

Final Project Report 2008



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Contents

- **Executive Summary**
- **Introduction/Background**
- **Aims/Objectives**
- **Operational Setup**
- **Key Activities**
- **Agencies Involved**
- **Added Value**
- **Lessons Learnt/Evaluation**
- **Appendices**



Project Report

Executive Summary

This project had been developed to bring the young people of St James Ward together to encourage partnership. V Challenge is funding the project; at first instance we were given a budget of £900, which was later reduced to £500. The project ran in the St James Ward, which includes Sholver and Derker. This project ran from September 2008 – November 2008, in this time we recruited a group of 15 young people from this area, held nine meetings with the young people and attended several events.

Introduction/Background

The main aim of this project is to set up a group of youths aged 11 to 18, who will then represent the young people of the areas Derker and Sholver. Both areas are predominately council estates, both with facilities for the youths of the areas such as a park, a community centre and a youth club. Groundwork have spent time working within both of these areas and have a strong relationship with the youths, providing a willingness by the young people of both areas to participate.

The members will be required to attend the weekly meetings that were set up to discuss relevant issues within their areas and to bring ideas to the table of how we could bring about appropriate action to target these issues. Our job will be to structure these meetings, find volunteers from the above-mentioned areas to take part in the youth forum and to formulate a 12-month plan of action for the forum. As well as this, one of the aims was to feed into the Youth Sub Group and bring the young people of St James together. Our hopes were to build the confidence of the young people, to give them the opportunity to have their voices heard and to take part in community projects.

Aims/Objectives

- To feed into the Youth Sub Group
- To facilitate group meetings on a regular basis with the support of Gemma.
- To identify projects for the group
- To write a 12 month plan with support from Gemma Russell, who works for Groundwork in the Youth Department, and to hand this over to the group

Operational Set up

Research

Firstly we researched into pre-existing youth forums and the work of young advisors so that we had a full understanding of the work involved and to get an idea of the way in which we would structure our meetings. We visited our specific districts, taking a tour of both areas to find out where the main communal places were and to find out about the history of both areas. My partner and I spent two of our evenings taking

part in sessions both at the youth centre and at one of the activity sessions already held by Lisa, a youth worker for Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale at Cheltenham Street. From this we discovered that it was going to be a challenge to get the two areas working in unison, as there is a background of problems between the two areas. We found youths that would be willing to help on our project and we held discussions at both meetings as to what they believed were the main issues in the areas and also what kind of activities/events we could hold to bring these areas together. Being in these areas gave us a feel of what the community spirit was like and what kind of expectations we could have in regard to volunteers.

Recruitment

To achieve the first tasks of planning preparing and recruiting for our Youth Forum we attended several meetings, one of those being with counsellors of the area we worked within. We communicated our ideas to them and wanted to know if we could feed into their monthly gatherings the ideas and goals of the youth forum. The idea was welcomed as it would be refreshing to have the ideas and thoughts of the youths of the area - as opposed to anyone assuming what would be more favourable for them and they would have representatives to discuss future ideas with. The second meeting was with members of the community who plan events for the evenings in the local area. From this gathering we gained an understanding of previous events, which have been held to bring the community together, interpreting how these events were taken up and what objectives stood in the way. The final meeting was more informal: Our aim was to recruit several youths to attend our first weekly meeting. From these events we gained an understanding of how the community is run, the community spirit and also some insight into what changes could potentially be made and what issues needed to be raised at our meetings. In regard to our preparation, we produced a meeting schedule in which we made sure we had allocated sufficient time to 'work and play' as to make this project exciting for the youths as well as being beneficial to the community. We also researched ice breaker issues so that the youths would be given the opportunity to interact with each other and find out more about each other's interests and backgrounds - to make them feel more comfortable when involved in debate and discussions.

Sessions

At our first youth forum meeting preparation and session plans were vital. To do this correctly, we had to take into consideration the allocated time to include fun activities and have serious discussions to gain insight into and give the youths an idea of how future sessions will be structured and what both parties can expect from the running of these sessions. I feel that the meeting went well, and we had an even balance of work and fun, from which we had the opportunity to discuss a range of topics to give us an idea of how we will be able to structure the next session. The downfall to our meeting was that there was an imbalance of children from the areas, so we found we needed to recruit more people in order to give the meetings an even playing field, which in turn will allow us to draw ideas from both areas involved in our project. Planning our sessions developed our research skills and time management skills. Carrying out the session plans was an essential part of our project, as it documented the progression of our project whilst giving us the opportunity to then evaluate the session and to make positive change to all subsequent sessions. During the first few weeks we also carried out a ten-week plan for our project to identify the very scope of it: In essence, we figured out what we wanted to have accomplished by the end of the time we had spent working on it. In this plan, we had to identify the resources that we have to use, the money we had to spend and the time that we have to carry it all out. This helped us a lot, as it gave us the opportunity

show that we were able to combine all of these elements into document form and for us to then be able to focus on the direction that we wanted to embark on.

Risk assessment had to be put in place for any session or event that took place, which taught me how to identify any risks and how to put measures in place to target these risks. I feel that it was an important part of the session planning because it gave us the opportunity to ensure that no harm would come to anyone that attended the session. It also made us realise that even the smallest and simplest things that may seem irrelevant at the starting point need to be considered.

To keep the young people engaged and also because they were working well at meetings we decided to hold cook-and-taste sessions every other week to promote healthy eating and also to give the youths an opportunity to learn how to cook a meal themselves.

Partnerships and Events

We joined up with another team that was working in the same area as ourselves. The team held an event day, which included a clean up, a discussion into improvements that they believe could take place in the area, and activities such as baking for the Halloween party that was being held in the local park. For this, we had to produce a detailed proposal for the celebration, one that included a suitable venue/location, coverage of any health and safety issues, writing of a press release to gain exposure for the work we carried out, and organisation of equipment and ingredients for the day. We needed to do all of this to ensure that the event would run smoothly and to make sure that we had full control of the event. The day itself went very well. We attended a Halloween party, which gave us the opportunity to liaise with people from the area, including members of the Council and the town's Mayor, to show them the work we have been carrying out and that we were planning to carry out in the future. For this, we put together a presentation board with pictures from the youth group sessions and the clean-up day.

Contingency Plan

We had planned to put a graffiti board in the local park, which we were denied permission for. The parks department and a local councillor believing that this would promote graffiti in the area rejected it. We were very disappointed about the decision, as from researching this idea we had found that this had proven to be a positive action in other communities. As we knew that this idea was not guaranteed for approval from the start, we did have a contingency plan, which was crucial when planning for the unforeseen. This was creating a website for the young people to hold any information on the local area, events and meetings.

Final Event

For our last event and to fulfil the aim of feeding into the Youth Sub Group we held a meeting with the group in which the young people carried out a presentation of what they had been doing for the past ten weeks. In the previous meeting the young people had voted for a Chair and Vice-Chair person and this event also gave these elected members the opportunity to liaise with the members of the group and give them their business cards, which we prepared for them. For this event they also put on a buffet for the guests to show the skills they had learnt whilst carrying out the cook and taste sessions. This gave the group the opportunity to show case the work that the St James Youth Forum had been carrying out and future plans.

Agencies Involved

- Youth Sub Group
- Positive Steps
- Stoneleigh Park Group
- Derker Wardens
- Sholver Youth Club
- Groundwork Youth Works Department

Outputs

- 15 young people signed up and attended the Youth Forum Group.
- 2 Derker Wardens attended the Clean Up Day
- 11 Members of the Youth Sub Group attended the final presentation

Land improvement (m ²)	0
Land maintained (m ²)	246 m ²
Young people involved	20.9 person days
Adults involved	13.5 person days
Schools involved	0
Businesses involved	0

Added Value

We attended a meeting with local groups to discuss the possibility of having locality forums in the area and applying for funding to support this. The work we have been carrying out with our youth forum has been recognised, and the intention is to use the work we have done as a template for other groups to look at and move toward. A draft funding application for a 12-month plan was produced with our input and was presented at the Youth Sub Group meeting to various local groups and councillors.

At our final presentation, the Youth Forum Chair-woman, Katie Cartwright, presented us with a website that she had designed for the group. This website was very impressive and showed that she believed in the work that we had done and that she was enthusiastic to carry this work on.

Another member of our Youth Forum, Ryan Smith, is also now attending the Youth Sub Group Meetings, which will give him the opportunity to share his views, ideas and opinions of the local community.

Lessons Learnt

- To have a contingency plan, which is crucial when planning for the unforeseen. This was in regards to the fact that we were not given permission to locate a Graffiti Board.
- We had one unsuccessful meeting and the key to this flaw was communication. We had communicated with the young people and they had agreed on the change of day but they had not communicated to us that there was another meeting on the same evening. Furthermore, we had not communicated with our Youth Works Department to ensure that there were

no other meetings or activities held on this evening. From this we have learnt that communication is key to the smooth running of the project, whether this is with the participants of a Youth Forum or major stakeholders in a multi million pound project! It can be difficult, as we found out on this occasion; a good communication system needs to be in place to overcome this kind of issue in the future.

- Ensuring that we continually checked back to see if the project was on track to meet objectives, and working to the same objectives
- That planning is the essential activity in project management but sometimes there are exceptions and issues that may threaten the project schedule or project costs.
- The risk assessment process helps to foresee potential threats before they become issues, allowing us to make decisions well before the threat has even occurred.
- We gained the knowledge of how to effectively manage a group of young people at our meeting using the 'work and play' approach.
- We gained experience in networking and making partnerships which will be in place to help and support St James Youth Forum.

Evaluation

The structure of the sessions that we carried out worked very effectively; we gave the young people the opportunity to learn communication and vocal skills whilst learning about cooking and healthy lifestyles.

The events that we held gave the young people the opportunity to take part in the planning and preparation and focused on different aspects of the community including clean ups, community events and feeding into community groups. This showed the community that the young people are willing to get involved and are dedicated to helping to make future improvements to the St James Ward.

Looking to the future, with the help and support from Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale we are hoping that the St James Youth Forum will continue to grow and progress, whilst also gaining more members from the Sholver area.