

# OnSide Youth Zones

## Defining the Impact of a Youth Zone

### Executive Summary

May 2015



## Defining the impact of OnSide Youth Zones

This report has been prepared by AMION Consulting, a specialist in socio-economic impact assessment. Its objective is to define and assess the impact of the Youth Zones, drawing in particular on the operation of the Youth Zones in Harpurhey, Manchester (The Factory), Oldham (Mahdlo) and Wigan to gather data and evidence regarding the outcomes being delivered for young people and local communities.

In periods when economic conditions remain challenging, it is important that services that make the most significant contribution to both customers and to the communities in which they live are given priority. The report, of which this is a summary, provides the framework to demonstrate why investment in the OnSide Youth Zone model can be made with confidence based on the evidence uncovered by the research.

### ***What do Youth Zones do for young people?***

The Youth Zones can make a significant difference to the overall wellbeing and life chances of the young people participating in activities at the Centre. Consultations with both the Youth Zone members and partner organisations, carried out as part of this study, have confirmed that they:

- provide a safe environment in which young people can take part in a wide range of sports, arts and music activities in which they can develop their personal and social skills and qualities needed for learning, work and the transition to adulthood;
- raise young people's aspirations, build their confidence and resilience and provide them with information that will assist them in making the right lifestyle choices – particularly in relation to substance misuse and involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour;
- improve young people's physical and emotional health and wellbeing;
- assist young people at risk of dropping out of learning to engage in activities that will enable them to reach their full potential;
- have the capacity to make a significant impact in their local communities, through improved community cohesion, a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour, improved perceptions of the area; and
- provide a real 'community' asset, which promotes and facilitates close partnership working.

### ***Why are the Zones successful?***

There are a range of factors that key partners have attributed to their success, which include:

- the state of the art facilities;
- the universal and targeted support provided;
- the expertise and dedication of the staff and volunteers;
- their ability to engage young people, listen and respond to their needs; and
- their ability to work closely with partners to facilitate early intervention.

***What the young people say:***

- 76% of young people were getting on better with family since attending the youth zone;
- 72% are staying out of trouble as a result of attending;
- 70% of members exercise regularly each week at the youth zone;
- 60% of respondent believed that the Youth Zone has helped them understand the dangers of smoking, alcohol & drugs;
- 51% said that they were less likely to miss school or college since attending the youth zone;
- 80% reported getting better marks in class and 73% were getting better grades on coursework/exams;
- 80% of all respondents<sup>1</sup> have been encouraged by staff and volunteers at the Youth Zone to think about their future on leaving school or college; and
- 89% reported feeling more self-confident as a result of attending the Youth Zone.

***What the key stakeholders say:***

The key stakeholders interviewed<sup>2</sup> were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the Youth Zones. In addition to the improved life chances for the young people attending the Zones, they cited the following as areas that the Youth Zones have impact on:

- reduced crime and anti-social behaviour (including youth offending and arson) as a result of the high levels of young people they engage and sustain in positive activities. The Youth Zones in this study attract on average 5590 visits per month from over 1500 Youth Zone members in each area;
- reduced fear of crime – 75% of local businesses surveyed, commented on this as a key benefit for the area in addition to the positive contribution to anti-social behaviour which was having a knock on impact on the perception and image of the area;
- the Government's Youth Contract and capacity to reduce the number of young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) – through targeting support and provision of role models and mentors;
- providing valuable support for troubled families – this includes activities and support to tackle behavioural problems and social skills while at the same time providing respite care for parents - leading to reduced social care costs over the longer term;
- safeguarding – through early intervention and effective referral of young people to specialist services where required;
- improved health and wellbeing – by engaging key agencies and service providers to deliver information, advice and guidance to Young People at the Zones; and

<sup>1</sup> This question was only asked among the senior Youth Zone members

<sup>2</sup> GM Police; Local Authorities; Fire and Rescue Service; Connexions; A key Housing Association; Other leisure service providers

- improved community cohesion – achieved through the policies implemented at the Zones, the initiatives developed to promote cohesion and opening up the premises for wider community uses.

**Placing a financial value on the impact of the Youth Zone - their social impact and cost benefit ratio**

Measuring social impact has become increasingly important in recent years as the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires those commissioning or procuring public services contracts to consider how their work can improve the wellbeing of an area.

There are a range of methodologies for measuring social value which use financial proxies, a figure that can be used to represent the value of something in a calculation, so that the values of the outcomes can be recognised. For the purposes of this study, we have used the HACT<sup>3</sup> social value bank figures to make an assessment of the Social Impact of the Youth Zones.

The social value generated by the universal service offered by the Youth Zones and their employability support project are summarised in the table below, along with an indicative cost benefit ratio:

Calculating the Social Value of the Youth Zones				
Universal Services	The Factory	Mahdlo	Wigan	All Youth Zones
Total Social Value (Universal)	£2,073,048	£2,443,251	£3,837,261	£8,353,560
TSV (less deadweight)	£1,679,169	£1,979,033	£3,108,181	£6,766,384
Targeted Service: Employability	The Factory	Mahdlo	Wigan	All Youth Zones
Total Social Value (Employability)	£514,050	£485,815	£435,822	£1,435,687
TSV (less deadweight)	£436,943	£412,943	£370,449	£1,220,334
<b>Overall Social Value – Universal and Targeted</b>	<b>£2,116,112</b>	<b>£2,391,976</b>	<b>£3,478,630</b>	<b>£7,986,718</b>
Cost of the Youth Zones	£1,207,997	£1,141,599	£1,587,871	£3,937,467
Cost to Local Authority	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£1,200,000
<b>Cost : benefit ratios</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>2.10</b>	<b>2.19</b>	<b>2.03</b>
<b>Cost : benefit ratio to Local Authority</b>	<b>5.29</b>	<b>5.98</b>	<b>8.70</b>	<b>6.66</b>

Therefore, the study confirms that the social value of Youth Zones far outweighs the costs of provision and this is even without placing a value on many of the benefits identified by the report. Benefits not measured include, for example, the health and wellbeing improvements arising through targeted services designed to assist vulnerable young people through one to one counselling, the participation of young people with disabilities through the initiative ‘A level Playing Field’ along with ASB, mental health and alcohol issues which the Youth Zones tackle.

<sup>3</sup> Housing Associations Charitable Trust



During the coming year, as new robust data collection systems are embedded within the Youth Zones and the approach to measuring outcomes is developed further through the establishment of baselines and an annual survey of beneficiaries, an increasingly comprehensive valuation of benefits will be pursued by OnSide as a key corporate priority.

In short, Youth Zones in the format developed by OnSide involving early intervention and continued partnership working with a range of agencies on the ground Youth Zones can make a real contribution to reducing the demand for a range of public services. At the same time they significantly improve the life chances of the young people that participate in the activities of the Centres. The study concludes that these benefits in turn will lead to significant cost savings in the future for local authorities and other public agencies in the areas served by each Youth Zone.

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