

**P-04-577 Reinstatement Funding to the Real Opportunities Project – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Clerking Team, 16.09.14.**

Hi Kayleigh,

Many thanks for your assistance & to Jane Hutt for her response to our Petition. The Petition has been organised by the Peer Mentors (trained by the now disbanded Real Opportunities Team) who volunteer at "The Mix" youth club for young people with learning difficulties.

We are aware that additional requests for European funding have been made for which we are grateful. Unfortunately there are no indications of what funding will or won't be found, what it will be for, or when it will or won't be released.

In the meantime the service that was being provided has now ceased & many of the key staff who provided it have been made redundant.

Our petition isn't to blame anyone for the situation. We believe there is a consensus that Short Break & Transition support for young people with learning difficulties & their families is inadequate. However, waiting in the hope of more funding isn't an effective strategy for families in need right now. We care greatly about the support our learning disabled friends deserve and have worked really hard to come up with something we feel could be helpful and affordable.

We have worked with "The Mix" Committee & attach an Outline proposal document to provide details of the specific issues faced & some ideas to address them. We are not experts in proposals ... but we are young people who understand the needs of our learning disabled friends & who want to communicate them to people who can make a difference.

Please can you circulate the attached documents to the Petitions Committee for consideration with the Petition? The proposal is not intended as a panacea – but as an outline document to demonstrate cost efficient services can be provided now to help the majority of young people with learning difficulties with essential Short Break & Transition support.

Regards

Aled

# SHORT BREAK AND TRANSITION SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARMARTHENSHIRE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES INCORPORATING ***“THE MIX”*** YOUTH CLUB MODEL

## OUTLINE PROPOSAL

### Introduction

This is an outline proposal document focussing on Short Break and Transition facilities for young people with learning difficulties in Carmarthenshire.

The proposal has been prompted by the closure of the Real Opportunities Transition project in August 2014 which has left many young people with learning difficulties and their families without the crucial Short Break & Transition support they have come to depend upon.

*“The Mix”* is a private Youth Club for Young people with learning difficulties living in Carmarthenshire. There are 53 registered members with average weekly attendance ranging between 24 – 40 per session.

The majority of attendees are unable to access “mainstream” youth clubs without additional support. Members and their families travel from all over Carmarthenshire to access what they describe as a “unique environment”.

### Proposal

The aims of this outline proposal are to identify potential opportunities to ;

- **Cost efficiently increase the Short Break availability for young people with learning difficulties in Carmarthenshire.**
- **Maximise return on investment by integrating support for learning disabled young people and adults to create a unique and complimentary environment for 16–30 year olds.**
- **Deliver Short Break support that is safe, inclusive, fun & Transition focussed**

- Address core support areas lost with the closure of the Real Opportunities project. In particular
  - Restoring the Peer Mentor Programme
  - Creating opportunities for paid employment for young people with learning difficulties in Carmarthenshire
- Provide security for the future of “*The Mix*” through the provision of public support

### Demand for Services

In August 2014 “*The Mix*” Committee met with the Children's Commissioner for Wales. The Commissioner highlighted his focus on Short Break & youth Transition facilities. His views are summarised in the June 2014 report entitled “*Full Lives – A Study of Short Breaks Provision.*”

The “Real Opportunities” Transition project, supplying young people with learning difficulties across Wales with skills for learning and employment, has run for the past 3 years. In Carmarthenshire the project funded 6 full time front line specialist support staff. The Real Opportunities team delivered a range of transition activities throughout term time and holiday periods at a cost of approximately £300K per annum. The project benefited from European funding and has been very successful.

Real Opportunities project funding ended in August 2014 leaving a huge vacuum for the 198 young people in Carmarthenshire who were accessing the social and personal support facilities and the additional 60 young people waiting to join. For most of these young people Real Opportunities was the backbone for transition assistance and the primary route to meet and socialise with their peers. The loss is already being acutely felt by project participants and their families. A brief summary of the project achievements are attached in the “*Real Opportunities What Works In Wales*” PowerPoint presentation.

Short Break provision in Carmarthenshire is **not** available to all learning disabled families. Indeed the majority of families of young people with learning difficulties receive little support until their needs are assessed as critical. In February 2014 a proposal by Carmarthenshire County Council to save £200K per annum by closing either the Blaenau Respite Centre in Ammanford or Llys Caradog Respite Centre in Llanelli was withdrawn following an overwhelmingly negative public response. Two on-line petitions calling for the maintenance of services for young people with learning difficulties have been presented to the Welsh Assembly this year. One of the petitions has been prepared by young peer mentors trained by the Real Opportunities team. The mentors want to support their learning disabled friends and a great deal of their input is included in this outline proposal.

Despite this clear demand for services, for many of the Real Opportunities

participants and others “*The Mix*” now provides the only social activity of the week, and the only chance for parents and carers to have a regular break.

### Peer Mentoring

The Real Opportunities project has trained over 1 000 Peer Mentors across Wales. Mentors complete a 30 hour training programme which includes direct working sessions with their learning disabled colleges. Peer Mentors receive an Agored certification once their course work is successfully completed and assessed.

Peer Mentors are a valuable resource to their schools providing additional support to their learning disabled friends. These friendships have also continued outside of school. “*The Mix*” have 4 regular Peer Mentors who attend from Amman Valley Comprehensive. Several “*Mix*” club members have joined as a result of having worked with peer mentors at school. Only with the support of their mentor friends have they felt confident enough to join the club and take the first steps towards independent activities. Peer Mentors have proved pivotal in transitioning young people into a broader social environment.

The Peer Mentors enjoy their involvement both at school and at “*The Mix*.” The work they do is a great way of demonstrating to future Colleges and Universities their ability to take on responsibility and their social conscience. With the closure of the Real Opportunities project no other training exists to create future Peer Mentors. This hugely valuable resource will now be lost.

### Present Situation

“*The Mix*” operates from facilities at Llandybie Memorial Hall and also pro-actively organises social events in the wider community. It receives no financial support from Carmarthenshire County Council with service users instead paying a £3.00 weekly subscription. Sessions run from 5–7pm every Wednesday evening. Unlike publicly funded youth services, “*The Mix*” also runs through school holiday periods when young people and carers are often in most need of support.

There are 53 registered members with average weekly attendance ranging between 24 – 40 per session. The operation of the group is entirely dependent on the goodwill and availability of the parents and peer mentors who volunteer. As the group continues to expand, with around 5–10 new applicants per month the club now also pays 2 additional workers to help ensure a safe and stimulating environment.

Many club members find the current 2 hour timeslot difficult to co-ordinate with school and college timetabling and travel arrangements. Funding for more staff and regulatory difficulties make operating for more than 2 hours at a time difficult. “*The Mix*” members would also welcome the opportunity to attend twice weekly sessions

but unfortunately the commitment is too great for the already hard pressed volunteers and Mentors.

### Operating Model

The model is based around a core provision of regular, Transition focussed Short Breaks accessible to the majority rather than the minority of learning disabled young people. The Short Break provision will be available for at least 2 separate 2 hour sessions per week including during holiday periods when families are often under most strain.

Learning difficulties mean that chronological age is often not a true indicator of the cognitive & social abilities of an individual. A learning disabled adult of 30 may typically be more comfortable and responsive to Youth Club environments than traditional adult services. Accordingly we would propose that the age range for “*Mix*” groups would be in the region of 16–30 yrs. This allows for an ability rather than chronologically based social mix, accessible by both adult and youth service user groups.

The 2 hour sessions will be planned and supervised by 2–3 Full Time Short Break Transition Managers (assuming an additional venue can be found in the Carmarthen area) operating within an agreed Annual Budget. The Short Break Transition Managers will also be responsible for liaising with local schools, colleges and families to continue the Peer Mentor programme and for developing a range of Transition focussed activities to take place in the wider community. These will include the delivery of appropriate education and employment based Agored courses and Travel training to assist service users accessing educational, social and ultimately employment opportunities.

During each of the 2 hour weekly sessions the Short Break Transition Managers will be assisted by 3 Youth Service Session Workers. These will help with the delivery of the sessions through a range of differentiated activities.

In turn, the Youth Session Workers will each be responsible for and supported by a Learning Disabled Staff Worker and volunteer Peer Mentor from the Mentoring programme. This will provide invaluable paid work experience for young disabled people who will be both supporting and supported by their Peers.

Youth Service Session Workers, Learning Disabled Staff and Peer Mentors would also assist with community based events. The **additional Short Break provision from these community activities** can be included in the cost model once a calender of events has been agreed.

The Cost model shown in the attached *Appendix 1 “Mix Working Model”* spreadsheet includes indicative Short Break Transition Managers salaries at £22K per annum, Youth Service Session worker rates of £10 per hour and Learning Disabled Staff

Worker payments at £6.31 per hour. Additionally cost inclusions have been made for venue hire & insurance, equipment and consumables refresh and administrative overheads. The proposal is therefore that for each session staffing will be

2/3 x	Full Time Short Break Transition Managers	
3 x	Youth Session workers	(2 hrs / session)
3 x	Learning Disabled Staff Workers	(2 hrs /session)
3 x	Accredited Peer Mentors	(2 hrs / session)

## Outline Job Descriptions

### Full Time Short Break Transition Manager

- Plan and deliver weekly *Mix* sessions differentiated to support the range of members and publish a monthly event calender.
- Plan and deliver monthly Community based outings and school/college holiday activities (cinema, bowling, surfing etc.) Participants to pay own costs
- Ensure all activities are planned and delivered within identified Budget
- Ensure Security and Health and Safety/Risk Assessments are in place
- Identify additional Transition support needs for club members and signpost to relevant teams
- Work with Carmarthen County Council to promote awareness of the group to potential new members
- Supervise and support Youth Session, Young Learning Disabled and Peer Mentor workers
- Collate 1 Page Profiles for each service User
- Co-ordinate with local schools to train and accredit 10 x Peer Mentors per qtr (40/annum)
- Ensure Hall and Equipment is ready for each session and left in appropriate condition
- Travel training where appropriate

### 3 x Youth Session Workers (2 hrs/session)

- Support and deliver weekly session plans agreed with Short Break Transition Managers
- Supervise and support Young Learning Disabled session workers and Peer Mentors
- Assist with completion of 1 Page Profile for each service user
- Work with Carmarthen County Council to promote awareness to potential new members
- Ensure Hall and Equipment is ready for each session and left in appropriate condition
- Assist in planning monthly activity calendar
- Ensure Security & Health and Safety/Risk Assessments in place
- Support community trips

### 3 x Young Learning Disabled Session Workers

- Assist Youth Session Workers in delivery of agreed session plans
- Provide Peer support to service users
- Ensure Hall and Equipment is ready for each session and left in appropriate condition
- Support monthly community based activity and holiday plans

### 3 x Peer Mentors

- Complete Accredited Peer Mentor Training Package
- Provide minimum 1 hr per week Peer Mentor support at school
- Provide Peer support at Mix sessions
- Assist with community activities
- Provide support during school/college holiday sessions
- Assist in planning monthly activity calendar

### Single Site Costs

*(See **Appendix 1 "Mix Working Model"** for full cost/benefit analysis).*

The example below shows costs to support a single site "**Mix**" environment similar to the current arrangements in Llandybie. The figures are based on existing building arrangements and a staffing mix of ;

- 2 x Full Time Short Break Transition Managers
- 3 x P/T Youth Session workers (2 hrs / session)
- 3 x P/T Learning Disabled Youth Workers (2 hrs /session)
- 3 x Accredited Peer Mentors (2 hrs / session)\

The single site model for Llandybie running 2 sessions per week for up to 60 service users per session would provide 10,400 hrs/annum of high quality transition focussed respite care for as little as £5.35 per hour per service user. There would be minimal additional costs for Transition activities delivered outside of *Mix* club environment as they will encompass part of the Full Time Short Break Transition managers core responsibilities. Participants attending Community based activities (meals out, cinema, bowling, surfing, craft day etc) will pay their own costs.

	Llandybie single session/wk	Llandybie 2 sessions/wk
Average short break cost per participant per hour	£9.09	£5.35
Available short break capacity hours per annum	6,240 hours	12,480 hours
Total Cost per annum	£56,749	£66,714

## Dual Site Costs

(See *Appendix 1 "Mix Working Model"* for full cost/benefit analysis).

The provision of a second site would allow potential service users currently restricted by time/travel constraints from attending Llandybie to attend a more convenient location. It would probably be best placed in the Carmarthen area where it would similarly benefit Peer Mentors living or attending schools in the Carmarthen area. The costs are based on similar building arrangements to Llandybie and include an additional Full Time Short Break Transition Manager. The 3 x Full Time Short Break Transition Managers would not be site specific and hence would support both centres and all eligible young people with learning difficulties across the County.

- 3 x Full Time Short Break Transition Managers
- 3 x P/T Youth Session workers (2 hrs / session)



3 x P/T Learning Disabled Youth Workers (2 hrs /session)

3 x Accredited Peer Mentors (2 hrs / session)

See **Appendix 1 “Mix Working Model”** for full cost/benefit analysis.

	Llandybie single session/wk	Llandybie 2 sessions/wk	Llandybie + Carmarthen single session/wk	Llandybie + Carmarthen 2 sessions per week
<b>Average short break cost per participant/hr</b>	<b>£12.62</b>	<b>£7.11</b>	<b>£7.33</b>	<b>£4.48</b>
<b>Available short break capacity hours/annum</b>	<b>6,240 hours</b>	<b>12,480 hours</b>	<b>12,480 hours</b>	<b>24,960 hours</b>
<b>Total Cost/annum</b>	<b>£78,749</b>	<b>£88,717</b>	<b>£91,497</b>	<b>£111,935</b>

The models show that this safe, stimulating, socially integrated & Transition focussed model is cost effective & scalable. The 2 site option similarly catering for up to 60 service users attending twice per week would mean the County could offer a total of 24,960 hours/annum of Short Break support for as little as £4.48 per hour per service user.

## Summary

“*The Mix*” model would secure and increase the Short Break & Transition opportunities for young people with learning difficulties in Carmarthenshire. It provides for a regular, fun, safe, stimulating and Transition focussed social environment accessible to families before their needs become critical.

The model helps fill some of the vacuum left by the closure of the Real Opportunities programme and reduces the likelihood of a surge in demand for Short Break support at Carmarthenshires remaining residential centres. It also provides a platform to build on the work of the past 3 years delivering a greater return on the European and match funded investment already made. Embracing a 16–30 age group helps broaden social skills and deliver cost efficient integration of adult and youth service support.

Full time staffing would allow for the restoration of the highly valued Peer Mentor programme benefiting mainstream and learning disabled young people, their schools, colleges and the wider community. The mix of social and Transition support helps prepare young learning disabled people for further education and provides paid work experience in an appropriately supervised environment. “*The Mix*” Peer Mentors and Committee would welcome an early opportunity to discuss this or any other proposals to support young people with learning difficulties in their Short Break and Transition needs.

<b>MIX CLUB SINGLE SITE OPTION</b>		
	<b>Weekly cost @ 1 session/wk</b>	<b>Weekly Cost @ 2 session/wk</b>
Short Break Transition Manager	£1,269.23	£1,269.23
Learning Disabled Youth Worker	£37.86	£75.72
Youth Session Workers	£60.00	£120.00
Equipment Refresh	£57.69	£86.54
Hall Hire	£50.00	£100.00
Insurance/Liability Cover	£9.62	£9.62
Admin Costs	£30.00	£45.00
<b>TOTAL WEEKLY COST</b>	<b>£1,514.40</b>	<b>£1,706.10</b>
<b>ANNUAL COST</b>	<b>£78,748.72</b>	<b>£88,717.44</b>
<b>Cost per Service User/wk</b>	<b>£25.24</b>	<b>£28.44</b>
<b>Average Short Break Cost/hr</b>	<b>£12.62</b>	<b>£7.11</b>
<b>TOTAL SHORT BREAK HRS/ANNUM</b>	<b>6240</b>	<b>12480</b>

<b>MIX CLUB DUAL SITE OPTION</b>		
	<b>Weekly cost @ 1 session/wk</b>	<b>Weekly Cost @ 2 session/wk</b>
Short Break Transition Manager	£0.00	£0.00
Learning Disabled Youth Worker	£37.86	£75.72
Youth Session Workers	£60.00	£120.00
Equipment Refresh	£57.69	£86.54
Hall Hire	£50.00	£100.00
Insurance/Liability Cover	£9.62	£19.23
Admin Costs	£30.00	£45.00
<b>TOTAL WEEKLY COST</b>	<b>£245.17</b>	<b>£446.49</b>
<b>ANNUAL COST</b>	<b>£12,748.72</b>	<b>£23,217.44</b>
<b>ANNUAL COST ( 2 sites)</b>	<b>£91,497.44</b>	<b>£111,934.88</b>
<b>Cost per Service User/wk</b>	<b>£14.66</b>	<b>£17.94</b>
<b>Average Short Break Cost/hr</b>	<b>£7.33</b>	<b>£4.48</b>
<b>TOTAL SHORT BREAK HRS/ANNUM</b>	<b>12480</b>	<b>24960</b>

ANNUAL COST ITEMISATION		
Short Break Transition Manager	£66,000.00	assumes average salary £22K per annum
Learning Disabled Youth workers	£1,968.72	2 hrs per week @ £6.31/hr/ worker
Youth Session Workers	£3,120.00	2 hrs per week @ £10.00/hr/ worker
Equipment Refresh	£3,000.00	
Hall Hire	£2,600.00	Sports hall + youth centre
Insurance Liability Cover	£500.00	
Admin Costs	£1,560.00	Mentor leaflets/Newsletters/Badges/Calls etc
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£78,748.72</b>	

\*Peer Mentors are Volunteers & are not salaried

Average Number of Service Users Llandybie	60
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Average Number of Service Users Carmarthen	60
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Jane Hutt AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyllid  
Minister for Finance



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH /00326/14

Aled Davies  
Tyler Payne

mailto:mail@changemail.org

28 July 2014

Dear Aled and Tyler

I am writing in response to your petition regarding the Regional SEN Transition into Employment Initiative (Real Opportunities Project) that is currently being supported through the 2007–2013 European Structural Fund programmes. I am responding as the European Structural Funds programmes fall within my Ministerial portfolio.

I am pleased that European Structural Funds has supported such a successful project, which has helped you and the lives of some 1760 young people and their families in Wales.

The project started in September 2010 and was initially due to finish on 30 September 2013, but was later extended by WEFO to September 2014. I understand that Caerphilly County Borough Council, the lead project sponsor, recently requested an additional extension which would have required additional EU funding, but unfortunately, due to current ESF programme 2007–2013 commitment levels, WEFO was unable to agree to this request.

I am pleased, however, that the new European Structural Funds programmes 2014–2020, which are currently being negotiated with the European Commission, include dedicated investment priorities to support youth employment and attainment in Wales, as these are high priorities for the Welsh Government. WEFO recognises the achievements of the Regional SEN project and is keen to see the activity continue. It has therefore encouraged Caerphilly Council to explore opportunities for funding within these new programmes and to submit a new project proposal to help progress discussions as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,  
Jane Hutt

Jane Hutt AC / AM  
Y Gweinidog Cyllid  
Minister for Finance

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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Printed on 100% recycled paper