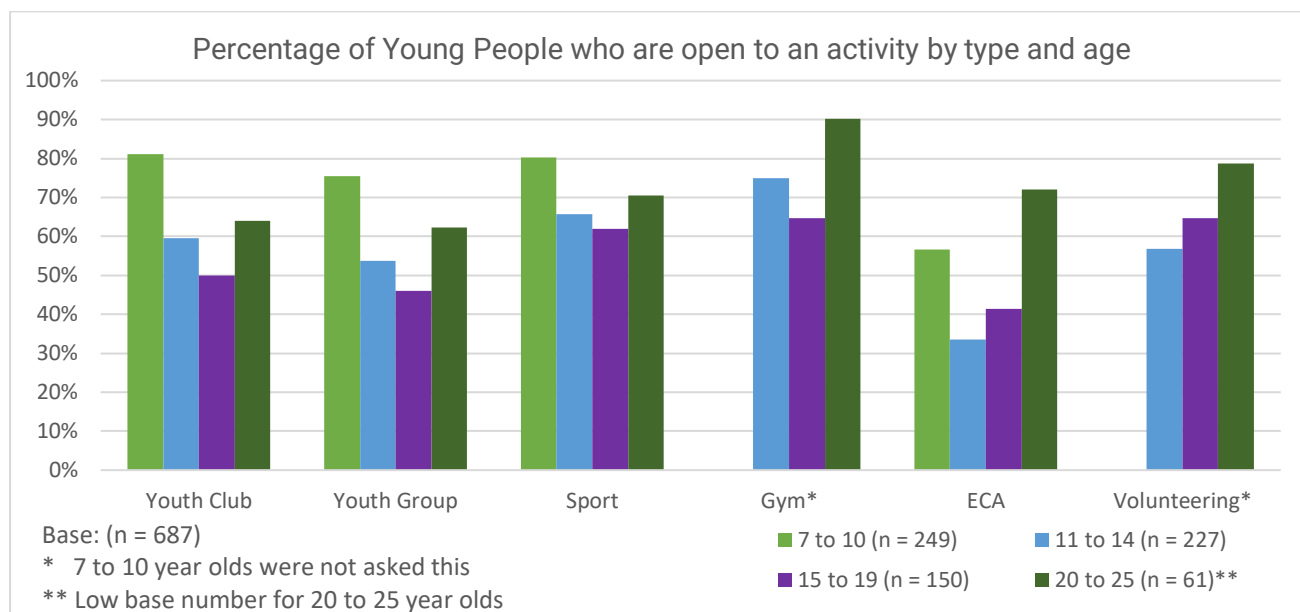
Participation levels by activity type, age band, and gender



Base: n = 489

*ECA – Arts, music and dance.

Results suggest that teenage girls aged 15 to 19 are especially resistant to joining youth clubs⁴ and youth groups⁵. However, as age increases, attendance and openness to participate in youth clubs and group activities generally decrease. Those who do not attend perceive the provision to be boring and poorly resourced. If youth club and group provision organisations want to work with older age groups, they must change their approach, image, promotion and the activities on offer.



Segmenting membership based on age, and sometimes gender, could support greater engagement and involvement.

A well-defined, co-produced, wide-ranging programme of activities for younger age groups would be more effective in engaging and capturing interest in youth provision

Conversely, involvement in the design, development and delivery of targeted activities could help to retain older participants and attract young people aged 14 years and above. Co-production should be used to support programme design, development, delivery and evaluation, but some general findings can help with this process. For example, sports, exercise in a gym or some other organised physical activity is what young people of all ages were most interested in. Girls of all age groups are more likely to be interested in the arts, music and dance (ECA).

In general, volunteering and social action is the activity most likely to attract and retain young people as they grow older. Improving the variety of volunteering and social activities available to young people, as well as more effectively promoting the opportunities and benefits of participating in these activities, could increase participation.

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⁴ Youth club: a place or organisation that provides activities for young people.

⁵ Youth group: a group of young people who form a part or whole unit to participate in organised activities such as Scouts, Guides or faith groups.

Recommendations to consider:

- Conduct an in-depth audit to gather additional information on providers of art, music and dance activities in Blackpool.
- Develop and coordinate a Blackpool-wide programme of volunteering and social action opportunities aimed at young people aged 14 years and above.
- Help providers modify their programmes and activities to support the engagement of 14-year-olds and above.
 - This should provide progression from universal multi-activity at 7–13 years to focused activities such as the gym, the arts, music sessions, volunteering or job clubs at 14 years and above.
- Adopt a framework to help organisations improve participation practices, specifically in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of activities and services. It should be:
 - designed to help organisations segment participants to target activities and services that are most likely to interest them
 - aligned with and informed by the Blackpool-wide youth participation strategy
 - achieving the appropriate [NYA Quality Mark](#) standards for youth work provision
- Assist other stakeholders in understanding the benefits of children and young people engaging in youth provision. For example, parents and carers did not appear to recognise the benefits of volunteering and social action.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and young people to identify areas where gender-focused provision may be beneficial.

Awareness of Activities and Support Services

A lack of awareness of the nearest opportunity to access provision was widely quoted as a reason for not participating in activities and/or accessing services. The older age groups generally had less awareness of activities and services. Parents and carers also identified a lack of information as a significant inhibitor. On the surface, this would indicate a need to improve communication channels when promoting activities and support services for young people.

Activities recommended by someone they trust or attended by their friends were strong indicators that young people would be open to participation. This indicator increased with age, suggesting that a campaign aligned with a renewed offer designed and developed with young people would be more effective if communicated through friends, teachers, youth workers and volunteers.

When conducting desktop research, it was difficult to identify accurate, up-to-date information about where young people could go to find services or activities. The difficulty in identifying services and activities, as well as the organisations that provide them, demonstrates the need for better coordination across Blackpool. The recommendations outline the need for a centrally coordinated approach to communicating youth provision, as well as more nuanced targeted tactics to increase awareness and referrals.



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Recommendations to consider:

- Develop a marketing and communication plan to promote and communicate available activities and services to and with young people. It should be:
 - coordinated by an agency with a remit to promote the statutory offer throughout Blackpool
 - developed with young people, and serious consideration should be given to segmenting the offer by age
 - promoted, with information segmented for different audiences to facilitate referrals from trusted people known to the young person

Safety

Young people felt unsafe travelling to and from the provision. The focus group discussions revealed that a perceived availability and high prevalence of drugs and alcohol increased the feeling of unsafe travel within the community.

Engaging users and non-users of provision in identifying whether there is an issue locally and if it inhibits participation in their provision, would enable a greater understanding of the issues that young people face. Once established, supporting young people to develop protective factors to change behaviours and identifying how the provision can modify arrangements to increase feelings of safety may support increased participation. For example, focusing on young people's safety during the times that it is most critical for them, such as when travelling to and from clubs and groups could help mitigate perceived risk.

Recommendations to consider:

- Adopt a framework to help organisations improve participation practice and support co-production.
- Develop a co-produced tool kit to support youth workers in engaging young people in identifying real and perceived safety issues (local) and developing action-based protective factors to mitigate real and perceived risks.
- Develop a safer route to youth provision plan in collaboration with the local Police to reassure young people.

Cost

The perspectives of parents, carers and young people differed when discussing cost as a barrier. Parents and carers cited cost as one of the most significant barriers to participation in activities, with fees, equipment and travel considered to be inhibitors. However, young people perceived cost as a minor inhibitor. The recommendations reflect the need for providers to be supported to continue offering cost-effective provision and to consider providing individuals with the opportunity to access funds or resources to purchase or loan equipment.

The perceived inaccessibility to tourist leisure activities available in Blackpool was related to cost barriers. These unique leisure activities could increase access to leisure time provision. However, most young people who participated in the focus groups saw these as a negative rather than a positive.



Parents and carers cited cost as one of the most significant barriers to participation in activities



Recommendations to consider:

- Increase awareness and potentially enable more young people to access services that they currently cannot afford.
 - Leisure services offer a wide range of heavily subsidised provision for young people in Blackpool. Align this offer with the coordination of a marketing and communication plan to promote services and activities.
- Engage tourist leisure businesses to improve the services they offer to local young people and raise awareness of the current offerings.
- Make youth provision free of charge and provide resources to local youth providers by generating a council-coordinated funding stream.
- Undertake targeted work with youth clubs and youth groups to help their members to access funding to enable them to participate in provision (i.e. equipment). This could be a centrally funded grant system led and coordinated by young people.

Support Services

Support services designed for young people require further consultation. Analysis of the data collected for this report infers that young people need clearer information about the support services that are available and are most willing to receive this information from people they trust. Equally, parents and carers identified a lack of awareness as a significant inhibitor to young people in their household being able to access support.



Data suggests that young people need clearer information about the support services that are available

75% of the organisations that participated in the consultation stated that they provided some form of support service for young people. In addition to the statutory support services available to young people, an audit of services and improved communication channels would help raise awareness.

The way this information is communicated should be co-designed with stakeholders. Young people, in addition to providers, would be obvious stakeholders in this process, and because young people are more likely to access services as a result of a recommendation from a trusted person, parents, teachers and youth workers should also be involved.



An audit of services and improved communication channels would help raise awareness

Recommendations to consider:

- Develop a marketing and communication plan to promote and communicate young people's activities and provision.
 - Promotion and information should be segmented for different audiences to facilitate referrals from trusted people known to the young person.
- Adopt and adapt a multi-discipline evaluation framework to monitor the impact and effectiveness of support services partnerships.
- Investigate where provision could benefit from a gender focus in collaboration with stakeholders and young people.

Next Steps

The review of Blackpool youth provision was undertaken to document current delivery, identify what works for young people and identify areas for development. The review is designed to advise a development plan that will inform future youth provision in Blackpool.

The development plan will underpin the evolution of youth provision in Blackpool. It will be published in early summer 2022, and regular progress updates will be shared with stakeholders.



youth focus ^{NW}
Improving the lives of young people

Blackpool Council

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