

# Youth Engagement through the Take Part Programme

## Evaluation Report

### March 2011

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A yellow speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom-left corner. Inside the bubble, the words 'take part' are written in a lowercase, black, sans-serif font.

#### **1 Background**

In the summer of 2010, Great Yarmouth Borough Council successfully bid for £6K from the Take Part Development Fund to integrate the aims and objectives of the Fund into its existing Neighbourhood Management Programme. In January 2011, we received an additional £3K to continue with the project.

The project has been supported by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Team working in partnership with Voluntary Norfolk who provided Neighbourhood Development Officer support. The Team has also continued to support the new groups formed out of this project.

#### **2 Aims and Objectives**

We developed a programme of activities which would provide information, advice and practical support for young people on how to become active citizens within their local community and/or the Borough. In addition to advertising the workshop was open to anyone under 25, we wanted to aim it at young people with different social backgrounds, ages and abilities so we used our links with local support groups for young people in order to attract participants eg the Benjamin Foundation and Mancroft Advice Project (MAP), together with local youth groups and statutory agencies such as Probation Services, Children's Services and the Police.

We also wanted the workshop to have a particular emphasis on the fact that, although some of the young people were already engaged in groups, there were other ways they could be active citizens even if they were not yet eligible to vote and to also support them into "real-life" local civic engagement opportunities.

The programme also provided an opportunity to influence how the Council and Local Strategic Partnership partners engage with young people in the future.

#### **3 Activities**

We engaged a facilitator specialising in youth active citizenship to deliver two 2 day workshops, one in October 2010 and the second in February 2011.

The first day of the Workshops included activities such as:

- Meeting democratic leaders eg the Mayor, Leader and the second youngest County Councillor in the Country and Council Managing Director;
- Presentations/ workshop sessions on civic pride and democratic processes;
- Promotion of volunteering opportunities and learning about the benefits for themselves and their communities;
- Information on the 3 tiers of Local Government operating within the Borough;
- Support in producing draft manifestos and/or a campaign including tools for getting your message across (ie using the media);
- Information on rights and freedoms that had to be fought for.

Participants produced brief campaigns about important issues to them such as more opportunities to hear the youth voice; the development of a Parkour area; the need for jobs; no cuts to youth services and sexual health campaigns. During the first Workshop, these campaigns were delivered to the democratic leaders, however, on the second workshop a mock demonstration was held outside the venue which was filmed and later put onto their Facebook page.

The second day of the workshop included a Houses of Parliament tour followed by a drama workshop to provide team building, presentation and confidence skills. Participants on the first Workshop presented their campaign ideas to Brandon Lewis, their local MP and met Norman Lamb, the Chief Political Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister.

An additional bespoke one day workshop was held in February for participants of the first Workshop to give them more targeted support such as teaching methods and interview techniques. This enabled them to become peer facilitators for the second Workshop by leading on an activity around the different tiers and functions of Government and on the second day of the second Workshop they interviewed the protestors on the green opposite the Houses of Parliament.

We also held two celebration evenings where we presented an officially sealed Council certificate to each of the young people to recognise their achievements.



#### 4 Evaluation

Each participant completed an evaluation form at the end of the first day. Those who attended the celebration evening for the first Workshop were also asked what worked and what hadn't worked so well to help us to refine the format and content of the next workshop. The main points from the evaluation appear to be:

- that sessions should be mostly interactive activities rather than powerpoint
- “dry” information should be taught in fun ways
- activities should be around subjects young people think are important
- incorporate new media into activities wherever possible
- mix young people up with others they don't already know
- use a “hook” to attract young people – ie going to London.

Interestingly, it would appear that some of the best parts of the workshop for some of the young people came as a bit of a surprise ie meeting the MP was declared to be “a once in a lifetime occasion” by one young person and another wants to get more involved in the different democratic structures.

An external evaluation commissioned by Inspire East suggested that in Great Yarmouth “The Take Part project also motivated individuals to change their life plans, adopt more ambitious ideas for their future employment and become more connected to people around them”.

## 5 Outcomes

The first workshop attracted 25 participants and the follow-up bespoke facilitation session attracted 10 “veterans” who also helped out on our second workshop which had 16 new participants. This gives a total of 51 participants in our Take Part activities.



As a result of the initial Take Part activity a number of outcomes have been realised:

1. **Youth Action For Change (YAFC):** The project idea emerged during the first workshop, has since started up, and the group are now meeting weekly to work towards being an official borough-wide facilitator for the youth voice. They want to change the perception of young people and campaign for increased involvement in determining mainstream activities and democratic decision making. They have all developed their skills and confidence to enable them to present to various groups and they have attended a recent demonstration on public service cuts where they interviewed County, Borough and City Councillors and demonstrators. They are also in regular contact with the MP and have their own facebook page.
2. **UP (Parkour):** The workshop facilitated the development and next steps of an existing idea. The Group has come together with statutory agencies to take the project to the next level. The group designed a new logo and are working on developing a viral campaign to launch the project and to generate wider involvement from young people in the Borough. Their aim is to create the first purpose built urban park in the eastern region.

3. **Commoners Youth Club:** An existing group who, as a result of learning campaign skills and boosting their confidence, launched a successful youth led campaign to recruit new adult volunteers to help run their youth club.
4. **1 participant (24) started to help out at the MP's constituency office** and has now secured a Future Jobs Funded post through Voluntary Norfolk working within the GYBC Neighbourhood Management areas.
5. **Another person (18) has also secured a FJF post** around providing community support/organising.
6. **A group of vulnerable adults want to campaign** for support and funding to provide a community gym at their hostel.
7. **Aspirations for several young people have changed ie hairdresser to a community development worker and an interest in possibly becoming a politician.** Another 3 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop said on their evaluation forms that they wanted to get into community development work and actively campaign on a number of issues including healthy eating and legalising cannabis.
8. **Participants were asked to do mini-campaigns on what was important to them these included creating jobs and sexual health awareness** – a format that would be really helpful to ourselves and our partners in understanding what young people are interested in and how to reach them.
9. **Provided confidence for a large number of young people** – ie one young girl didn't say anything in the first workshop but constructively challenged the Leader of the Council on an issue at the next workshop.
10. **We engaged 3 students through the local FE college to film the first workshop which helped with their course work,** giving them valuable experience of being commissioned to do a relevant piece of work.
11. **Established much stronger links with local agencies** such as MAP and Benjamin Foundation and Probation Services.

There are also a number of even softer outcomes/anecdotes:-

1. One young man who is a youth offender and known to be unreachable by many statutory agencies joined halfway through the first day and was totally engaged in the activities - he is now linked into the neighbourhood management programme and the UP project and is actively encouraging other young people to join. As part of the evaluation we asked do you feel like you could be more active in your community and he responded – yes, if I try hard – this is totally amazing bearing in mind his background and the fact that he has been involved in gang culture and anti-social behaviour.

2. Two young people said they were interested in researching more about England's history after our trip to the Houses of Parliament where they learnt all about Henry VIII and his wives and daughters.
3. A vulnerable young man living in supported housing dipped in and out of the 2 day workshop – he even laid on the floor of the Houses of Parliament and yawned, but later admitted that he had found it interesting and asked when he was going to receive his certificate because he'd never received one before!
4. 3 young people had never been to London.
5. Another young man said he found it a lot more interesting than he had thought and enjoyed the opportunity to be with other young people because he doesn't have any friends.
6. A general conversation on the bus to London led to one of the young people engaging in a detailed discussion around gender equality issues and positive discrimination with one of the neighbourhood development workers.

## **6 Value for Money**

The £9K grant provided not only the two 2 day workshops, the bespoke workshop and evaluation evening but also the provision of a branded tee-shirt, goody bag and certificates. £1,500 was also allocated to the two new groups YAFC and UP to continue supporting their development into active citizens.

On the basis that there were 51 participants and £7,500 available (£9K minus £1,500 for the continued development of YAFC and UP) this gives a spend of approximately £147 per person.

We feel this represents real value for money and a high level of return on the investment based on the outcomes achieved, particularly bearing in mind the high levels of dependency of some of the client groups such as the Benjamin Foundation and MAP. Also, if we were to undertake a Social Return on Investment exercise on the project as a whole, it is likely this figure would show a much greater return in terms of the wider social element than just for the individual, for example the number of volunteering hours and the investment back into the local economy on the basis that wherever possible local companies have been used to support the project.

Embedding the programme across currently funded support provided by the Borough Council and Voluntary Norfolk through the Neighbourhood Management programme has enabled 1:1 development support to be given to individuals, projects and the group work.

The project also provides added value through:

- utilising links with the Target Opportunities Programme and related pre-employment support (Working Neighbourhoods Funding). Two participants have subsequently become employed through the Future Jobs Fund into neighbourhood development posts.
- supported links to the Volunteer Centre with support around accessing additional volunteering and community opportunities.
- stronger links have been established with some local agencies which will help with future partnership working.

## **7 Next Steps**

Using the evaluation results and feedback, a programme of post workshop activities has been considered which will help to embed the learning of the Take Part programme eg:

- There is potential for reshaping engagement mechanisms between young people and the Council (see evaluation results). We are hoping that closer working between YAFC and the Council will lead to a co-facilitated session with Cabinet members on opportunities for youth involvement in mainstream activities and decision making.
- The development of a “how to” guide for young people who want to know more about local involvement opportunities.

YAFC, UP and the Commoners will continue to receive support from the Neighbourhood Management Teams and regular contact will be maintained with partners to look for further opportunities to work together.

There is also an opportunity for our statutory partners to use the lessons we have learned and to use the contacts we have made eg YAFC, Benjamin Foundation and MAP, to develop targeted engagement opportunities and campaign ideas in the future.

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