

Lessons from the baseline evaluation

The **myplace** support team are carrying out an evaluation of the **myplace** programme. In March 2009, we completed a baseline review of all Fast track projects. This report is a short summary of the key lessons and learning points identified through this baseline research.

The evaluation identified some weaknesses that projects will be addressing. Rather than disguise these, we have highlighted such lessons, as well as examples of good practice. Our goal is to help build on success and failure to achieve the best possible results.

Background

myplace is a complex and ambitious programme that will draw together skills and expertise from a variety of different stakeholders. The Fast track projects will lead the way for other **myplace** projects by providing valuable learning. **myplace** projects have developed around ten key principles and we have used these principles to describe the activity in the baseline evaluation report. The ten principles are:

1. **Young people's outcomes:**
2. **Young people's active participation**
3. **Accessibility**
4. **Community cohesion**
5. **Community leadership**
6. **Partnership**
7. **Long-term viability**
8. **Co-financing**
9. **Sustainable development**
10. **Strategic context**

Young people's outcomes

Music, drama and arts are popular activities being proposed by the Fast track projects. These types of projects reflect what young people want to do and so have the potential to engage young people who are less interested in sports and games.

Many of the projects are aiming to encourage young people to develop their skills through incorporating training into the **myplace** facility. Most are also promoting volunteering opportunities for young people.

For guidance on planning a music facility in your **myplace** centre, visit the **myplace** support website or click on this link. <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Planning-and-delivering-a-world-class-youth-facili/>

Increasing young people's active participation

While some form of consultation appears to be carried out universally, only a small number of projects have supported active involvement of young people in taking their project forward. Initiating and sustaining active involvement is difficult. It requires dedicated support from skilled youth workers and needs to be developed over a period of time to build up skills and trust in young people.

Where young people are supported to take on an active role in managing projects it benefits both the project and the young person. There are several good examples of how to do this among the Fast track projects.

There are a number of links and downloads to guidance on involving young people on the **myplace** support website. Click on this link to find out more <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Involving-young-people/>

Improving accessibility

A key focus for **myplace** was to give young people access to positive activities at times that they wanted to use them. In particular this would mean opening later in the evenings, during weekends and in school holidays. However staffing these facilities and providing services and activities during these times requires significant staffing resources and is expensive. The current planned opening times for many of the Fast track projects may not meet the original aspirations of the **myplace** programme.

Accessing the hardest to reach groups requires staff-intensive outreach in addition to facilities that are open late in the evenings and at weekends. Having these 'world class' facilities closed for long periods of time (such as during the school day) will send out the wrong messages about the programme. It may also mean missing opportunities to engage with certain key target groups such as young people NEET and young people with disabilities.

Building community cohesion & leadership

Only a small number of the Fast track projects have a clear ambition to use the **myplace** facility to engage with the wider community and promote greater inter-generational contact. While this focus meets the programme objectives of overcoming mistrust between young people and others in the wider community, the balance of activities will need to be carefully managed to retain the youth focus.

Several of the Fast track projects have longer term ambitions to pass ownership of the facilities to community-based groups such as local trusts. However this approach to managing large-scale community facilities may present risks to sustaining the activity in the longer term.

For more information on leadership and **myplace**, click on the following link <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Leading-a-world-class-youth-facility/>

Fragile partnerships

Several of the partnerships that are taking forward the Fast track projects are new and most projects have developed in the absence of an integrated strategy for youth facilities. New partnerships take time to establish and for trust to build. This increases the risk that the activities being developed will not be sustainable in the longer term. Projects are now having to work hard to address this.

For further guidance on developing partnerships, go to the 'learn' pages on the **myplace** support website, or click on this link; <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Delivering-joint-action/>

Co-financing and long-term viability

Those exemplar youth facilities that have inspired the **myplace** programme have developed their funding formula over many years. This has come about through learning from mistakes and through developing specialised skills that complement those of the facility management staff. There is a sense that some of the Fast track funded projects underestimate the difficulties they might face in generating sufficient income streams to sustain a 'world-class' facility. Some of the challenges include:

- Stretching staff between management and fund-raising;
- Over-reliance on leasing out facilities without detailed market knowledge;
- The time needed to generate private sponsorship;
- Difficulties in developing profit-making social enterprises (such as cafes); and
- Accessing the right skills at the right times.

For further guidance on funding, go to the 'learn' pages on the **myplace** support website, or click on this link; <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Securing-funding-and-generating-income/>

Increasing emphasis on sustainable development

The majority of the Fast track projects have identified some aspects of design and facility management that will help to minimise the impact on the environment and climate change. But these are often fairly low key. A full sustainable development appraisal and plan would lead to significant improvements.

Build strategic context

All of the Fast track projects are contributing in some way to wider strategic priorities for their areas. There is little evidence that the projects themselves have emerged as part of a comprehensive and integrated strategic process. But in some instances **myplace** is acting as a catalyst to bring key stakeholders together to work on a wider strategy for youth facilities.

See the 'effective strategy' section on the **myplace** support website for more information, or click on this link <http://www.myplacesupport.co.uk/Effective-strategy/>