

Youth Engagement Task & Finish Review

Youth Engagement work undertaken by Community Services and Safety

The Council's Community Services and Safety teams undertake a very wide range of work that can be considered as youth engagement. This ranges from the Youth Council, which is a particular focus of this review, through to the hundreds of activities and projects that are delivered through sports, arts, dance, community and the Museum Service.

As background information to the Task & Finish Review, it is worth noting the breadth of these initiatives in order to understand the scope of local provision for children and young people and the following list gives a good overview of what is provided. However, whilst all of these initiatives provide excellent opportunities to engage with young people through mechanisms of sport, leisure and culture, for the purpose of this review these are not determined as Youth Engagement specifically, as there is less opportunity to receive structured feedback from participants.

Overview of general youth activity provision:

1) Mountain Biking – A series of 'led' mountain biking sessions are available for youngsters aged 8 – 18 years, which take place in designated areas in Epping Forest and the Lea Valley nature reserve. These sessions aim to develop discipline, skills and fitness amongst participants and encourage youngsters to understand and be part of a sports club environment. Part of this project is funded through external funding, including purchase of equipment including bikes and helmets, in order to reduce issues with accessibility. £10K funding was secured for this work from Sport England.

2) Football and Boxing Projects in Super Output Areas – Funded through a mixture of core budget and external funding, these projects are delivered in key target areas of the district and are designed to engage through sport, young people at risk of anti-social behaviour/youth nuisance. Sessions currently operate in Waltham Abbey at Town Mead and Limes Farm, Chigwell and attract between 25 – 80 young people per session for football and around 15 – 20 for boxing. These sessions are delivered by experienced coaches who promote discipline, as well as skills and fitness improvement for participants. £14,200 funding was secured for this work through the Police and Crime Commissioner.

3) Street and General Dance Programmes: These take place across the district at a range of venues and target children and young people of all ages. Initially the sessions are led and organised by Council staff, but the aim is for each group to become self-sustainable by training of volunteers who are often parents, to take over the running of them. Two special 'showcase' events are held each year to enable the young participants to demonstrate their skills and these attract audiences of around 800 family and friends.

4) Netball Clubs: Targeted particularly at teenage girls, these sessions aim to keep girls taking part in sport, by offering fun and competitive sessions outside of school within a club environment. £600 was funded by Active Essex to pump prime this programme.

5) Horse Riding and Horse Care: These sessions are funded externally and aim to provide opportunities for young people who wouldn't usually have access to this type of activity. Prices are kept to a minimum and young people get experience of a working stable, riding and how to care for horses. This programme has been funded by Sportivate funding from Active Essex.

6) Boot Camps: These special fitness classes are designed for older young people and aim to improve fitness, coordination and wellbeing, as well as discipline and concentration.

7) Inclusion programme: Fully funded through Essex County Council, this programme offers a very wide range of opportunities and activities for children and young people with additional needs and their families. A full time Inclusion Officer appointed and managed by the Council has developed a regular weekly programme of activities for local families and holiday activities and projects throughout the year. The range of activities provided through this programme include horse riding and horse care, multi-sports sessions, trampolining, swimming, arts & crafts, boccia, field trips and camping. Around 165 families are engaged in this programme, with 615 children and young people ranging from 3 - 18. Over the last 3 years, £114,600 funding has been secured from Essex County Council and key elements of the programme have been made self-sustainable, through re-investment in the programme.

8) 'Six For All' – This programme has been running since 16 April 2014 and is funded through Sport England Inclusive Fund. The main aim of the programme is to engage young people aged 14 and over with local sports clubs and activities in order to provide them with easy access to sports activities over the longer term. The work involves training local sports club staff with the skills and knowledge to either set up new sections within their clubs, or integrate young people and adults with additional needs within their core activity. £145,479 funding was secured from Sport England for this work, which will take place over the next two to three years.

9) Holiday Programmes: Hundreds of holiday activities and events are provided for children and young people across the district, during the summer, Easter and half term periods. These sessions include playschemes and 'Play in the Park' for younger children up to 11 years, through to special sports, leisure and dance sessions for 11 – 18 year olds.

10) Youth Volunteering Programme: Approx 120 young people participate in a taster volunteering day every year. Secondary schools are asked to nominate 20 pupils to attend a day which is facilitated by Community Service's staff and a range of partner agencies. Schools are able to select the most appropriate project for their pupils and this can include; working with EFDC's CountryCare Team, working the City of London at The View, assisting at ELHAP (an outdoor adventure playground for young people with disabilities) and so on.

Recently, a group of pupils from King Harold School were supported to complete a gardening project at the Lowewood Museum and forthcoming days are planned at St Clare's Hospice and within the Council's Sheltered Accommodation Schemes. Evaluation has shown how much the young people gain from these days and the majority express an interest in continuing to volunteer in the community after the event itself.

11) Museum Programmes: A pilot Youth Panel has been established at Lowewood Museum with a view to this being rolled out in Epping Forest to coincide with the preparation for the re-launch of the new EF Museum. The Young Curators programme, which is funded by the Arts Council England and Royal Opera House Bridge Project, has worked with over 50 students based at Epping Forest College and Herts regional College to provide exhibition and design skills. This has resulted in the creation of two public exhibitions which will tour the East of England region. The possibility of future work with the Colleges is being explored.

The Museum also stages 'Takeover Days' as part of a national programme, which gives young people the opportunity to take over a museum for a day. The initiative enables young people to create an exhibition, develop education activities and deliver an event. At the last of these events which was staged at Lowewood Museum, over 70 people attended on the day and 30 pupils from a local primary school also visited to take part in the activities the students had developed.

Formal Youth Engagement provided through Community Services and Safety:

In addition to the overview of generic activities provided above, there are a range of projects and initiatives that are specifically designed to more formally engage with children and young people, in order to promote key health, safety and wellbeing messages. These are as below:

Crucial Crew

This is a long-standing awareness initiative (c15 years), which is delivered to every child aged 11 years old who goes to school in the Epping Forest District. However, it should be noted, that over the last two years, this service has also been delivered to Brentwood Primary Schools as there is currently no similar provision in that area. Crucial Crew is targeted at children in Year 6 at primary Schools, as research has identified that the transition phase from Primary school to secondary school can be a difficult time for most children.

Crucial Crew is organised by the Council's Community Services and Safety staff and involves support from a range of key statutory partners from Essex Police, NHS, Essex County Council and Fire Service, as well as voluntary sector partners including drug and alcohol advisers and experts from the field of bullying and domestic abuse.

Staged over a period of two weeks in the school summer term (usually in June), Crucial Crew is generally based at Gilwell Park Scouting Headquarters in Epping Forest. This is one of the few sites in the district that can accommodate the range of scenarios that take place each day for a total of around 200 children per day. The range of scenarios staged each day are led by a range of partners and include the following:

- Online safety & Cyber Bullying – Essex Police
- Healthy relationships, in order to raise children's awareness of what a normal family should be like – Safer Places
- Road safety awareness - Essex County Council
- Water safety - RNLI
- Alcohol and drug awareness - AlcoHelp
- Bullying – Red Balloon
- Anti-social behaviour and recycling – EFDC
- Healthy living/smoking cessation – Ace
- Fire safety – Essex Fire & Rescue
- Construction site safety - Mears

The sessions are interactive and all children are encouraged to be involved in the discussions. At the end of each day, all children are brought together to take part in a quiz using hand held monitors to assess their level of knowledge gained. They are also given a Crucial Crew workbook, which contains details of the scenarios covered.

Schools are asked to feedback on their perception of the programme, through the teachers who attend with the school groups and over the years that Crucial Crew has been running it has always been seen as a very successful initiative that the children talk about when they go back in school and remember for many years.

Breakdown of Costs of Crucial Crew:

Management and organisation	In kind - EFDC
Statutory services scenario providers	In kind support

Venue hire	£8,000.00
Coach transport for children	£12,000.00 (schools contribute £6.00 per child towards costs)
Workbooks	£3230 (£1000 contribution from High Sheriffs Fund)

The schools that attend from outside of the district are charged £5.00 per booklet and £6.00 towards transport which is offset against the total cost of the programme.

Reality Roadshow

Following the success of Crucial Crew and in discussion with partners, approximately 8 years ago, it was decided to develop a similar awareness programme for pupils of secondary schools in order to reinforce safety messages at a further critical point in their lives. Reality Roadshow was therefore designed by the Council in consultation with partners and now provides an excellent resource for young people aged around 14 years old, in Year 9 at secondary school.

Reality Roadshow is actually held within each secondary school in the district, during curricular time and has a similar scenario programme to Crucial Crew, with the exception that the scenarios are much 'harder hitting' and the focus is on 6 key subjects. These include the following:

- Drugs, in particular, "Legal highs"
- Alcohol misuse
- Sexual health
- Consequences of crime, via an offender insight
- Body image and self esteem
- Cyber bullying and internet safety

The sessions are more detailed and informative than the Primary School programme and are fully interactive, encouraging all participants to contribute. Generally the scenario providers are the same, although additional providers are commissioned where necessary. A bespoke theatre production sets the scene for pupils at the beginning of the day. The script has been specifically commissioned to reflect the issues currently facing our local Epping Forest young people. The other sessions around alcohol and drug abuse contain quite shocking, but true statistics and reference and participants are given very clear messages about the dangers in being involved in any form of substance abuse.

The sessions on healthy relationships are appropriate to the participant group at a time when they may be taking big decisions in their lives and will be aware of their own family dynamics.

Feedback is undertaken with all participants and teaching staff and as with Crucial Crew, this is also very positive. In fact most of the young people will refer back to Crucial Crew and the initial impact that it had on them at Primary School.

Total Costs of Reality Roadshow:

Management and organisation	In kind – EFDC
Scenario providers:	
Internet safety (Essex Police PCSOs)	FREE

Legal highs (ADAS)	FREE
Sexual Health (NHS)	FREE
Alcohol misuse (AlcoHelp)	£200
Healthy relationships (Safer Places)	£200
Offender Insight (Tony Sleet)	£120
Venue Hire	NIL
Total cost per school	£520
*Arc Theatre	£450 *Cost recharged to school

In the last two years, £2,700 funding from Essex County Council Transitions Fund for Young People has been secured to support the provision of reality Roadshow.

Part of the Youth Strategy budget of £8,700 is used to fund the costs of Reality Roadshow and the remainder of this budget enables a small amount of targeted work to be undertaken in local secondary schools, with young people referred by their teachers because of behavioural and other issues, as detailed below.

Targeted Work in Schools:

Usually this work is undertaken over a period of 6 – 8 weeks at a regular time each week and the sessions are structured and follow a clear course outline and set of aims. The focus of this work is to encourage participants to adopt more positive attitudes and behaviours and to provide support where there are issues of drug or alcohol abuse, or Domestic Violence within the family. To date the theme of the sessions has varied considerably and some intensive work has been delivered to support young people at risk of self-harm and suicide. The staff appointed to undertake this work are therefore appropriately trained and experienced.

Over the last 3 years £50,518 has additionally been secured from Essex County Council and One Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership to undertake this work.

Budget allocation for working with Children and Young People.

It would be a significant exercise to provide an exact account of the core budgets of Community Services and Safety that are allocated specifically for young people, as much of the work that is undertaken forms part of wider projects. For example, a Community Event provided in a local ward or area will impact on young people as audiences, consultees and participants.

Therefore it is more appropriate to advise the panel on External Funding generated either specifically for work with children and young people, or as part of a wider project. This amounts to approximately £750,000 over the last five years.