

Engaging Young People – Southbrook Estate, Daventry



July - August 2006

Summary

Working in partnership with a number of stakeholders, including Southbrook Community Association, Vibrant Fibre and Threshold Studios, to develop a short term youth programme of activity on the Southbrook estate to raise the profile of the issues around the lack of youth provision in the area. Southbrook estate is situated less than 200 metres from Daventry Town Centre and that suffers from a number of deprivation issues, many of which relate to the provision for young people.

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation had been working on the estate to support the Southbrook Re-Growth Team take forward the Southbrook Estate Neighbourhood Action Plan.

The Southbrook Re-Growth Team is a sub-group of the Southbrook Community Association and is made up of local tenants and residents; its main role is to support neighbourhood renewal in the area. The group has been in existence for over a year and has achieved a number of positive changes on the estate, yet as a grass roots group it currently needs continuous support.

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation supported Southbrook Community Association to develop the skills and capacity of the Re-Growth Team; through helping to establish projects and actions that the group felt were key to delivering the Southbrook Neighbourhood Action Plan. The Neighbourhood Action Plan has a strong emphasis on supporting young people and young people's projects - as it is believed that these are key elements to regenerating the estate.

Young People in Southbrook

Some of the key actions in the Neighbourhood Action Plan relating to young people, that Southbrook Re-Growth Team feel that they can play an integral role in, are:

- Further consultation with young people on the estate
- Developing a strong relationship between local partners and Dantre Secondary School
- Confidence Building and Trust Building activities for young people
- Developing a pilot programme of engagement and involvement with young people and agencies
- Supporting social activities.

Working with Southbrook Re-Growth Team, NIF and Northamptonshire County Council's Regeneration Officer have been involved in reviewing the need for youth provision, particularly with the summer months approaching. Under the youth programme, NIF and Northamptonshire CC started to look at the possibility of providing summer activities; and to consult with young people through these.

The Re-Growth Team wanted to see activities provided which were appealing to young people, and to ensure that young people could clearly see how they would benefit from being involved. NIF had explored the opportunities of engaging with young people through a variety of different tools and techniques that were different to the usual ways of engaging young people.

We then approached Threshold Studios.

Threshold Studios

Threshold Studios is a not-for-profit, social enterprise dedicated to widening access and participation in creative media opportunities as a catalyst for social change. With a firm commitment and passion for inclusion through participatory arts, Threshold has been working with disengaged young people and communities for over 8 years.

Threshold has a policy of working with workshop leaders with similar life experience to the groups they are working with, as this provides them with positive role models. They also offer an open door policy for mentorship to participants hoping to contextualize their experience and highlight positive life choices, in so doing encouraging new paths for progression either through career choices or creative activity.

Working in partnership with Threshold Studios, an exciting project was developed using a number of engaging activities with local young people, including an arts based initiative using the context of the Southbrook estate as a focus. The overall aim was to encourage community cohesion and self esteem on an estate where youth activities have been lacking for some time, and in order to also highlight the lack of existing youth provision in the area. Arts intervention in this vein has been recognised as a valuable activity to promote a positive and engaging Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The activities have also provided the DCLG programme with an opportunity to further consult with the young people who participated.

Past Projects

A partnership on the Southbrook Estate ran an arts project for young people in 1993 and used the subway as a focus to develop murals which are still present with little vandalism to date. Since then, there has been little momentum in terms of youth provision. One factor which also amplifies the lack of provision is the main open space area, which includes a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area), which has been fenced off to the public and is only used through the school.

Through this arts project, we wanted to show young people that they are part of the Southbrook community and have a right to participate and to express themselves in the community.

Project Aims

Working in partnership with Threshold Studios, the programme aims were defined as:

- to facilitate activities for younger residents to identify and celebrate culture and expression
- to build self esteem and confidence in expression through the arts
- to nurture young peoples' confidence in getting involved and contributing to their community
- to address the breakdown in relationships between the younger and older members of the community
- to engage young people in activities in a positive and safe environment
- to undertake further consultation with young people using the participatory tools such as the ideas wall

The stages of the youth programme were as follows:

Stage 1

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation worked with Threshold Studios and the Southbrook Community Association to work up the programme for delivery,

familiarise ourselves with the area and to look at past issues relating to young people.

Stage 2

Once the programme had been established the following steps were taken:

- Marketing campaign – recruiting both young residents and, using the Youth Service flyers, leafleted hard to reach young people at key locations and prominent positions where young people hang out.
- Inviting young people to participate by meeting them where they ‘hang out’
- Local promotion of activities such as:
 - Break dancing
 - Aerosol Art
 - Urban Photography
- Confirmed details with photographer for Micro documentary – this was filmed alongside the activities to be shown at the celebration / exhibition event at the end of the project. Every young person involved will be given a copy as a lasting reminder of their achievements and members of the community, with an interest in film making, will be invited to shadow and assist.
- Celebration Event – using a community space to show the aerosol art pieces, display prints of the photography and screen the micro documentary.

Stage 3

Delivery of Programme

Activity	Outline	Positive Outcomes
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The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

Activity	Outline	Positive Outcomes
Break dancing	Bringing in professional break dancers and workshop leaders to give young people a chance to learn new skills and moves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although not necessarily seen as a consultation or tool, we used this as a way of initially engaging young people's interest in the project and as a method of building up young people's confidence. This was also used to help build up a positive relationship between the young people and ourselves • Enjoying activity responsibly in their own environment
Aerosol Art	Using professional aerosol artists and workshop leaders to assist young people create bespoke aerosol artwork, based on the creative brief of life in Southbrook. Using the context of Southbrook, young people were given the opportunity and freedom of expression to show the positive and negative aspects of their estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New skills that they can develop safely and responsibly • Changing the perception that aerosol art can only be produced by defacing public property - it can be given a context and used for consultation. • Raising self-esteem • Improving relationships between younger and older members of the community by raising young people's pride in their estate.
Urban photography	Using professional workshop leaders and photographers as mentors, we will get young people to think about spaces in Southbrook and how to represent them in a way that shows their feelings about them. There would also be an attempt to link up with the local Secondary School on the estate allowing young people to use the skills learnt as part of a national curriculum activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased creativity and new skills • Raising self-esteem • Changing young people's perceptions of their surrounding areas • Prints for each participant of their best shots • Photographic equipment to be left on the estate so they can develop skills.
Microdoc	Short documentary made by professional film makers of the activities and achievements of the young people to be shown at the celebration event - each participant will receive a copy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Souvenir of the young people's achievements • Documentary evidence of what Southbrook are achieving
Celebration event	Event and screening where the young people will get an opportunity to showcase their artwork and see what they have achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the self esteem of the young people • Strengthening relationships between young people, their peers and the older members of the community
Subway Improvement Project	Improve the visual impact of the existing subway and also give young people a sense of ownership of part of their estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was hope that the work from the aerosol art could be added to the subway mural. However, due to funding implications this was not feasible at this time.

Key Learning Points

One key learning point within this project has been the fact that agencies and service providers are constantly asked to engage young people in regeneration activity and consultation; but it is sometimes difficult for young people to see how they will benefit in the short term and the ways of engagement can at times be uncreative. Here the tools used, although not particularly novel, are innovative and serve a number of purposes:

- Fun for young people.
- Can be used as a good incentive to attracting young people.
- Fit a number of learning, support and individual objectives.
- Can be used as consultation tools or provide the opportunity to be combined with consultation activity.
- Help build relationships between young people and agencies - as the tools are about doing things with young people and not to young people.

Daventry District Youth Forum

Whilst undertaking this process of engagement, Daventry District Council was offering the chance for local young people to have their say by becoming youth representatives on Daventry District Youth Forum.

Daventry District Youth Forum was set up in 2005 to involve young people in citizenship issues and to encourage them to take an interest in getting involved in the community. In supporting the regeneration of local estates, Daventry District Council encouraged representation from Southbrook – but the young people involved in this project did not, at the time, want to commit to this opportunity.

It is hoped that, in the future, these activities (which are expected to continue through Dantre School and Threshold Studios in 2007) will encourage some of the participants to come forward as representatives on this Youth Forum. It is also envisaged that young people on the District Wide Youth Forum will work with Connexions and Detached Youth Workers to discuss potential projects and spend.

In October 2006, Daventry District Council staff who were involved in this project decided to use a large proportion of their Money 4 Youth funding for a graffiti wall. It is understood from discussions with the Northamptonshire Regeneration Officer that the positive aerosol art project on Southbrook had some influence on the allocation of this funding.

Learning

The main key learning point to highlight at this stage has been that any area that urgently requires youth support services and youth provision requires both transparency of what can be expected by agencies in terms of youth provision and a more sustainable approach to short term youth programmes.

Difficulties and Barriers

The overall project was initially aimed at attempting to engage young people who were 'hard to reach' and the project was intentionally only publicised through word of mouth and through leafleting.

This created a number of issues including that the process of young people participating was 'hit and miss' and it was also difficult to assess whether the young people who did participate were actually 'hard to reach'. Without working with a key captive audience it has also been difficult to get young people initially involved.

Sustainability

A pilot DCLG funded project, it emphasised ways of working with young people, primarily to highlight the lack of existing youth facilities on Southbrook at this time and it was felt that there was no co-ordinated approach to youth provision.

There are still some clear issues around youth provision on the Southbrook Estate with limited out of school controlled provision. The lack of youth provision was also made clearer when Southbrook Community Association undertook a community consultation in October 2006 which highlighted the issues around access to play space, open space, youth facilities and out of school support / outreach.

However, there have been some positive outcomes, including raising awareness. The project has acted as a catalyst for youth facilities in the area and the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation was involved in different approaches to youth engagement.

Public Service Agreement Target(s)

- Make places safer and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Engage and empower local people and communities
- Provide appropriate provision for children and young people, and tackle inequalities