



Children & Young People's Advocate City of Lincoln Report 2011

Children & Young People's Advocate Cllr Chris Burke – City of Lincoln Report 2011.

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Introduction

The City of Lincoln Council has long supported the principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda. Alongside this principled approach has been a strong determination to influence the transitional youth group aged 16 to 25 away from crime. This administration strongly supports an intelligent and interventionist approach working with our partners at County, Schools and third sector levels to prevent children and young people becoming vulnerable wherever possible. Where this vital part of our community does become vulnerable the Council, informed by such avoidable tragedies as the Baby P and Victoria Climbié cases, will do all in its power to support such children and young people.

The Council recognises that the faith community plays a significant role in providing schools throughout the City and pays tribute to that work alongside the work of all of our teachers, staff and governors. We also acknowledge that faith groups provide a significant

proportion of voluntary sector youth work, including uniformed groups such as scouts and guides (particularly for 6-12 yr olds). Most of this provision relies heavily on the support of volunteers and the local community, without which it could not operate. In the current climate, provision is often restricted by the need for more volunteers or finance. The work of the University of Lincoln, Bishop Grosseteste University College and Lincoln College are also recognised as making a very significant contribution to the opportunities our City affords to young people.

Context

Children and Young People often get a bad press and the perceptions of them are concerning. A recent poll conducted by Barnados uncovered some very negative views held by the wider community. Nearly half of the UK population feel that children are beginning to behave like animals.

- 44% feel that children are becoming feral
- 47% agree that young people are angry, violent and abusive
- 25% feel that children and young people who behave badly are beyond help by the age of 10 years
- More people disagreed that children who get into trouble are in need of help than agreed.

Other research shows however that despite this negative attitude, the majority of children and young people are well behaved, attend school, take part in activities and that a significant number are involved in contributing to their community.

A young person reading the report draft commented:

“We should avoid the current stereotype, perpetuated in some quarters that young people are like animals, needing only the threat of punishment for them to be controlled.”

It was also reported that in the recent riots across the country more young people came out to help with the clear up than rioted. There is a significant mismatch between the reality and perceptions

In Lincoln a significant proportion of children and young people live in poverty and are faced with numerous and multifaceted problems. The following outlines some of the key issues for children and young people in Lincoln.

Attainment

The 2010 KS4 results were positive, with 10 out of Lincoln's 11 wards seeing an increase in attainment, and overall attainment across Lincoln increasing from 44% to 49%. Although Lincoln remains below the regional average, the gap has lessened. The largest increase was experienced in Castle ward, where attainment rose from 33% to 56% (above the 2009-10 regional average of 53%), followed by Boultham ward where attainment increased from 36% to 48%.

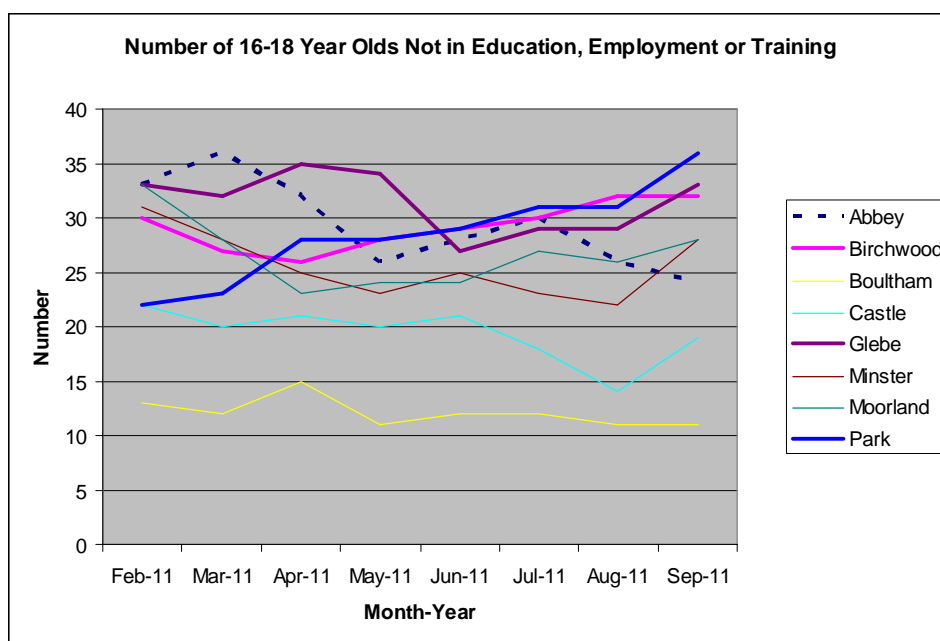
In September 2011 there were approximately 1,164 out of work 16-24 year olds in Lincoln. This was made up of:

- § 234 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training
- § 155 19 year olds claiming Jobseeker's Allowance
- § 775 20-24 year olds claiming Jobseeker's Allowance

NEETs – Not in Education, Employment & Training

The graph below shows the number of young people of NEET status (NEETs) aged 16-18 living in the different areas of the city. Areas of the city that had any occurrences of NEETs below the number 11 for any given month over the last 8 month period have been removed from all analysis of NEET figures (except for citywide totals). The three areas with the highest number of NEETs in September 2011 were Birchwood, Glebe and Park which, in September 2011, had a combined number of approximately 100 (43% of the total citywide figure). However, the number of NEETs in each ward is low (Park represented the highest number in September 2011 of 36) and therefore differentiations between ward are not substantial.

An interesting find was the reduction in the number of NEETs in Abbey ward which reduced over the 8 month period by 27%.



Source: Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council (2011) Proportion of 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training

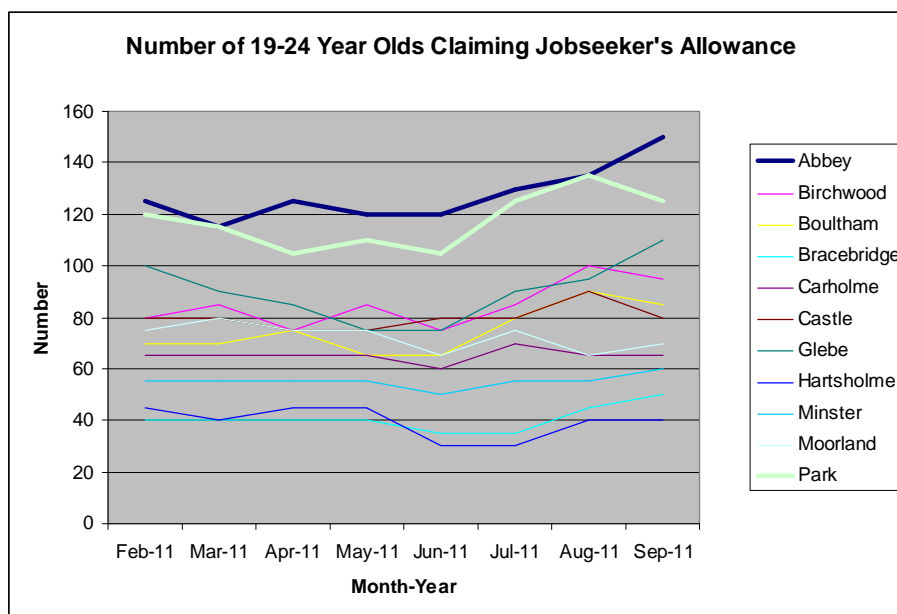
Young people who are not in education, employment or training are often missing vital skills around the ability to function cooperatively (team work, negotiation skills, willingness to compromise, etc). Even when these competencies do exist, there may be an inability to demonstrate/evidence this in such a way as to convince a third party.

The work of Council Teams, together with our statutory and third sector partners, can offer opportunities for young people to develop and evidence these skills. Accredited projects, such as the CCAA & BYAA schemes of the Diocese of Lincoln, go some way to addressing these issues as they recognise cooperative working, communication and problem solving skills, and give children and young people the confidence and evidence to claim these skills to third parties. However work with young people needs to start when

they are still 'children', so any consideration of provision for teenagers needs to consider the 'building blocks' laid down in pre-teen provision.

Unemployment

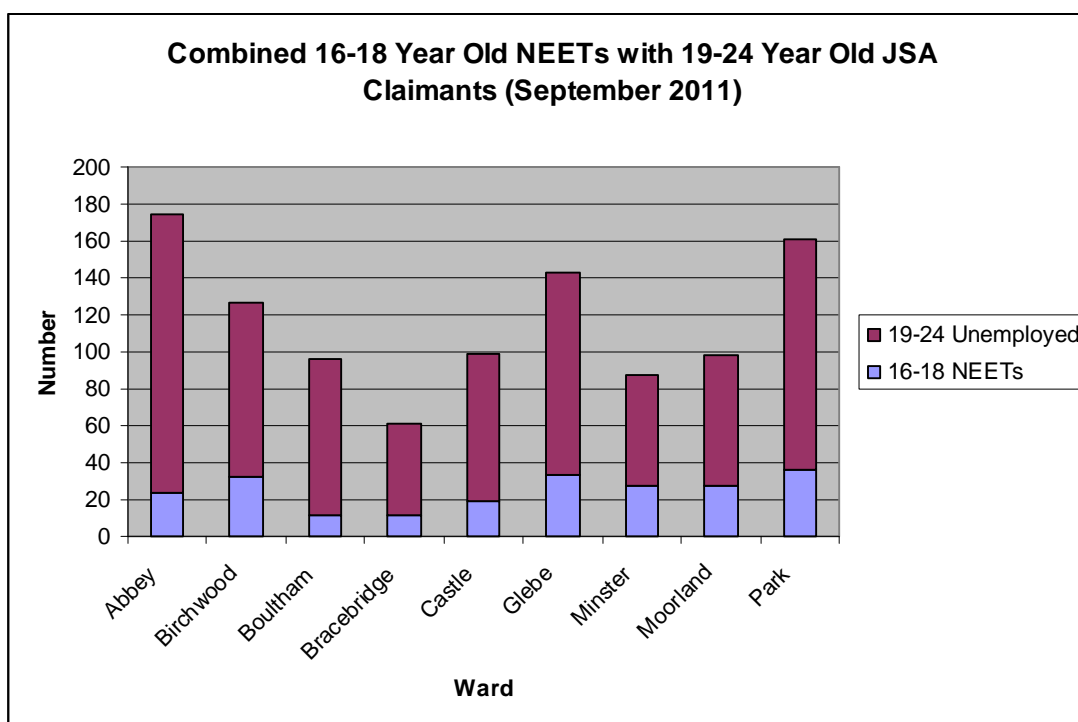
The issue of young people out of work extends beyond the age of 18. To reflect this, the data in the graph below shows the number of claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance aged 19-24. It shows, in September 2011, Abbey and Park had the highest number of JSA claimants. These two areas had been consistently highest for the 8 month period. The fact that Abbey is highlighted as an area of increasing unemployment for 19-24 year olds is in notable contrast with the NEETs data which shows there to have been an overall decrease.



Source: ONS (2011) Claimant Count – age and duration

NEET and Unemployment

The graph below shows combined NEET and unemployment data for September 2011. It shows the highest occurrences of 16-24 year olds out of work were in Abbey, Glebe, and Park. For each area analysed the number of 19-24 year olds unemployed was higher than the number of 16-18 year olds who were NEET. This would be expected due to the former having a larger age band.



Sources: Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council (2011) Proportion of 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training; ONS (2011) Claimant Count – age and duration

Child Poverty

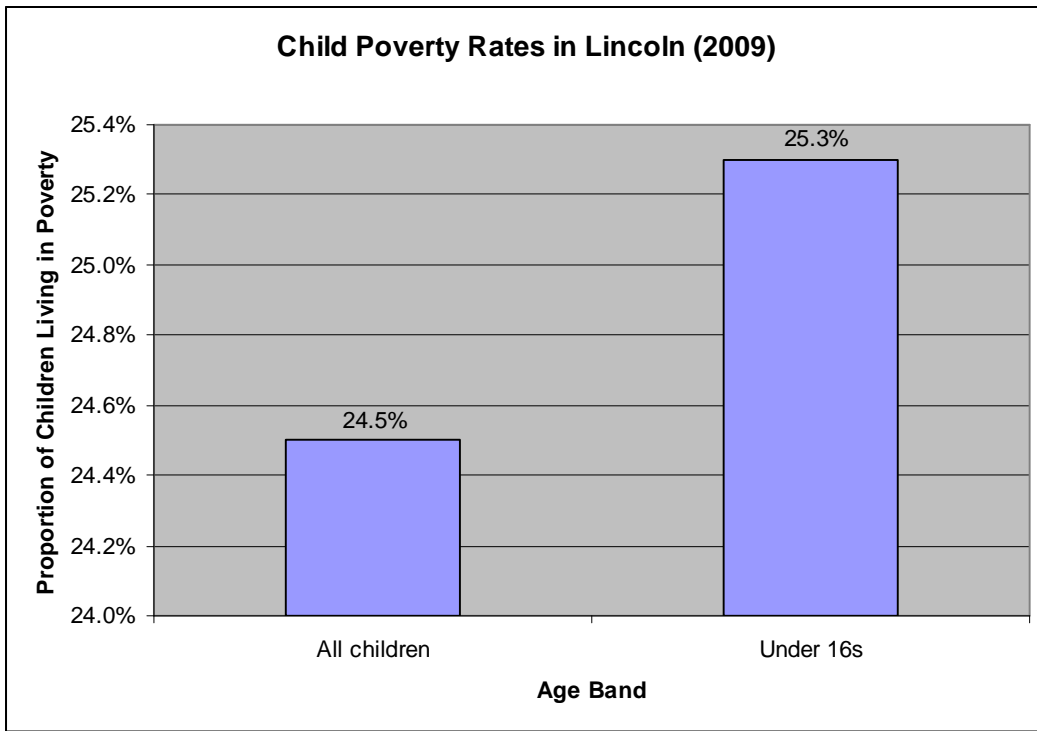
Definition: Number of children in families in receipt of either out of work benefits, or tax credits, where their reported income is less than 60% median income

Table: The proportion of all children living in poverty

Geography	2008	2009	% point increase
Lincoln	24.0%	24.5%	0.5%
East Midlands	18.4%	19.1%	0.7%
England	20.9%	21.3%	0.4%

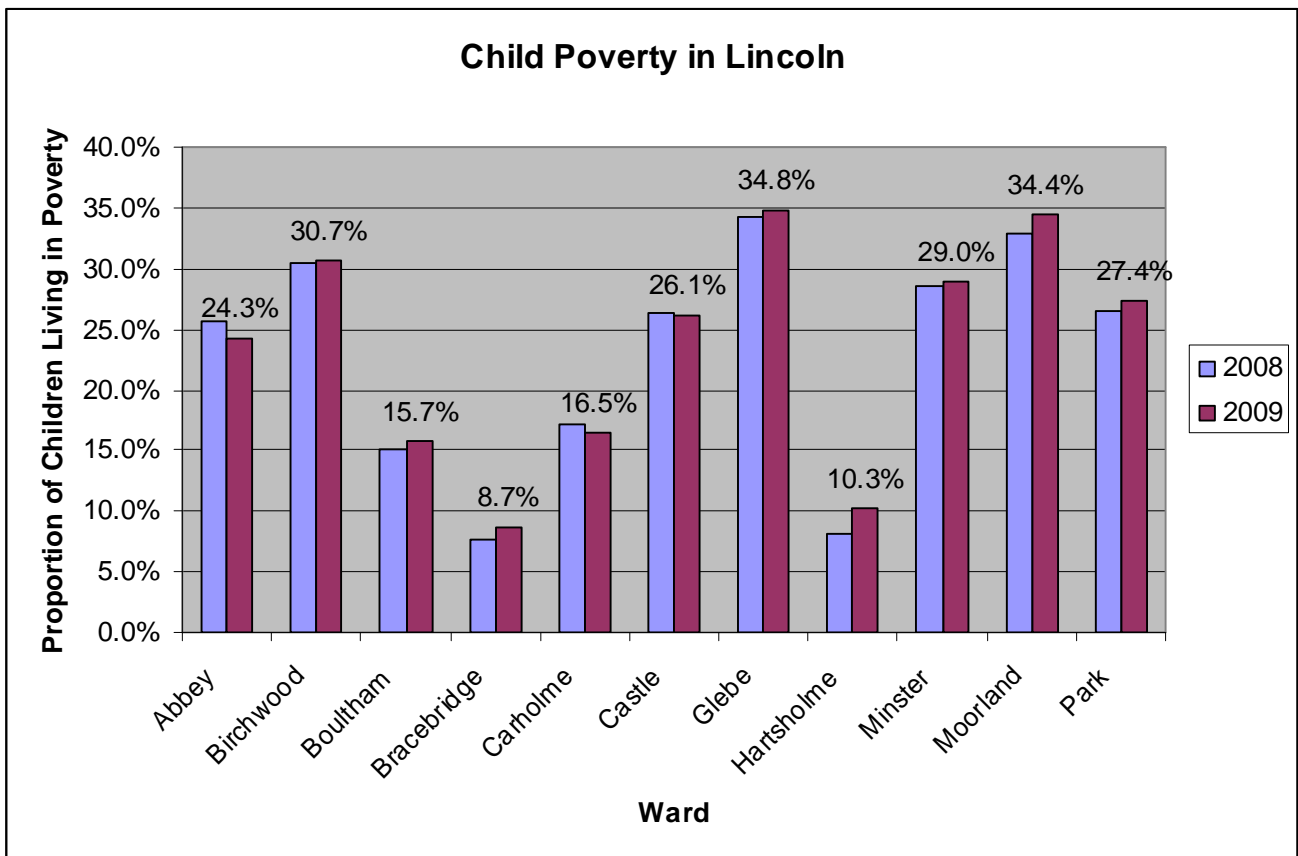
The table above shows the child poverty rate in Lincoln has increased, although to a lesser extent than experienced across the region, and to a marginally higher degree than the national rate.

The child poverty rate increases if just under 16s are taken into account, accounting for a total of 25.3% of all under 16s (compared to 25.0% a year before).



Ward Level Child Poverty

The figures in the chart below refer to the 2009 value. Overall across the city the increase in child poverty has not been vast. However, out of the 8 wards that increased in rate, the largest increase was experienced in Hartsholme (2.1% point increase), followed by Moorland (1.5% point increase), and Bracebridge (1% point increase).



Although the increase is steady, year on year this can have a significant impact upon the city. However, it should be noted that the increase in Lincoln, the East Midlands and nationally is likely to have been, to some extent, influenced by the state of the economy.

A young person reviewing the current position commented: "On the issue of child poverty- if we continue with public sector cuts only to the end of cutting the deficit, then we may lose track of what we are trying to maintain- the comparative wealth of our nation. This loss of wealth will affect those who are already nearest to the poverty line, far more than those who are making the cuts will ever feel. "

What is the City Council doing?

Policy

Children and Young People and the Strategic priorities

In terms of the councils strategic priorities the most direct work with children and young people is related to the poverty and disadvantage theme. Under this heading, five strategic priorities have been identified:

- Create a sustainable and resilient economy
- Maximise income
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Maximise skills and educational attainment

- Improve community cohesion

While the work under each of these priorities has the potential to have an impact on the life experience of children and young people, there is a very direct link in terms of maximising skills and educational attainment and improving community cohesion. Task and finish groups are currently working up these issues by reviewing what work is currently undertaken by the council to address each of these, a review of the effectiveness of that work and prioritisation for future activity.

Community Leadership and Scrutiny

In terms of the councils Community Leadership and scrutiny function, the relatively new Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee, led by Cllr Karen Lee, has already looked at the provision of education for children and young people with special educational needs. This enabled the council to construct an informed response to the consultation on this provision and the closure of Queens Park School. The Council also recognises the contribution of partners such as TCM (Baptist Church), New Life Church & New Prospects Group, working with others, to support young people with learning difficulties.

The committee is now considering the reasons for, impact and potential to address the problems of high levels of children and young people being NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) and the high levels of Youth unemployment in the city.

Transitional Vulnerable Young People

Long before the introduction of Supporting People (SP) funding for vulnerable young people the Council particularly via the work of John Bibby and then Cllr Bud Robinson intervened on a number of occasions to support initiatives such as RPS Rainer's Supported Housing Scheme which specialised in particularly difficult cases. Rainer via former City Councillor and by then Rainer Executive Manager Paul Taylor was itself extending work commenced by LEAP, YMCA and NACRO among others. The CYP Advocate and Council Director John Bibby have met with a number of these organisations now over a decade later, including Rainer's successor Framework whom we welcome to the City. Heidi Walton, Malcolm Barham and Lisa Del Buono continue to work hard in this field creating the Showroom recently and the emerging new Nomad Trust facility. As a result of SP funding for over a decade (the highest level of support ever given to Lincolnshire for young people) youth crime has fallen by nearly 25% and thousands of young people have overcome homelessness, drug addiction and crime to lead fulfilled and secure lives. There is a danger however, in the current world recession, that the lessons of the past and these achievements may be forgotten and funding be consequently and irresponsibly reduced. LEAP has already evidenced the removal of a vital service for example despite a strong report from LEAP supporting the service and an intervention from the Council to our County colleagues. This service assisted particularly difficult cases and we might fear an inclination is emerging where such cases go unsupported resulting in an increase in youth crime. A heroin addict whose actions before support was assessed in 2006 by Rainer Lincolnshire needed to fund her habit regularly caused a cost to individuals and the public purse of about £1000.00 per day. The Youth Advice Service provided by Framework is very valuable and needs further promotion. This service has, in the past, enabled a great deal of preventative work to take place. Our sources indicate that a loss of night cover in Supported housing has occurred due to recent County contract changes, A similar change in Derby is now the subject of a fatality enquiry. There is an intelligent cost benefit analysis to be done as well as an ethical issue. The recent riots cost far more than the services needed to prevent them and, as has been mentioned earlier many more young people turned out to clear up than participated in the riots.

Safeguarding Children

The Council has responsibilities under the 2004 Children's Act to ensure that we have in place proper arrangements to safeguard children & young people from abuse. Whilst the Council is not directly responsible for the care of children & young people, clearly our staff, and indeed Members, will frequently come into contact with children & their families and an awareness of the risks of abuse as well as having appropriate reporting arrangements is vital if we are to comply with our statutory duty and, more importantly, protect vulnerable children. The Council has in place and has recently reviewed the Child Protection Policy and Procedure, which is backed up by information and advice on the intranet. I am pleased to report to Council that our officers work closely with the County Council and other agencies to do all we can to protect vulnerable children and we will continue to give this important subject the attention it deserves.

Neighbourhood Teams

- Young people have been at the heart of the development of neighbourhood working across the City. The below bullet points highlight a number of activities that have aimed to improve outcomes for young people
- Neighbourhood Planning – Young people's views have played a significant role within Neighbourhood Planning, including recent Placecheck reports in Bracebridge and Sincil Bank.
- The Showroom – Young people from Moorland were involved when developing the application for the Showroom. A number of consultation events were held and young people from Moorland attended the ceremony in London when the award was announced. In St Giles they were involved in developing a bid for £80,000 to renew a dilapidated ball court area
- Young people in St Giles were trained as part of 11 Million day then were responsible for allocation of £1500 Community Chest money to finance projects in their community.
- Young people on Tower Estate worked with the Neighbourhood Team to create a video expressing their views which was played to a Children's Services Conference and received regional recognition as good practice.
- A young people's steering group from Moorland successfully lobbied Councillors for removal of a piece of equipment they felt was unsafe and worked with the Neighbourhood Team to host a Skatepark Competition which attracted competitors across the County with approx 200 people attending the event.
- The neighbourhood teams have supported a number of third sector and community organisations in the delivery of young people's activities and provision. Support includes volunteering staff time, assistance with funding, advice regarding a range of issues and facilitating partnerships. Some examples include the Stand Up Speak Up project with LCFC Sports and Education Trust; the development of Abbey Youthie (voluntary led youth club); 3D Youth Services (Moorland youth club) and Lincolnshire Dance.
- The Neighbourhood Working Programme also works closely with Children's Services in Charing and supporting Family Centre Advisory Groups; supporting funding bids (e.g. Abbey Children's Centre); and advising on the development of youth provision in the neighbourhood. An officer from Neighbourhood Working currently chairs a subgroup of the CYPSP which is reviewing the Participation Strategy for the County.
- A staff member from Neighbourhood Working spent a month mentoring a group of young people from Bracebridge as part of the National Citizen Service.

- Young people have been encouraged to showcase their artistic talents through several community murals and performing arts projects, in which the young people have been central to decision making.
- Support has been given to two young volunteers originating from Afghanistan. They recently presented at Refugee Week and have recently met with a script writer funded by Lincoln University to help to tell their stories.
- Young person's Question Time where we invited Local Councillors, Police and the University to form a panel and young people from the neighbourhood questioned them on topics ranging from education to youth provision.
- Neighbourhood Teams have led projects to address the issue of Teenage Pregnancy through the use of virtual babies. We have developed and supported agencies to deliver an awareness programme on substance misuse health and sexual health and have operated a number of c card schemes and Chlamydia screening.
- We support a number of intergenerational projects where residents swap skills with the young people from knitting and darning to wii and texting and social networking
- Last year 2010 the Deputy Chief Constable awarded on our behalf 57 certificates to young people within the St Giles community who were recognised for their volunteering contributions to the neighbourhood and we hope to award even more certificates this year

Anti Social Behaviour

Any children/young people that come to our attention for Anti-Social Behaviour will get an initial visit from the ASB team, investigating officer and a local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). They speak to the young person and find out why they are behaving in this manner, whether through boredom or anything slightly deeper. The majority of the time, the issues will stop after the visit, but sometimes we will need to look at further action such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts which are voluntary contracts with a set of conditions on there. Some of the conditions can involve engaging in positive activities around the City. The council also provides diversionary activities for children and young people in order to prevent anti-social behaviour. See below for more details.

If a young person's behaviour revolves around alcohol, a referral would be made to Sam Barstow, the Alcohol Intervention Officer. Sam would then look at assessing the problem, and either make referrals through to Addaction, or engage the young person with some one to one intervention.

Leisure and Sports Development

The activities described in this section contribute to one or more of the following outcomes:

- Promoting and improving health and wellbeing
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (diversionary activities)
- Developing skills and confidence to promote and facilitate involvement in the local community

Curriculum coaching - Sport Development deliver sport specific, multi skills and multi sports sessions in Primary, Secondary and Special Schools within Lincoln and surrounding area, targeting all ages

Extra-curricular Coaching - Sport Development deliver breakfast, lunch time and after schools clubs to Primary, Secondary and Special Schools within Lincoln and surrounding area delivering sport specific, multi skills and multi sports sessions, targeting

Sportshall Athletics - Competition environment provided for Primary Schools in Lincoln. Engages all 16 Primary schools and is held at Yarborough Leisure Centre, targeting 8 - 11 year olds

Street Soccer - Provides a competition based football session to St Giles, Ermine and Tower/Monks Road estates, targeting 7-13 yr olds.

Community Multi Sports Sessions - Deliver multi sports sessions to anyone aged 7-14, to various community centres around Lincoln. Bracebridge, St Giles and Sudbrooke Drive Community Centres. Sport Development takes sport/physical activities to the community.

Dance Factor - Annually run street dance competition. Open to any male or female aged 12-18. Delivered in eight areas across Lincoln every Friday night for 10 weeks. Finishing with a competition night at end of the project.

Fairplay Football - Football based project open to any young male 14-18. Natural progression from Street Soccer. Informal competition based sessions aimed at reducing ASB in Lincoln. Currently running in Birchwood, St Giles and Tower.

Lincoln 10k Roadrace - Annual Roadrace set in the North of City. Open to anyone 15+, maximum of 5,500 entries.

Primary and Secondary Races - Annual road races set in the North of City. Open to young people aged 9 -11, and 12-14 respectively.

Lincoln "getmummyfit" Buggy Push - Annual Buggy Push delivered along with the Primary and Secondary School Races.

Holiday Activities - Provides affordable holiday activities across Lincoln during school holiday periods. Open to anyone aged 7-14 year olds.

Multi Skills Festival - Multi Skills activities delivered through a Festival Day to Infant Schools in Lincoln, open to young people aged 4 - 6 years old.

FitKids is a project designed to engage with 8-11 year old children who are concerned about their weight or health. The project engages with children and their parents (guardians) in healthy and educational activities. The project currently runs at Birchwood and Yarborough leisure Centres as well as Sincil bank, and over the next year is looking to expand into schools in the area.

Recreation Services

Play Areas

Nearly a million pounds has been invested in play areas over the last few years and there are 18 located throughout the city. The council also manages the cities community centres which are available to hire at a concessionary rate for youth clubs/activities. There are junior pitches available to hire at Sobraon Barracks and Skellingthorpe Road and mini Pitches available at Sobraon Barracks. Under 16's again receive a concessionary rate.

Leisure Services

The following family entertainment is provided by the city council:

- Fair comes to South Common twice a year (April and September)
- Circus comes once a year (October/November)

The teams at Yarborough and Birchwood Leisure Centres are committed to persuade young people to enjoy a healthy active lifestyle. Our extensive facilities and activities mean that there is something on offer for everyone, whether they like to jump, kick, splash, run or generally just get exercising!

Swimming

Swimming is a fun way to stay healthy and a skill that could even save a life! We have a range of swimming based opportunities for young people from lane swimming, learn to swim courses through to one to one tuition and specialist training e.g. diving and NPLQ lifeguard training. Currently Active Nation Lincoln are teaching 800 people to swim.

Sports Coaching

Different coaching courses are available for all ages and abilities including:

- Toddler gym
- Trampolining
- Gymnastics
- Junior tennis
- Basketball
- Badminton

Courses are available from just £3 per week and our junior supporters swim for free during their sports coaching with us. There are currently 120 young people committed to 10-weeks of structured sports coaching.

Active Kidz Camp

We offer young people the opportunity to make the most of their school holidays and enjoy a range of fully supervised activities. These range from rounders and basketball to swimming and mini games. The Camp is available to those age 8 to 14 years old at £16 for a full day and £8 for a half-day. We also schedule other holiday activities for younger ones, such as intensive trampolining courses or multi-skills sports sessions.

Junior Gym and Swim Membership

Those aged between 11 and 15 can get now active with full use of our gym during hours when we have that extra pair of hands available amongst our team of Exercise Coaches; Monthly membership is £15 per month and free swimming is included!

In addition to the activities provided directly by Active Nation, we are pleased to support the activities of a range of local clubs, who make full use of the extensive facilities at the sites. These partnerships include; Lincoln Triathlon Club, Lincoln Wellington Athletics Club, Pentaqua and Vulcans Swimming Clubs, Footy Monsters and Lincoln Archers.

Other Strategic Work

Since February 2010, City of Lincoln Council has been represented on ACT, a strategic subgroup of the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership which provides the valued and necessary support, challenge and co-ordination for participation activity across Lincolnshire. Jose Bruce, an officer for the City Council, is currently its elected Chair.

Participation is about providing choices and opportunities for children and young people to have an input into decisions that affect their lives. It is about encouraging and supporting children and young people to contribute, and acting upon their views whilst being open, honest and realistic with them on the levels of involvement they can have. In order to achieve this, we need to be mindful to give them sufficient time, information and support to be fully involved in the decision making process.

In order for organisations to critically assess the quality of their participation activity, the model of Harts Ladder has been adopted in Lincolnshire (see Appendix 1). The model encourages organisations to avoid projects that score below 4 on the ladder, due to the tokenistic nature of the participation. It encourages teams to aim for the highest appropriate rung when designing projects.

The current Participation Strategy for Lincolnshire, together with the associated Children & Young People's Charter (see Appendix 2) is currently under review and will enter consultation phase in early 2012. The City Council is well placed to consider adoption of the Charter in the coming year with the aim of improving its participation activity as part of the Council's priority to develop a fit for purpose council. Some of our teams, such as those within Neighbourhood Working, have already adopted the standards and values within the current Strategy and Charter. Once the review is complete, an assessment of the implications of the Charter would create an opportunity for dialogue across council teams working with children and young people, in order to share good practice, identify areas for improvement and promote a more unified set of standards and values across council teams.

Conclusion

The intention of this report has been to highlight both our operational and strategic work in the vital area of children and young people and our concerns for the welfare of this crucial section of our community. We do need to recognise how vulnerable these young people are during the current economic period and the Council is determined that they should not become the victims of unthinking economies by statutory and any other bodies that should know better. Our children and young people represent the future of this and other communities and we are well aware of our duty of stewardship towards them.

Appendix 1 – Harts Ladder: A tool used in Lincolnshire to address the quality of CYP Participation



Hart's Ladder of Participation

8. Children and young people initiate decisions and actions (shared decisions with adults)

Children and young people are empowered and able to learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

7. Children and young people initiated and directed

Children and young people have an idea and decide the way forward. Adults support, but do not take charge.

6. Adult initiated decisions shared with children and young people

Adults have the initial idea. Children and young people have their views considered and are involved in making decisions at every step of planning and implementation.

5. Consulted and informed

Children and young people give advice on projects run by adults. They are told how their input will be used and what decisions have been taken. They have a full understanding of the project and their opinions are taken seriously.

4. Assigned and informed

Children and young people are assigned a role and told how and why they are being involved.

3. Tokenism

Children and young people appear to be given a voice, but they have little or no choice about the scope or methods of their participation.

2. Decoration

Children and young people are 'used' to help or bolster a cause. They may take part in an event but not understand the issues.

1. Manipulation

Children and young people do or say what adults suggest. They have no real understanding of the issues, or will not have been asked for their opinions. Some of their ideas may be used but they are not told what influence they had.



Our principles

The Children and Young People's Charter

Staff and volunteers within all services need to know they are working in ways that encourage, promote and involve children and young people's active participation.

To ensure that this happens we have developed a Children and Young People's Charter.

Children and young people have equal opportunity to be involved

In Lincolnshire We Will

- Take a Children's Right approach, and adhere to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Articles 3 and 12.
- Ensure fair representation of children and young people at all levels of involvement.
- Work with Children and Young People using a range of methods appropriate to age, understanding, wishes and purpose of work.
- Make a commitment to 'Every Child Matters' in particular outcome 4, giving Children and Young People the opportunity to make a positive contribution.

The involvement of children and young people is monitored, evaluated and improved

- Examine current practise to identify where your organisation is using Hear by Right standards, and then put an action plan in place.
- Engage Children and Young People to evaluate your progress against the action plan to ensure improvements are made.

Children and young people are valued

- Value of children and young people's input is equal to that of professionals.
- Listen to views of the children and young people and provide feedback that demonstrates action has been taken.
- Communicate with children and young people using creative and effective methods, including ICT.
- Commit to using plain language and avoiding jargon.
- Put in place a reward system that benefits children and young people, including accredited activity and training.

Appendix 2 – Principles of the current Children & Young People's Charter & Participation Strategy



Sir Al Aynsley Green with pupils at
Moors Abbey Primary School

The involvement of children and young people is a visible commitment that is properly resourced

- Include young people in a range of decision making processes including recruitment procedures.
- Support training needs of existing staff to implement the standards of the Charter.
- Give children and young people the opportunity to develop their skills.
- Share organisational expectations with other partners.

Benefits for children and young people

- Children and young people benefit from better and more relevant services.
- Services for children and young people are more responsive to their needs.
- National Evaluation Children's Fund (NECF) research shows that participation builds the 'resilience' of children, this includes the perceived benefits of:
 - Building on existing skills and gaining new ones.
 - Increase in confidence and self esteem.
 - Social development.
 - Improved interpersonal skills.

Benefits for the organisation

- Information can be gained from children and young people as citizens and customers about their:
 - Attitudes.
 - Needs.
 - Aspirations.
 - Views as to what constitutes quality in service provision.
 - Barriers to access services.
- Feedback from end service users to improve and promote the ways your service operates.
- Services can be designed, delivered and evaluated on actual rather than presumed needs, which is cost-effective.
- Recognition of involving children and young people and public awareness of this involvement.
- Recognised standard across partner organisations of a commitment to work with and listen to children and young people.
- Feedback from other organisations to improve your service.
- Networking opportunities with other partners.
- Demonstrate your commitment to children and young people.
- Clear focus on involvement of children and young people to reduce duplication.
- Promotion of services to all partners and children and young people.
- Children and young people can bring fresh perspectives and new ideas about services.