

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING - COUNCILLORS ANN HARTLEY AND STEVE CHARMLEY

1. Background

- 1.1 This Portfolio Area crosses a number of services areas which contribute to improving and maintaining the Health and Well-Being of Shropshire residents. The passage of the Health and Social Care Bill through Parliament during 2011/12 and its enactment in March 2012 gives particular significance to this Portfolio Area.

SAFEGUARDING

Children's Safeguarding

2. The achievements noted in the last portfolio holder's report have been consolidated in 2011/12.
3. These are described in detail in the separately presented Annual Safeguarding Report.
4. The social work teams have continued to benefit from their co-location at Mount McKinley and further teams have been accommodated there. These include the Disabled Children's Team, the Independent Review Unit and the Children in Need Team. These arrangements have had a positive impact on efficiency and joined up working
5. The progress in relation to staff recruitment and retention has been maintained and the support of newly qualified social workers has been prioritised.
6. The annual safeguarding group staff conference was held on 27 June 2012 and was opened by the portfolio holder. The conference involved staff in the outcomes of the Children's Safeguarding Peer Review held in May 2012 and in considering a range of important practice developments.
7. The Council has supported the development of the Safeguarding Children Board with the active involvement of the lead Member. The Board has identified three key priorities. These are:

- Compromised parenting (resulting from domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and substance misuse)
 - Communication
 - Missing children
8. The Safeguarding Group has led on a major multi agency 'Back to Basics' review of early help. This is to ensure that the accessing of early support services is straightforward and effective. The strengthening of our First Point of Contact arrangements is underway as are our triaging arrangements involving Police and Health colleagues.

9. **Conclusion**

In all, there has been good progress in 2011/2012 and the follow up work on our Safeguarding Peer Review is ensuring a dedicated focus with partners on all areas of improvement

Adult Safeguarding

10. A multi-agency Safeguarding Board has been in operation in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin since April 2009. This Board evolved from an existing adult protection committee and has responsibility for overseeing adult safeguarding matters across the safeguarding partnership. This year Shropshire Council has administered the Board and this has been chaired by the Safeguarding Group Manager.
11. Shropshire Council is responsible for ensuring the multi-agency adult protection policy is implemented effectively across the county and that all adult protection referrals are investigated appropriately. The multi-agency policy was further reviewed during 2011/2012 and performance against key indicators was within target.
12. In Shropshire, individual social workers and the team they belong to are responsible for the investigation of any concerns, but there is an independent Adult Protection Coordinator that oversees and chairs all adult protection issues that are high risk, high profile, complex, institutional or involve Shropshire Council members of staff
10. A peer review of Adult Services will take place in September 2012 and this will include a focus on safeguarding.

11. **Conclusion**

There has been significant progress on further strengthening and developing the Council's Adult Safeguarding arrangements during 2011/12. Major strengthening of relationships across the partnership has been undertaken through the development of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

CORPORATE PARENTING

12. Looked After Children's services are delivered through dedicated LAC social workers.
13. Residential services are delivered through monthly statutory visits to our three children's homes.
14. Our children's homes have continued to achieve consistently high Ofsted judgements this year.
15. The Corporate Panel is chaired by our Lead Member and supported by a core group of Members. The Children in Care Council also support this important panel which focuses on the overall services to children in our care and again areas for development.
16. The main focus currently relates to the employment and education of our care leavers and the further development of work experience placements.
17. As part of this work the Director and Lead Member have visited care leavers across the county to gain a full understanding of their care and education experience.
18. The numbers of Looked After Children in Shropshire has remained relatively stable which has enabled the continuation of good placement stability outcomes.

JOINT WORKING WITH HEALTH SERVICE

19. Background

Shropshire Council has been working closely with all its health partners throughout a year of significant change for the NHS. The Council now has representation on the board of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and partnerships are being strengthened as a result of close working on a number of projects such as the Winter 9 and the Warm Homes Healthy People Initiative which provided co-ordinated support to people at risk of death and serious health problems from cold weather. A major influence on shaping future priorities has been the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

20. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

- 20.1 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been a mandatory requirement for Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities since 2007. It seeks to identify health needs in the local population and inform the

commissioning of services based on these needs. The Health and Social Care Bill 2011 has given a renewed focus on the JSNA by giving it a central role in bringing partners together in deciding priorities. These priorities have informed the structure of the Health and Well Being Strategy, which will be key to future commissioning of health and social care services in the Shropshire.

- 20.2 Throughout 2011/12 the JSNA process underwent a significant overhaul to take into account the changes in policy and to extend its remit. Although considerable development of the JSNA has taken place over the last year, it is recognised that the process will continue to change over time and new data will become available, adding to and enhancing the JSNA. A summary document outlining priority areas identified from analysis of data and information available can be found on <http://shropshire.gov.uk/jsna.nsf>.

21. Shadow Health and Well-Being Board.

- 21.1 The Shadow Health and Well-being Board has continued to establish itself throughout the year. From April 2013, the Board will have a responsibility to ensure that the commissioning plans for health, social care and public health align. The outcome of a stronger partnership between health, local government and other key agencies will be better use of collective resources, to allow investment in preventative interventions and enhanced democratic legitimacy for health commissioning decisions.

- 21.2 Some of the key areas of work that the Shadow Board has been overseeing over the last year have included:
- Adult Social Care Transformation: Live Life Your Way
 - Unscheduled Care Strategy
 - The Ageing Well Programme
 - A review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
 - The transition of public health responsibilities from the PCT to the Council
 - Developing a Shropshire Healthwatch to represent patients' interests
 - Developing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform future commissioning of health and care services

- 21.3 The Board has agreed that it will give priority to issues that:
- Affect large numbers of people and / or are major causes of illness and death
 - Are major areas of health and social care spend
 - Have significant potential to improve outcomes.

- 21.4 The Shadow Board has also adopted a set of principles to help determine its priorities. These are:
- The number of priorities should be kept manageable
 - A balance should be struck between short term and long term issues

- A range of age groups should be covered
- Priorities should balance the focus between healthy lifestyles (wellbeing) and health and social care
- The challenges of a largely rural area should be recognised.
- The Shadow Board is also the accountable body for the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Board for Children and Adults.

21.5 The priorities currently being consulted on in the draft Health and Well-being Strategy, and arising from the JSNA, have been articulated as a series of outcomes:

- People are empowered to make better lifestyle and health choices for their own, and their family's health and wellbeing
- Better emotional and mental health and wellbeing for all
- People with long term conditions and older people will remain independent for longer
- Health inequalities are reduced
- Health, social care and wellbeing services are accessible, good quality and 'seamless'

22. Public Health

22.1 Good progress has been made over the last year in relation to the transition arrangements to move public health responsibilities, specific public health functions and Public Health staff from the NHS to Shropshire Council, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill 2012, national guidance and taking into account the formation of new organisations such as Public Health England, the NHS Commissioning Boards and Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

22.2 Senior council staff, Public Health and PCT colleagues have been working together as the 'Shropshire Joint Transition Working Group' since January of this year, overseeing the plans and progress of 6 workstreams, covering:

- Workforce, HR and Accommodation
- Governance, Information and Assurance
- Contracts/contracting
- Finance and Resources
- Communications & Engagement
- Performance Monitoring & Reporting.

22.3 Public Health staff are expected to relocate to Council premises (Shirehall) by the end of January next year. Currently, all workstreams are on track to ensure successful transfer on or before 31 March 2013. However, national funding arrangements for next year remain unclear. Shropshire has the lowest per capita shadow financial allocation in the West Midlands and one of the lowest in the country, which could have implications for future mandated public health services. Representation

about this has been made to the Department of Health and other mitigations are being planned.

- 22.4 Transition developments have benefited from operating in close partnership with both the council and CCG:
- Public Health and the council are working together to identify synergies and opportunities for integrating public health activities with existing council services and functions.
 - Public Health and the CCG have developed high level working arrangements over the last year, with some joint posts being considered as potential future developments and co-location options being identified and progressed.
- 22.5 From 2013, Public Health will work within and across the council to enable departments and services to put health and wellbeing at the heart of everything they do.

23. Healthwatch

- 23.1 The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires Local Healthwatch to be the new consumer champion for both publicly funded health and social care.
- 23.2 Local Healthwatch goes to the heart of the government's ambition for a health and care service that is centred on patients and users. Local Healthwatch will gather people's (whether current users of services or not) views on, and experiences of, the health and social care system. In this way, community views will have real influence with those who commission and provide services about what users, carers and citizens need and want from them. This can help them to be more responsive to what matters to service users and the public, and to design services around their needs.
- 23.2 Healthwatch Shropshire, through its membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board, will be an integral part of the preparation of the statutory Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy on which local commissioning decisions will be based. This gives Healthwatch Shropshire much more influence on decision-making and makes public engagement a key influencer on the strategic planning of health and care services from the start.
- 23.3 Healthwatch Shropshire will be there to support individuals by providing information and advice about access to services and choice, e.g. signposting. This will enable people to take more control of their own health, treatment and care, and understand and use the increased choices available to them.
- 23.4 In December 2011, a multi-agency working group began work to map current provision in Shropshire against the requirements for Local Healthwatch. In addition, a public engagement exercise has recently

been carried out and consisted of an online survey, structured meetings with representatives from the council's Peoples' Panel and meetings with other groups including people with learning disabilities and children and young people. The survey received 231 responses. A further 45 people attended meetings and groups to discuss Local Healthwatch.

- 23.5 These activities have informed the specification that will be used to commission Shropshire Healthwatch in late 2012.

24. Operational Joint Working Examples

24.1 Teenage Pregnancy:

The number of teenage pregnancies in Shropshire is at its lowest in more than a decade. The figures released by the Department for Education highlight how efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy rates in the county are having an impact.

Over the last few years, efforts to reach the national targets of reducing the number of teenage pregnancies have resulted in an increased multi-agency commitment across the county to provide young people with the skills, confidence and information to make important choices.

24.2 CHAT/CHAT+

CHAT and CHAT+ services have been developed to be delivered locally to young people via CHAT young person friendly GP practices, school based services and further education facilities. CHAT/CHAT+ is a multi-agency way of working, an umbrella under which professionals work together to agreed guidance to provide public health messages and confidential one-to-ones sessions with young people, where required.

24.3 Respect Yourself Relationship and Sex Education Project

The programme won the national Pamela Sheridan award for innovation in Sex and Relationship Education for and 2011/12, is recognised by government as good practice.

The programme has been developed by the Health Development team within the Council to give teachers the confidence, skills and support to deliver Relationship and Sex Education. The Council is now commissioned by SCPCT to deliver this programme in primary and secondary schools.

In 2011/12 the Respect Yourself programme of resources, support and development reached 25% of primary schools and 45% of secondary schools.

25. Conclusion

Strategically, significant work has taken place on a number of fronts throughout 2011/12 to ensure that Shropshire Council and its partners are well-placed to implement the arrangements required by the Health and Social Care Act from April 2013. However there is still much to do to develop the working relationships between partners and a culture of trust and shared responsibility that will make the Health and Well-being Board an effective partnership that makes a difference to the lives of Shropshire residents. The continued success of collaborative working arrangements at operational level provides reason for optimism that this can be achieved.

26. Sport and Physical Activity

- 26.1 In August 2012 the Shropshire Community Leisure Trust took on the management of five leisure centres – the Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre, the Shrewsbury Sports Village & Indoor Bowls Centre, Oswestry leisure centre, Whitchurch Swimming Centre, & Market Drayton Swimming Centre. The new contract and approach promises to provide both an improved and more cost effective approach to the future delivery of leisure services with savings per year in excess of £320,000. Already an ambitious programme of investment has been completed in three centres including the introduction of a brand new fitness suite at Market Drayton and a new café at Oswestry. Further investment is planned and will eventually total £1.1m. Partnering arrangements will be developed over the next year including the application of the Partnership Innovation Fund in support of social benefit projects and the work of the Trust in support of community sports development.
- 26.2 April 2011 saw the beginning of the new four year national Sportivate programme, targeting the semi sporty 14 to 25 yr olds. Many diverse sports and activities, such as Angling and Mountaineering as well as more traditional sports such as Tennis, Cricket and Rugby have been available. Working in partnership with Energize County Sports Partnership (CSP) the programme in its first year saw over 450 young people from Shropshire engaged in the programme, with many of these joining clubs or continuing with informal activities after their initial introduction to a new sport or activity.
- 26.3 September 2011 also saw the beginning of the new national Sportmakers programme (a Volunteering programme for the 16+ population to get involved and make sport happen local to them). To date over 20 Shropshire people have signed up to the programme with over 10 delivering or making sport happen on a regular basis. To support the Sportmakers programme, a local Ambassadors programme has been created to spread the word about the programme and encourage

more people to get involved in the follow up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

26.4 2011/12 was the first year that Sport England began to award funding to Places (facility development) projects.

The following Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin projects have been successful in securing funding;

Project	Lottery Funding Awarded	Sport England Funding Programme	Sports Involved
Church Stretton, Brooks-bury Recreation Ground	£50 k	Protecting Playing Fields	Football
Quatt Cricket Club	£48 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Cricket / Rounders
Meole Brace Bowling Club	£34 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Crown Green Bowls
Springfields Recreation Ground, Shrewsbury	£48 k	Protecting Playing Fields	Football
Market Drayton Cricket and Squash Club	£50 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Cricket, Squash and Disability Sport
Bridgnorth Town FC	£50 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Football
Hanwood Village Hall	£50 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Various
Border Counties Gym Club	£50 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Gymnastics
Chelmarsh Sailing Club	£36 k	Inspired Facility Fund	Sailing

26.6 A significant factor behind these successful applications was the use of the Shropshire Council Sport & Leisure Facility Strategies that were completed in 2010. The area now has a full suite of strategies covering outdoor / playing fields and indoor facilities and also an assessment of need against all sports. This has been achieved through continuous liaison with the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport.

26.7 In the last 12 months, a major piece of work has also been undertaken in Market Drayton where the business case for new and improved sports facilities has been commissioned by the Sport Drayton organisation representing a range of sporting and educational interests. The final report highlights some potential opportunities (including the potential for an astro turf pitch and improved indoor provision) which will require

continued collaboration with an emphasis on sustainability in order to bring these improvements to fruition. Energize CSP continue to support the project.

- 26.8 In 2011, 25 Community Games took place in Shropshire with a further 40 registered to take place in 2012. From week long festivals of Sport and Culture in Oswestry to one off events to celebrate the passing of the Torch Relay these festivals have been an excellent way for local communities to get together and celebrate the Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to the UK. 27% of participants reported they rarely or never take part in sport & physical activity previously so it's also an effective way to promote activities to an otherwise inactive group of people. Like the Olympics, the Community Games programme was inspired by our own Wenlock Olympian Games and with funding from
- 26.9 Cabinet Office, this has now become a national programme which will continue until at least Sept 2013.
- 26.10 In 2011/12 Shropshire was invited to join the School Games movement. Coordinated by Energize CSP, the following was achieved:
- A successful bid for £60,000 to hold a Level 3 School Games festival at Lilleshall on Tues 3rd and Wed 4th July 2012.
 - Enabling over 1,000 young people (as participants and volunteers) to take part in the first Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Level 3 School Games festival at Lilleshall on Tues 3rd and Wed 4th July 2012.
 - Setting up a School Games Youth Forum and Leadership Camp so that young people are fully involved with the organisation of our event
- 26.11 During May and June of this year it was decided to promote Shropshire Council leisure facilities by offering selected free public swimming sessions and complimentary inductions to fitness suites across the county. The timing coincided with the increased enthusiasm and excitement in the build-up to the 2012 Olympics.
- 26.12 The sessions attracted nearly 8,500 swim visits, many of which were made by first time users of the centres.
- 26.13 More than 450 people attended the fitness suite inductions which now enable them to use these facilities on a regular basis. Monitoring work is underway to identify how many of these 450+ customers have become members and regular users of the fitness suites.
- 26.14 These offers ran alongside a national free swimming initiative promoted by British Gas; again linking to the Olympic Games. As a result, 512 families took advantage of free swimming during May and June in Shropshire pools.

27. Libraries

- 27.1 During Health Information Week in early July 2012, various promotions in libraries across the county were held highlighting information and resources as well as including the Smoothie bike at Shrewsbury and Highley libraries. As the bike is cycled a smoothie is produced! This proved particularly successful with a group of children at Highley.
- 27.2 Oswestry Games Book Relay took place as part of the Oswestry Community Games in July 2012. Mobile librarian Chris Wood dashed heroically in heavy rain to all four primary schools in Oswestry. Librarians held brief assemblies where a copy of 'The Story of the Olympics' was gifted to each school courtesy of funding from Oswestry Rotary Club and Storylab the Summer Reading Challenge for 2012 was also promoted

28. Arts Development -Torch Relay

- 28.1 In May 2012 over 2 days, 20,000 school children stood on the streets and roads of Shropshire to welcome the Olympic flame. Schools took the initiative further, arranging additional sports activities, picnics or visits to coincide with the Torch Relay – so the day out for the children became a true community celebration event.
- 28.2 Events were established in all locations, with some community workshops starting in February. Local communities saw the Torch Relay visit as an opportunity to work together on something positive for their own village or town and groups of organisers emerged to make and put up the bunting, the flags, arrange tea, coffee, water, tee-shirts, art trails, souvenir clay pipes, dancing, exhibitions, bands, music and celebration.
- 28.3 It was estimated that over 40,000 were on the streets of Shrewsbury and 10,000 in Much Wenlock, with huge numbers attending all 11 of the communities through which the Torch Relay ran. Although the attendance figures were higher than anticipated, largely due to the weather and extensive media coverage of the Torch Relay, the intelligent thinking and dynamic approach taken by the Event Team ensured a safe and meaningful experience. Shropshire Council worked across many areas including Highways, Street Scene, Passenger Transport, Schools, Festivals, Tourism, Community Engagement, Communications, Risk Management and Emergency Planning, and joined with partners from the Highways Agency, PCT, Police, Ambulance and Fire Brigade.
- 28.4 Over 400 volunteer days were recorded on the 24th and 30th May. People from local communities, colleges, Shropshire Council, Rotary and Town Councils stepped forward to help steward and be part this momentous event. The media coverage which followed the visits was extensive and positive.

29. Public Protection & Enforcement

29.1 The past 12 months has been a time of significant change and Improvement for Public Protection and Enforcement. We have streamlined our service structure reducing the number of management posts down from 20 to 12 in order to protect front line services whilst delivering financial savings of £500k. We have developed a 3-year Service Strategy to focus on delivering improved outcomes for local people and businesses. We are now looking forward to delivering a range of innovative services through service redesign and transformation in the next 12 months to build on these successes.

29.2 Some specific notable successes in the past 12 months have included:

- Reducing the cost of administering our IT systems whilst increasing our capacity to provide more on-line services
- Dealing with a number of serious environmental and disease incidents to minimise the risk to local people and businesses
- Carrying out a pilot exercise to measure baseline satisfaction levels for key service areas - achieving 90%+ in some areas
- Developing a new approach to business support to ensure we provide high quality, sensible and pragmatic advice to local businesses
- Introducing new ways of working to maximise income levels particularly in Pest Control and Private Water Supplies
- Supporting the police in providing high quality information and intelligence throughout CCTV operations
- Carrying out a number of significant criminal investigations; one of which resulted in one of the largest fines - £100k - for a care home following the tragic death of an elderly resident of the home and an immediate custodial sentence of 6 months in relation to a benefit fraud case.
- Saving £238,000 for Shropshire consumers and businesses through work undertaken in connection with consumer protection legislation.
- Concluding the Oswestry' Community Alcohol Partnership (Os-CAP) that amongst other achievements resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour
- Increasing the number of rated premises under the Food Standards Agency Food Hygiene Rating Scheme; there are now 1,925 premises in the scheme

- Processing 3,258 taxi licence related applications; this being 40% of all licensing applications
- Identifying a total of £569,695 housing benefit and council tax benefit had been claimed incorrectly and taking appropriate enforcement action in each case
- Mainstreaming integrated offender management (IOM) into the Shropshire IOM as a result of the IOM pilot – Route7. Partner agencies remain committed to Integrated Offender Management as a means of reducing crime and re-offending
- Trialling, in partnership, Anti-Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conferences (ASBRACs) as a means of protecting vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour
- Formally determining 3 sites as being “contaminated land”; we secured grant funding from the government and one of these sites was remediated; the other two are in the process of being assessed and remediated
- Sampling private water supplies and with the adopted charging scheme has resulted in an increase in income from £30,000 to £70,000 and identified significant numbers of water supplies with unsafe levels of contamination and in need of improvement such as better treatment/filtration.

30. Assessment & Eligibility

30.1 Customer Pathway

There have been significant changes and positive developments in the experiences that people approaching Adult Social Care during the last year. The introduction of ‘First Point of Contact (FPOC)’ and a revised short term path way focusing on ensuring people who would benefit from a period of reablement has had real benefits for individuals. The long term path continues to ensure that individuals needing on-going support have this.

30.2 Supported Housing for Adults with Learning Disabilities

During 2011/12 a third supported living bungalow for three adults with multiple and profound disabilities was opened in Shrewsbury on the site of the old Eskdale residential hostel. A fourth development has commenced in Shrewsbury on the site of the former Mount Pleasant infant school and we are planning for further developments of this supported housing model in the Shrewsbury area during 2013/14.

We are also in the early stages of a further supported housing development in North Shropshire of 9 self-contained and one resource flat for adults with learning disabilities. This type of development supports adults with learning disabilities to live in a supported environment in a local community and also means that personal budgets can be pooled to buy shared support for example sleep in care at night.

30.3 Supported Housing for adults with mental health needs

The Elms House in Shrewsbury has been purchased by the South Staffordshire and Shropshire Foundation Trust for the redevelopment of community based mental health services. As a result new supported housing has been developed in Shrewsbury for adults with mental health needs. This seen self-contained flats and one resource flat have been built on the same site as the new supported living bungalow at Eskdale Road. This site is now a small integrated community making good use of local amenities and the adjacent Abbots Wood day centre. Centre based activities from these developments such as walking for health are now extended to the local community with a regular turn out of over 50 people on the weekly walks

30.4 Partnership Boards

The five Partnership boards for family cares, physical and sensory disabilities, adults with learning disabilities , older people and mental health continue to meet, The boards are currently looking forward to what their new roles may be as part of the wider stakeholder alliance linked to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

30.5 Personal Budgets

Personal budgets continue to be widely embraced and adopted by users of social care services . We see these being widely used by adults with learning disabilities and older people as they consider new and different opportunities to their traditional day care.

30.6 Carers

Services for Family Carers were reconfigured during 2011/12 and support re-commissioned to provide a tiered support service based on level of need. At the same time carers assessments were brought back in house to be completed at the same time as the assessment of the cared for. Carers clinics have also been introduced and People 2 people (P2P) our social work practice pilot are also trialling carers peer support groups and group assessments.

30.7 Voluntary Sector

Assessment and Eligibility continues to work closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector and is currently testing the new VCS commissioning process as preventive services are re-commissioned.

31. Business Growth & Prosperity -Active and Healthy Lifestyles - Outdoor Recreation

31.1 Walking for Health

The Outdoor Recreation Service manages and supports **47** nationally accredited, Community led, 'Walking for Health' schemes across the County. These schemes, which are **free to use**, help people, who might otherwise find it difficult to start taking exercise, to walk (in organised groups) at a level comfortable to the individual. The scheme is supported by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) who are involved in the signposting of the schemes within the **Active 4 Health** initiative. The aim is to move the service users on through gradually increasing levels of exercise until they are able to join local independent walking groups. Currently there are **294 trained volunteers** leading the walks for over **1000 service users**. In 2011 this led to over **20,000 individual walks** being undertaken by the service users. Three Walking co-ordinators work county wide, supporting the existing schemes and helping to develop more in areas where there is currently little or no provision.

31.2 Active Volunteering

Outdoor Recreation encourages **active volunteering** within the County and we have in excess of **700 volunteers** who regularly work on maintaining our rights of way, local green spaces and countryside sites. A key element of this are the **65 local Parish Paths Partnership groups** whose **325** volunteers spent over **4,200** hours working on our rights of way in 2011, a value of over **£30,000**. The service also manages 42 local play areas and 122 countryside sites and works closely with local friends and volunteer groups to manage, maintain and them.

31.3 Partnerships and Infrastructure improvements

Partnership working is key to many projects designed to enable and encourage more people to access walks in both rural and urban areas and lead a healthier life. Improving the infrastructure to enable local communities to become more active from their doorsteps is crucial. In the last year we have worked with or are still working with:

- **Shropshire MIND** and the **Fieldfare Trust** who have used service users to survey and write guides for part of the Shropshire Way extension in the north of the County.
- **The Lyneal Trust** and the **Canal and River Trust** (the old British Waterways) to increase easy access to Whixall Moss and at Colemere.
- The "Disabled Holidays" organisation in the production of an easy access guide to the County.
- **Natural England** to allow more access to Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses, both of which are internationally important habitats.

- **Shropshire Wildlife Trust** as part of the Meres and Mosses Landscape Partnership to allow more people to access and understand the area from Ellesmere to Whitchurch.
- Over the last year over **25 new circular walks** have been designed and upgraded maximising sustainable transport use and providing easier access walks for locals and Visitors alike. Ten of these start in Oswestry and add to the “**Active Oswestry**” project.
- Numerous new ‘**play** ‘ **infrastructure** projects were completed last year with a further 3 new Play areas established this year.
- Over **700 improvements** were made to the local Rights of Way network in 2011 and **37 individual improvements** made to local sites and greenspace. This asset is free to use for all. Further developments are planned here and the service is currently exploring alongside Energise and the PCT, funding opportunities to promote increased use of countryside sites as ‘Outdoor Gyms’ .