

EXETER:

A Young People-Friendly City



Towards a
youth strategy
for Exeter



2017



Why have a Youth Strategy for Exeter?

This report has been developed with the support and commitment of Exeter Community Forum, Exeter City Council and Devon County Council, recognising that meeting young people's needs requires agencies to work together and actively engage with young people, their families and communities. These three bodies are committed to working together with young people to help make Exeter a Young People-Friendly City where the views and aspirations of young people are heard and responded to, and where young people can access the best

possible services wherever they live and whatever the wider economic, social and political context. It explains how organisations and communities in Exeter can help make growing up in the city as good an experience as it can be, and can help young people achieve their ambitions by providing support and challenge along the way. It should be seen as a first stage in developing an effective Youth Strategy for Exeter.



What is included in the report?

A Steering Group, made up of representatives from Exeter City Council, Devon County Council, Exeter Community Forum and other interested bodies, agreed the overall reach for the proposed youth strategy as:

- The views of young people should be at the centre of the proposed actions
- Focus on young people aged 10-25, to include key transition points from primary to secondary schooling and from education to work and further training
- Cover the geographical boundary of Exeter City Council, recognising that facilities in Exeter are frequently used by young people from surrounding parts of Devon and even further afield.
- Focus on what young people do outside of the time they spend in formal education (schools, college etc), taking in their leisure time and services they

may need for support with specific concerns such as housing, mental health and drug and alcohol misuse

- The Steering Group agreed not to focus on the needs of university students living in the city temporarily. However, it acknowledges the potential for increased partnership work with Exeter University and others to make the best use of facilities which could benefit young people.



Priority actions

The priorities identified in the report arise from analysis of the findings of research conducted about young people's lives in Exeter between May and October 2016. Young people's own views were central to our approach, and 680 young people aged between 10 and 19 responded to our survey. 50 further young people from groups who were harder to reach, including those of Black, Asian and minority ethnic origin, LGBT young people and others with particular needs were interviewed by peer researchers. 51 organisations that work with young people provided their perceptions of issues for young people in Exeter through a separate survey. We also considered a range of statistical indicators showing how young people in Exeter compare with those in other areas of Devon and further afield.

The priorities listed here help Exeter develop its identity as a 'Young People-Friendly City'. We have included a list of 'indicators' that will help us to know whether we are achieving the key priorities.



PRIORITY 1: A voice for young people in the city and beyond

Young people in our survey and interviews told us that they want to have a more meaningful voice in decisions made in Exeter that affect them. These range from decisions about environment and transport to being involved in designing their own youth projects and contributing to wider discussions about how resources are utilised and new investments in the city. The indicators below will help to measure the success of the strategy.



How will we know we are achieving this?

- Local forums involve young people in their communities
- Young people contributing to city-wide strategies for environment, transport, sport, recreation, arts, culture and community development
- Exeter young people make a strong contribution to Devon-wide youth voice forums
- Public bodies can show how young people's views have influenced policy and strategy decisions

PRIORITY 2: Things to do, places to go

Reduced budgets and increasing costs means there are fewer opportunities for young people to get involved in activities – including sport, arts and music – meet their friends in safe places and get support from youth workers and other staff and volunteers who can encourage and inspire young people to reach their full potential. Young people told us that they wanted more opportunities and things to do outside of school or college, and wanted more information about what is available. These indicators show how this can be achieved.



How will we know we are achieving this?

- More youth centres and safe spaces for young people to go to meet their friends, get involved in new activities and get support from experienced youth workers
- More affordable music, arts and sports events and venues for young people
- More young people-led initiatives to provide local places to go and things to do
- Increased availability of 'pop-up' premises for short term youth facilities
- Partnership arrangements in place that enable Exeter's young people to benefit from specialist sports and arts facilities owned by colleges, universities and other public bodies
- Information about things to do and places to go in Exeter is regularly updated and made accessible to young people

PRIORITY 3: Protection from bullying and violence

This was the top priority for young people who responded to our survey. Bullying takes many forms and happens in many places – schools, colleges, communities, on the streets and on line. Young people are often victims of violence,



sometimes by their peers and sometimes from adults, and while in general young people said they felt safe in their communities, many had anxieties about experiencing violence in the city centre. We hope these indicators will enable Exeter to take action to protect young people from the culture of bullying and violence.

How will we know we are achieving this?

- Multi-agency campaign that involves young people in order to eliminate bullying in schools, youth projects, sports and cultural organisations
- Education programme for young people delivered through schools, colleges and youth projects to highlight ways of reducing the risks of on-line bullying
- Zero tolerance of bullying behaviour in public forums
- Young people report reduction in fear of bullying and violence

PRIORITY 4: Support young people's mental health

The organisations that work with young people identified young people with concerns about mental health as the highest priority group for intervention. Nationally, there has been a dramatic rise in young people with mental health problems in recent years and the statistics show that Exeter is no exception to this – indeed rates of reported mental ill-health amongst adolescents is higher here than in most other areas of Devon. These indicators will support young people's mental health in Exeter.



How will we know we are achieving this?

- A multi-agency strategy for supporting young people's mental health in Exeter, informed by the views of young people
- Accessible early help for young people experiencing mental health concerns including counselling and peer group support
- Support for families of young people with mental health issues, to enable them to be able to help the young person themselves

PRIORITY 5: An environment with young people in mind

In general, young people appreciated the positive environment in Exeter – its buildings, green spaces and proximity to countryside and sea were highly valued. They were bothered about congested traffic and litter, and felt that parks and green spaces could be planned with young people in mind. They were particularly concerned to make public transport more accessible for young people. These indicators would reflect young people's views.



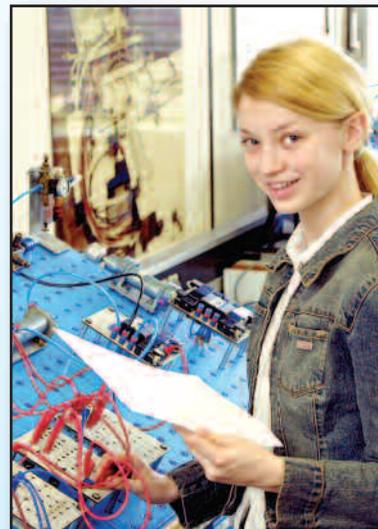
How will we know we are achieving this?

- Young people are consulted and engaged in environment and transport planning
- Bus fares and timetables are determined taking into account accessibility for young people
- Exeter's parks and city centre are more welcoming to young people, with safe spaces, better lighting and places where young people can sit and talk to friends
- Free wifi access is built in to the creation of young people-friendly spaces
- Organisations in Exeter support youth-led projects to combat litter and improve the environment



PRIORITY 6: A young people-friendly economy

Young people and the organisations we consulted recognised the importance of young people gaining the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to get into positive employment when they complete their formal education. Specific skills can include knowledge and understanding of managing their financial situation; advice about career options that matches their skills and interests, opportunities for experience in different work settings, and building their confidence in team working, communication, problem solving, creativity, entrepreneurship and leadership. These indicators provide measures for developing a young people-friendly economy.



How will we know we are achieving this?

- Consistent approach to careers advice and stronger links between higher and further education institutions and organisations working with young people
- Stronger relationships between organisations that support young people and local potential employers leading to new work opportunities for young people in the city



- More volunteering and project work opportunities that help young people develop the life skills they need
- Specific programmes and materials on financial management aimed at young people delivered through schools, colleges and youth projects

What happens next?

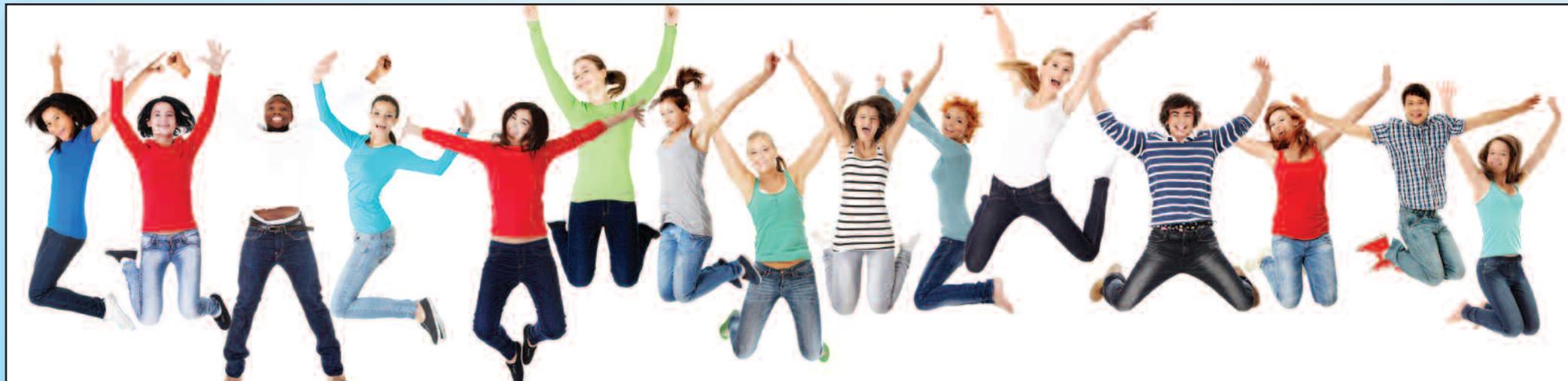
The draft report was endorsed by the Exeter Board in November 2016. After the official launch of the report in March 2017, and we expect that key organisations – public sector, private companies and voluntary and community groups – will adopt its priorities and come together with young people to achieve the outcomes that will lead to Exeter being recognised as a **'young people-friendly city'**.

It is important that young people themselves have a strong voice in how the proposed strategy works out in practice. Young people are already coming together in a forum for youth voice in the city, and they will be active partners in implementation. Space (formerly Devon Youth Service) will support young people to make a difference.

The indicators in the report, combined with actions added at the launch event will form the basis of an action plan for each priority – these will be further developed with the engagement of the relevant key agencies and organisations.

Young people and those working with them are invited to make an active response to the document which can be found on the VOYC Devon website <http://www.vysdevon.org.uk/> You can also read the background information and research summary there, and leave your comments on the proposed strategy.

We would like organisations to talk about it individually and together, and to make their actions and commitments public, so that progress on engaging with the priority issues can be monitored. You can help make it happen in lots of ways, including displaying our posters.



Partners in 'Exeter: a Young People-Friendly City'

Exeter City Council

Devon County Council

space* (formerly Devon Youth Service)

VOYC Devon

Exeter Community Forum

Devon & Cornwall Constabulary

Diocese of Exeter

