

## **CONSULTING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON SEALAND MANOR, CLWYD**

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### **Introduction**

The idea for this project arose from discussions with Alyn and Deeside Community Agency about the nature of the Agency's/Forum's role in empowering young people and developing models of practice for enabling young people to have a voice in their communities.

The aims of the project were to enable young people and the local community to arrive at decisions about the use of Sealand Manor community centre for young people's activities and how young people can contribute to this. The project was also concerned with broader initiatives which address the interests and concerns of young people in the area.

The project was thus essentially neighbourhood based. It took on board the idea that if people are involved in developing initiatives in their own neighbourhood they are likely to be more able to relate to any resulting provision.

One of the important aspects of the project was that it was developed in partnership with a number of organisations. The Wales Youth Agency worked with the Mid-Clwyd Youth Service, Alyn & Deeside Community Agency and Clwyd Social Services who all contributed resources to develop the project and evaluate its usefulness as a model of practice which could be used in other areas. The networking was co-ordinated by Alyn & Deeside Community Agency who played an important role in setting up the consultation. This partnership with a local agency provides a useful model for the future.

Sealand Community Council were also fully behind the consultation as they were concerned to discover how they could develop services for young people in the area.

### **The Setting**

Sealand Manor is a small estate of 122 households and a population of 342 people. The estate is isolated from other parts of Sealand by a busy main road on one side and the river Dee on the other.

The estate is very young. According to the 1991 census 45% of the population is under 24 and given that there are few services for young people this could be a potential issue for the future development of services. Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix 1 show the age structure and the numbers of young people in particular age groups.

Over the last ten years there have been a number of attempts to develop services, both for the community and for young people.

It is hoped that this consultation would give the community council and relevant agencies sufficient information to develop something which was relevant to young people.

## **History of the Estate**

The estate was initially developed in 1935 by the Welsh Land Settlement Society in order to offer employment and housing to miners unable to work underground due to ill health. Eighty houses were built for rent, alongside an estate farm which provided employment for the residents of the estate. Most of the miners and their families came from South Wales, possibly attracted by the quality of the housing. This influx of population from a different culture and communities may also be a contributing reason to why the estate feels isolated from the other areas of Sealand, although older residents do not express this. Also workers in the Garden City area would have worked predominantly at Shotton Steelworks so therefore there would have been few opportunities for the two communities to mix.

Gradually there was a drift away from working on the farm towards employment in the Textile and Steel industries. About 30% of families living on the estate are related to the original tenants.

Further houses were built following the war and then in the 1970's. Currently a third of the estate is in private ownership following the Right to Buy.

## **Facilities for Young People and the Community**

The main provision for young people is Sealand Youth Centre, a mile away in the Garden City quarter of the area. However to reach the centre from Sealand Manor involves walking along a dark lane and under a short subway. This has served to exacerbate the feelings of isolation about the estate which were expressed by both the young people, and those in their late twenties who we spoke to.

The youth centre at Garden City is very busy and attracts young people from across the Sealand area. Whereas there is a community centre at Sealand Manor there are very few services developed for the community and none for young people. The only service operating at present is a young parents group supported by Social Services and the Health Service. The group is ran by parents themselves who are very enthusiastic. A noteworthy innovation has been the attendance of a health visitor at the session who adopts an informal approach to her task as opposed to the more formal role one has come to expect.

The only other form of provision is a playscheme run by Alyn and deeside District Council during the summer.

It should be noted that young people aged 10 - 17, and living on Sealand Manor at the time of the 1991 census, comprised 24% of that age population within the Sealand Youth Centre catchment area, a statistic which does not seem to be reflected in the services available in the area.

## **Methodology**

The intention was to undertake a questionnaire (see Appendix 4) with young people in the area and enable them to express their concerns and interests and what services they felt should be developed for young people. It was also intended to try and gain young peoples participation in this process and support them in taking their ideas to the community council. Liam Kealy was supported in this work by Danny Hammel, a youth worker from the Sealand Youth Centre. The Mid Clwyd Youth Service resourced Danny's sessions as their contribution to the project.

The proposed programme was:

- Session 1: Evening: Leaflet distribution and initial contact session (see Appendix 3)
- Session 2: Afternoon and evening: Questionnaire and contact session
- Session 3: Afternoon and evening: Questionnaire and contact session
- Session 4: Afternoon and evening: Questionnaire and contact session
- Session 5: Afternoon and evening: Questionnaire and contact session
- Session 6: Afternoon and evening: Contact session and general meeting with young people
- Session 7: Follow up session to above
- Session 8: Afternoon and evening: Contact session and meeting with young

people and community council

Session 9: Feedback to agencies involved and final session with young people.

## **What Young People Said**

The contact sessions worked mainly as envisaged and about 30 young people and children between the ages of 6 and 18 were contacted on the streets, in their homes via parents, or at the meeting arranged on the 10th November. The main message which came across was a strong concern about the complete lack of facilities for children and young people on the estate and the problems this caused for them and the community. There was a difference in the way that children and young people under the age of 12 and those over 12 perceived the issue and there was also a difference in the way that young women perceived the quality of life on the estate to the perceptions of young men.

Young men were very concerned about the lack of facilities and the conflict that this caused with adults on the estate. Whereas young women valued the friendships that they had and these seemed to compensate to some extent for the lack of facilities.

Young people often talked about the youth clubs which had been organised in the past, and again there had been a mixed response. Children and those young people under 12 had valued the club but had felt that the adults in charge had needed support to successfully challenge the behaviour of older boys who consistently disrupted the sessions. This had made people feel insecure.

The reintroduction of this type of Junior Club was seen as an essential service by this age group. This would entail developing structured evenings and activities which included things like Bingo, Arts and Crafts, a Coffee Bar which sold a range of sweets and an environment in which children felt safe. The possibility of parents or other adults from the estate providing the adult support was seen ok by this age group. However, this age group were adamant that a Junior Club could not take place unless some other form of provision was put in place at the same time to divert older young men away from disrupting the club. Children felt very insecure about the behaviour they had experienced from this older group in the past.

The older group, mainly young men had felt that the clubs had not been very good. The types of activities available had either not been relevant or not sufficient for them. They also recognised that their behaviour had contributed to the demise of the club. They were also concerned that they were unable to relate to the youth workers who organised the club, either because of generational differences or because the youth workers did not have an empathy with young people. One young man stated that "we need people like you who we can talk to." Both young men and young women in this age group

also felt that youth workers who did not live on the estate were needed in order to ensure confidentiality.

Disco's were seen as valuable by children and young people of all ages. As were trips and activities which took young people away from the estate and enabled them to have new experiences.

Behaviour patterns was an issue we discussed with the older young men. They were aware of the conflict caused in the community by their behaviour, which included vandalism, running through peoples gardens and abusing passers by. We gained the impression that this was a cultural tradition and a behaviour pattern passed down through different age groups. Some of the people who attend the young parents group remembered similar behaviour from when they were in their teens. Given that 10 and 11 year old boys mix freely with the older age group it does seem that this behaviour is learned. It is also exacerbated by the lack of amenities.

For example the only place to play football during the dark nights is between two garages which are lit up by street lamps. However this is situated on a main thoroughfare and next to houses with young families. Given that balls often end up in gardens and large groups of young men may use the area until late in the night, it is not surprising that conflict arises.

Finally the other important message which young people gave us is that they should have a say in the organisation and development of activities, rather than just being a recipient of them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is considered that an integrated package of responses are required in order to support children in their development by creating different patterns of behaviour through constructive activities. Older young people would also benefit from provision which enables them to develop a stronger link with the youth centre at Garden City and which also diverts them from behaviour which puts them at risk. The estate would also benefit from improved play and recreational facilities. I feel this has implications for:

1. Social Services
2. The Youth Service
3. The Community Council
4. The Community Agency

### **1. For Social Services**

A Junior Club for Under 12's would be beneficial for the personal development of children on the estate. This would offer a programme of activities and could involve local parents in it's organisation. The following

resources would be needed to implement this.

- Development time from a professional worker in order to gain the involvement of local parents and to support them in running the club and to enable them to work towards becoming an independent voluntary organisation.
- A sessional creche worker for younger children in order that parents can become involved.

## **2. For the Youth Service**

Young people living on the estate, aged between 10 and 17 comprise 24% of that age group in the Sealand Youth Centre catchment area (1991 Census). This age group represents the target group of the centre and is a significant proportion of it. Whereas the centre currently attracts some of the young men from this group, very few of the young women attend the centre.

Bearing this in mind and linking it with the issues this age group expressed during the consultation period, it is considered that the estate would benefit from the implementation of a programme of outreach youth work which is designed to:

- Promote a stronger link between young people and Sealand Youth Centre. This would entail a worker developing a positive relationship with young people and using the centres resources to enhance the development of the group and young people within it.
- To divert young people from disruptive behaviour and develop new models of behaviour which are then transmitted to a younger age group.
- To develop young peoples issues.
- To use the community centre on Sealand Manor as a resource and meeting place, as and when required. Rather than as the main focal point of activity for young people.

In order to resource this two workers operating on two sessions per week each would be ideal. Recognising that this may not be able to be met out of the current budget it is recommended that a single worker is funded for one session per week to maintain contact and develop relationships with young people, until the start of the new financial year.

## **3. The Community Council**

The Community Council has an important role to play in securing improved play and recreational facilities through discussion with the District Council. Specifically:

- Relocating the play equipment to another part of the field.

- Developing a football court on the tarmac area on which the play equipment is currently located. This would involve fencing it off and installing adequate lighting which is operated via a time switch. The problems which may arise through vandalism should be fully explored and resolved prior to installing lights. This would enable young people to play football etc away from houses.

#### ***4. The Community Agency***

The community agency has an important role to play in developing the issues outlined in this paper. It is considered that they have the following contributions to make:

- Acting in a capacity which enables the other partners to co-ordinate their efforts in order that services may be effectively directed.
- Accessing resources for local voluntary groups.
- Accessing funding advice and information regarding the development of an independent voluntary club for children and young people.

### **Timescales and Priorities**

December 1993 to 31 March 1994

#### ***Maintaining contact with Young People***

One worker session per week (Approximately cost £500)

#### ***Responding to Junior Needs***

- Building parental involvement.
- Needs creche/care support.
- Older young people will need attention in order to create space for this development.
- Will need money for rent, equipment and activities.

#### ***Issues for the Community Council***

- Consider setting a precept to contribute to the development of youth work on the estate.
- Developing use and management of the centre in a way which prevents vandalism. Supporting youth work will contribute towards this.

- Establish commitment from the District Council for improved play facilities.
- Raise income from the centre.

1 April 1994 Onwards

Outreach Youth Work resources for workers for 2 sessions per week each.  
On female one male.

Continuing support for Junior Club work.

Continued involvement of young people, children and local adults in the development of local initiatives.

## Appendix 1

### FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

#### ***20 October 1993 (6.45pm to 8.30pm)***

Met with Danny and checked leaflets out with him. Walked around the estate and leafleted all houses. Spoke to two young women about what we were doing. Then met up with a young man that danny knew from youth club. He'd read the leaflets !! great. Played football with him against a set of garage doors. Danny had the inspired idea to go in goals to reduce the number of times that the ball banged against the doors and upset local people. The young mans main concerns were a lack of space in the community centre, the need for somewhere to play football; things to do; netball for girls.

We asked him to pass the word around about what we were doing and keep an eye open for us.

Not a bad start. Pity about the weather as it kept everyone in.

#### ***27 October 1993***

6.45pm During the course of the evening we met up with a group of 8/9 young men and one young woman, most of whom filled in questionnaires. Some interesting things emerged from discussion which I had either not clicked or did not know about.

- Some young people go to Deeside Leisure Centre on Fri/Sat nights when young people from around the area go there.
- Football training on Wednesday nights.
- No corner shop/late night shop. Nearest at Garden City.
- Young people were uncomplimentary about the youth club which used to be run in the community centre as there was little to entertain them whilst they were there. Equipment was poor and staff were unable to relate to young people. They were suggesting that staff need to be young and have empathy with young people - "Someone like you two who we can talk to".

The group we met last night would need some intensive work in order to

induct them into habits/patterns of behaviour in a club/meeting space. Small group work would be an effective way of working with them initially.

It was apparent last night that the total lack of facilities was a real problem for young people and the community. The only lit area was a pair of garages outside homes with young families. Thus it is the only area young people can gather. Only space to play footy, balls go into gardens, young people retrieve them etc.. general scenes of antagonism resulted, Police were called . (It would be worth checking out incidence of nuisance calls received by Police.)

There were no young women on the streets last night.

Relationships between the group of young men and adults seemed based on a culture of mutual teasing, with each side giving as good as they get. Yet there also seemed to be a type of understanding as young people would go to one house in particular for cigarettes and to see what was going on. (In this case a clothes party). It may be worth speaking to the people at this house about young peoples issues. There definitely seemed to be a cultural pattern with regards to young people and their behaviour with adults.

### ***Young Parents Group, 28 October 1993***

The young parents group comprise of people who would currently fall into the young persons bracket (between 19 and 25) and some people who have only recently moved out of this age bracket.

- People said that young people had always hung out on the estate and that young men in particular had always been a problem. Young people had also always got up to tricks. etc..
- I also spoke to a very vociferous group of 10/11 year olds who were very concerned about the presence of the older boys. Find them threatening and perceived them as being a nuisance; cause of all the trouble on the estate.
- Shops difficult to walk to with children, especially in winter when the underpass floods. They have to walk a longer way around which involved a busy main road. This causes anxiety with regards to the safety of the children.

### **ISSUES**

1. Junior club - could council generate interest amongst adults on the estate to run a club.
2. Group work with older young men. It may be that a group worker could usefully act as a facilitator for this group. starting off very low key, meeting in the community centre coffee and discussion, scruples etc.

Then use the group as a resource to develop ideas.

### ***28 October 1993 - evening***

Spent most of the evening talking to three boys (approx. 13 to 15 years old) who were burning a bonfire near the community centre. They were all concerned about the need for things to do.

Then we went to Sealand Road and noticed a number of young people walking around. It would be useful to do this again when the youth centre is open to see if there is a difference.

### ***3 November 1993***

Met with 4 girls in one of their homes. They were concerned about the lack of facilities and their solutions were disco's and bingo. They were similarly concerned with the group of older boys.

We then met 3 young women on the street who also flagged up disco's as a way of relieving some of the tedium.

### ***4 November 1993***

I took leaflets to those young people who had given us their name and address in order to inform them about the meeting next week to discuss the findings of our work.

### ***10 November 1993***

Meeting with Youth Worker at Sealand Youth Centre

- Young men from Sealand Manor use the centre, but no young women come along even though a minibus is provided for the return journey.
- Noted how the culture of the Manor served to polarise the two communities in Sealand.
- Quite liked the idea of strengthening links between the centre and Sealand Manor via a prolonged period of outreach work.

### ***10 November 1993***

Meeting with Community Police Department

Sealand Manor was seen as an area of concern by the Police and they were similarly concerned about the behaviour of young men.

**10 November 1993**

Meeting with young people

This meeting was attended by a number of children and young people and we fed back what we felt our findings were in order to check them out. We had by and large picked up on most of the issues that were important to this group. We prepared the group to meet with community councillors on the 17th. Disappointing that none of the group of older boys turned up.

**11 November 1993**

Met with Jack Harty to feedback from meeting and talk about solutions. I then went and spoke to the people who ran the shooting school next to the estate as both the Police and Jack Harty had spoken positively about them and their efforts to support the community. However I found them to be generally disheartened about the response of the community to their enterprise.

**17 November 1993**

Meeting between Community Council and young people. Again none of the older group turned up. Jack Harty offered to run a Junior Club. Well received by the group but needs to be properly planned.

**18 November 93**

Feedback to Social Service, Community Agency and Youth Service. Project was well received with Social Services and the Youth Service prepared to commit resources to developing some of the recommendations in the report. The Community Agency will co-ordinate work.

## **Appendix 3**

LIAM KEALY AND DANNY HAMELL ARE YOUTH WORKERS WORKING FOR LOCAL COUNCILS.

WE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU THINK ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ARE AND WHAT FACILITIES YOU THINK SHOULD BE SET UP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

WE ARE ALSO INTERESTED TO FIND OUT IF YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HELPING TO SET UP THESE FACILITIES.

THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE US WILL BE FED BACK TO THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL WHO WILL USE IT TO DISCUSS IDEAS WITH ORGANISATIONS LIKE THE YOUTH SERVICE OR SOCIAL SERVICES, IN ORDER TO TRY AND GET THINGS GOINGS ON SEALAND MANOR.

IF YOU LIKE WE CAN ALSO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH THE COMMUNITY CONCIL SO YOU CAN PUT YOUR IDEAS TO THEM.

YOU WILL SEE US WALKING AROUND THE ESTATE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, PROBABLY ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY NIGHTS, SO IF YOU HAVE GOT ANY IDEAS OR WOULD LIKE TO FILL IN ONE OF OUR QUESTIONNAIRES THEN PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COME AND TALK TO US.

## Appendix 4

### SEALAND MANOR

#### YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender      male                       female                       Age \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you think are the good points of living on Sealand Manor?
2. What do you think are the not so good points of living on Sealand Manor?
3. What do you think are the main concerns of young people in the area?
4. What do you think of the facilities available for young people in the area?
5. What kinds of things would you like to see happening for young people in the area?
6. Would you be prepared to help organise any activities or projects for young people?

Yes                            No     

If Yes, would you be prepared to give us your name and address?

7. What sort of help do you think young people would need to organise activities or projects?
8. How do you think the community centre could be used for young people?
9. Have you ever been to the youth centre at Garden City and if you have what is your opinion of what goes on there?

Thanks for filling out this questionnaire.

We are going to try and hold a meeting for young people at the community centre on Wednesday, 10 November in order to let you know what the results are and to see what young people want to do about them.