

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 10 MAY 2004

REPORT ON: EVALUATIONS – SOCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP NO 3 THE XPLORE PARTNERSHIP

REPORT BY: HEAD OF COMMUNITIES

REPORT NO: 331-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For Committee to note the recommendations and actions arising from the two positive external evaluations of the Social Inclusion Partnership No 3 The Xplore Partnership received in 2004.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 note the 2 evaluation reports and approves the management action undertaken on the recommendations contained therein.
- 2.2 refers this Report to the Dundee Partnership for their attention.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no immediate financial implications for the Partnership outwith the scope of the revenue budget for 2004-2005.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There is a close relationship between Agenda 21 targets and the focus of the Social Inclusion Programme.

The Xplore Partnership exists to meet the needs of young people experiencing poverty or challenging behavioural difficulties.

The services offered seek to assist the Council meet the Dundee Partnership's regeneration strategies and targets.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The services offered in The Xplore Partnership target young people most in need and make no distinction in relation to gender or race.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The Xplore Partnership is one of Dundee's 4 Social Inclusion Partnerships and is classified as a thematic SIP targeting young people ages 11 - 18 years who experience poverty or challenging behavioural needs especially at important transitional periods of their lives eg the transition from primary to secondary education or the transition from schooling to work or further education etc.

- 6.2 The Partnership has charitable recognition and has an advisory board composed of a wide range of stakeholder organisations all of which deliver services to the targeted participant age group.
- 6.3 The funding for the Partnership's work comes from Communities Scotland as part of the Scottish Executive's support for Social Inclusion.
- 6.4 The initiative is in its 4th year of operation and follows an agreed set of performance indicators currently reflected within the Dundee Partnership's Transitional Regeneration Outcome Agreement 2004-2005 previously approved by Council.

The work of the Partnership is linked to the Dundee Community Plan 2001-2006 via the Working and Learning thematic group.

- 6.5 The approach to service delivery is interventionist, participant focused and seeks to encourage the young people and key support agencies to develop an action plan to assist the young person to overcome his/her difficulties and raise their aspirations and confidence. A high part of the programme involves intensive 1:1 support from a nominated worker over a period of time not exceeding 1 year.
- 6.6 Referrals to the services come from Council Departments, Police, parents and the young people themselves. In the past year to 31 March 2004 the referral source has been as follows:

	<u>New Referrals From 01.04.2004</u>	<u>Ongoing Referrals As At 01.04.2004</u>
Education	85	34
Social Work	41	30
Self/Parents	18	7
Health	5	2
Voluntary Sector	8	2
Other Agencies	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>78</u>

7.0 EVALUATION & MONITORING

- 7.1 A condition of renewed Social Inclusion Programme Funding requires the initiative to both internally and externally evaluate its success and effect against a declared set of agreed performance indicators.
- 7.2 Since the commencement of The Xplore Partnership, Dr Isobel MacPherson formerly of Caledonian University Research Centre was commissioned under competitive tender to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of the initiative. Her annual reports have been presented to the Partnership Board and the Scottish Executive and have proved helpful and insightful on the particular needs of the client group and the ongoing methodology in working with them.

Her final summary report "Views from the Front Lines – A Summary 2004" has been copied to Group Secretaries.

- 7.3 Communities Scotland have the role of co-ordinating and overseeing the Social Inclusion Programme in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Executive. As part of the transition programme into Community Planning in 2004-2005 all thematic SIPs were required to conduct an independent external evaluation against defined criteria set by Communities Scotland.

This work has been the subject of a competitive tender and has been completed by Blake Stevenson Ltd in January 2004. A copy of their final report has been copied to Group Secretaries.

- 7.4 As part of continued internal programme good practice, the Partnership has operated extensive databasing of its work with participants and conducted extensive consultation with stakeholder referral organisations, young participants, parents and workers. The results of these consultations were made available to external evaluations and were incorporated into the final reports outlined above.
- 7.5 Appendices 1/2 outline the Partnership's responses to each evaluation recommendation and issue and are being advanced at present.

8.0 THE PARTNERSHIP'S RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATIONS

- 8.1 Both reports have provided valuable data which will enable the Partnership to improve its efficiency, effect and economy in using resources.
- 8.2 More importantly, both reports clearly articulate the satisfaction expressed by the participant group which is also reflected in the number of achieved action plans and the progression of participants' personal and social development.
- 8.3 The participant group are extremely challenging to work with and represent a cohort of teenagers who are difficult to engage in positive learning experiences and who hold very firm views on learning of any description.

It is obvious that successful engagement with this cohort of young people demands high commitment, empathy, perseverance and ingenuity on the part of staff to achieve joint success with the young participant.

For many participants this has been their first self determined goal achievement programme.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Partnership are conscious of the advantages of joint working and have agreed to incorporate the majority of the evaluation reports recommendations into the 2004-2005 Action Plan. It is proposed that Committee note and approve this action.

10.0 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executives (Finance) and (Support Services), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) and the Xplore Partnership have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 The following background papers as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report.

Appendix 1 – Xplore Views from the Front Lines – Dr I MacPherson 2004

Appendix 2 – Evaluation of Xplore Social Inclusion Partnership – Blake Stevenson Ltd 2004

Stewart Murdoch
Head of Communities

29 April 2004

XPLORE VIEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES – DR I MacPHERSON 2004

No	Content	Partnership Response
1	There was a recognition that for some people it could be just too hard to change behaviour 'even with rewards'.	The development of proposed integrated community school pupil support teams may identify young people with support needs far earlier and seek to develop support mechanisms to avoid this result.
2	Some felt there needed to be a higher level of support across the board to reflect the high level of difficulties they faced.	The Partnership are conscious that participant needs are complex and that partnering agencies support is vital if behaviour change is to be encouraged and sustained. The development of greater multi disciplinary team working and data sharing is fundamental to success as is the continuance of support resource options.
3	Some young people felt there was nothing to do since they left Xplore.	The time allocation of up to 1 year is essential to allow the Partnership to cope with referral demand. Each young person's needs are carefully assessed at exit and proposals to ease this process by signposting other services are being explored as is the need to continue provision beyond a year on certain occasions.
4	They want to go back to Xplore because they miss the people.	<p>Xplore recognise the need for a peer or adult monitoring service but have real difficulties in accessing such a service due to high waiting lists and the vulnerability of the participant group.</p> <p>The Partnership has facilitated seminars to try and encourage mentoring but the availability of volunteers is low and there are real issues over "safety" using peers with this participant group.</p>
5	Earlier Access to Xplore	<p>There is no resource at present to enable referrals at primary age. The Partnership could not cope with the expected demand should this option be opened up under existing resource levels.</p> <p>The nature of the programme and staff requirement would also require different personnel skills, training and approaches.</p>

No	Content	Partnership Response
6	Explaining the reward system to the family	<p>This presents staff with real operational difficulties as the intervention focus is on the individual and siblings/parents can easily influence the goal achievement. In reality, however, the participant “incentives” are modest, do not involve cash and are closely related to behaviour goal changes.</p> <p>Several staff have observed that parental change of behaviour could assist participants but that this is outwith their intervention remit or role.</p>
7	What happens after Xplore?	<p>The Partnership need to encourage participants to integrate into positive learning choices and advocate for increased targeted services for challenging young people</p>

**EVALUATION OF THE XPLORE SOCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP –
BLAKE STEVENSON LTD 2004 – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE PAGES 59-62**

No	Content	Partnership Response
8.3	The young people themselves are amongst the greatest advocates of the support that Xplore offers and it is our view that better use could be made of this asset. In particular, the SIP may wish to consider greater use of the young people as role models/mentors.	Most young participants have specific individual needs and require to make adjustments to meet their own needs and objectives. This often means reintegration into the community and new activities which in a sense means “moving on”. Very few will achieve mentor capabilities to a degree which can command the confidence of staff in meeting the needs of others. The use, however, of young people in group situations is being used and will continue.
8.4	In addition, the SIP may wish to consider facilitating greater interaction between the young people, particularly in the early stages of participants’ involvement with Xplore. This would provide an additional element of support to newcomers and is an area that was highlighted by a number of the young people interviewed as currently lacking.	This will be piloted as appropriate. The programme, however, is a 1:1 support and involves the young person in personal action planning. It is not a group work focused intervention programme.
8.5	The SIP may wish to extend support for the young people beyond on year to enable account to be taken of relationship building in the early stages, and aftercare when the young person leaves Xplore.	Agreed – this will be considered within the exit strategy if particular needs arise. In principle, however, the programme is designed as a time limited intervention with clear progression and inclusion objectives.
8.6	In order to increase the number of young people that are able to be supported by Xplore, the SIP may wish to consider increasing the number of Youth Counsellors, particularly male counsellors. It is recognised that current budgetary constraints would necessitate this issue being considered as part of the Community Planning process.	Agreed. This is the core element of the initiative’s success and will be considered under future funding bid processes.
8.7	The SIP may wish to consider the introduction of some form of parents’ support group which would enable Youth Counsellors to engage with families more pro-actively, and this would also provide a forum for parents’ views to be considered.	The initiative does meet parents and seeks their assistance in assisting participants realise their goals. It is, however, participant focused and is not funded to work in depth with parents or, indeed, meet their often complex and specialised needs. The concept of a parental support group will, however, be explored on a self help basis.

No	Content	Partnership Response
8.8	As discussed earlier in this report, Xplore is fortunate to benefit from a solid and effective partnership.	Agreed. This asset is well recognised and appreciated by workers and brings benefits to participants.
8.9	In looking to the future, it is our view that the SIP should encourage more active involvement of currently passive partners, and that across the board partners should be further encouraged to disseminate the work of Xplore, both in their own organisations and more widely.	Agreed. This has been affected by Partnership personnel moving on to promoted posts and reorganisation within partner agencies. It is better to achieve Partnership representation at the appropriate level and who express commitment to the initiative's objectives.
8.10	On its inception Xplore established a set of indicators to measure its progress throughout its lifetime. Our research found these indicators to be lacking in clarity and in many cases impractical as tools by which to measure progress. No quantitative targets were set, and whilst this evaluation recognises the need for qualitative measurement of progress, it may be of benefit to the SIP to establish a range of indicators which also enable certain elements of progress to be measured quantitatively. There is also a case for establishing a more concise set of indicators to ensure clarity.	The Partnership have disputed this recommendation as indicators have since in inception been agreed and followed. The database enables clear result monitoring. The inception, however, of Regeneration Outcome Agreements under Community Planning from 2005-2006 will, however, focus and aid this process.
8.11	Progress on the Community Planning Process in Dundee has been significant and a Statement of Readiness has already been drafted. The Dundee Partnership intends to proceed with integration in March/April 2004 and looks well placed to do so.	Agreed. This has been completed.
8.12	It has already been determined that Community Planning in Dundee will be based around five themes – Learning and Working, Environment, Building Stronger Communities, Community Safety and Health and Care. Xplore has direct links to the Learning and Working theme, although its Chair is also Chair of the Community Safety theme which should help Xplore to influence cross-thematically, something which it is keen to do.	The relevant theme leaders have been briefed on the work of the Xplore Partnership and the evaluation reports.
8.13	Xplore's project co-ordinator sits on a Community Planning working group alongside co-ordinators from the other SIPs in Dundee, and representatives from Communities Scotland.	Xplore personnel have been involved in contributing to the SIP Team transitional process.

No	Content	Partnership Response
8.14	The information collected to date suggests that Xplore is reasonably well placed to tackle the transition to Community Planning, although there is a concern that Xplore's "voice" will not be heard in this larger structure and that there may be an element of "competing" for funding with other youth-targeted organisations	The evaluation data speaks for itself and Dundee Community Planning – Regeneration Outcome Agreements require the partners to meet specified outcomes which the Xplore Partnership can target and achieve.
8.15	One interviewee observed that they had attended a Community Planning meeting and that Xplore seemed to be virtually invisible in the process. The interviewee noted that there was a need to raise the profile of Xplore, make its achievements more widely known and fit these into the context of Community Planning.	Without the context of this statement it is hard to respond. The real issue is that the social inclusion needs of this cohort of young people can be easily lost without a "champion" advocating for resources.
8.16	One of the great advantages of Xplore is its independence and distinction from the mainstream. There is a risk that this independence may be lost through Community Planning, if, for example, the funds or activity are subsumed back into the mainstream.	Agreed. There is a need to preserve strengths but integrate to use resources effectively.
8.17	There was a concern on the part of one interviewee that the mechanistic, target driven nature of Community Planning would be unsuited to Xplore, which was believed to need more latitude and freedom to be innovative. There is a concern that this very flexibility and innovation may prove to be controversial.	As in all innovative initiatives, change can present challenges. The stakeholders, however, support Xplore by increased referrals and the impact assessments remain positive.
8.18	Some partners noted as positive the fact that Community Planning will give Xplore a status in the formal planning process in Dundee which it has previously not held.	The Partnership would support this view as it would help to convince partners of the extent and size of the cohort which now requires support to sustain access to and contact with learning.
8.19	In addition, a number of interviewees voiced concern that the younger peoples' voice will not be heard through Community Planning.	The Community Planning Co-ordinating Group and Building Stronger Communities Group are conscious of the need to engage with young people over community planning. The use of the Dialogue Youth initiative is being explored to assist with youth consultation.
8.20	There remains a concern amongst partners that the thematic approach, which has worked so well with Xplore, will be lost through CPP and that funds will be re-deployed on an area basis.	The national advice from Communities Scotland on SIP integration clearly advocates the advantages of thematic approaches which can aid targeting of resources to vulnerable groups/individuals. There is no single solution to regeneration strategies.

No	Content	Partnership Response
8.21	The Community Planning process needs to address the issue of longer term funding for initiatives that have been proven to work. The uncertainty of short-term funding means that planning for the future is always qualified and uncertain. There is a risk that if these issues are not sufficiently well addressed in the early stages of Community Planning the expertise of the staff currently employed through Xplore will be lost due to the uncertainty of short-term contracts.	Agreed. The Partnership are acutely conscious of shorter-term initiatives as an approach to longer-term regeneration needs. This, however, is the current preferred option of the Scottish Executive.
8.22	The issue of social inclusion of young people is one that requires long-term commitment. In essence, the work of the SIP will not be completed by March 2004 and there is an ongoing need for this type of support. This is clearly illustrated by long waiting list and feedback from partner organisations. There is a specific concern that the focus of the work supported under Community Planning will be on adults rather than young people. We would emphasise the need for this type of innovative, flexible support to young people to continue.	Agreed. The initiative has reprioritised workloads and resources to reduce waiting lists. This has been achieved by filling staff vacancies due to some personnel moving to permanent established posts.
8.23	There is a clear need for the diverse and increasing range of initiatives for young people to be integrated. The funding available for this type of work is currently fragmented and has resulted in an unfocussed approach to support for young people. One step towards achieving this would be to integrate the Better Neighbourhood Services Funding with Xplore's core funding given the similarities in the activity delivered by the two streams of funding.	This has been highlighted to key stakeholders and has received both staff and funding agency support. It is being progressed at present. The original brief for Better Neighbourhood Services Fund support envisaged this integration.
8.24	Given the similarity of these funds, our research suggests that it would be beneficial to Xplore to see these funds integrated with Xplore's funds through the Community Planning process, thereby streamlining the administrative aspects and maximising the benefits the funds can bring.	This will be a decision which the Community Planning Partnership must decide upon as clarity is obtained over the future of BNSF post 2006.
8.25	In addition, our research highlighted similarities between Xplore and SE Tayside's Include programme. There are elements of overlap and this may be an area that would benefit from early discussions around maximising use of resources in the most cost-effective manner. There may be benefits to having at least shared delivery elements rather than two discrete programmes operating in parallel.	This point was highlighted by the Xplore Board at discussions over the development of "Include". The decision not to integrate was made by Scottish Enterprise and Careers outwith the Partnership Board.

No	Content	Partnership Response
8.26	Although Xplore has been actively involved in publicising its work our research identified a greater need for Xplore to publicise the positive aspects of its work which would help to counter the negative perceptions which arose in relation to the incentives offered to the young people. This evaluation recognises, however, the need to avoid any stigmatization of clients and any additional publicity would need to take account of this.	Agreed. This will feature in the 2004-2005 Action Plan.