

# Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



## Working to keep young people safe in Hackney

Area: Hackney, London Borough, East London, population approximately 207,000

“In the summer holidays there are too many days and not enough distractions. ‘Gang’ members can speak to these children and young people everyday; they can offer to meet their basic needs and what seems like a way out. If there is little else on offer – they are likely to take it.” – **Alex Dodd, Extended Schools Cluster Co-ordinator, December 2007**

### Challenges

- Keep young people safe/away from gangs during the summer – in excess of 30 gangs in Hackney, some of the participants’ parents have been murdered by gangs
- Provide for their basic daily needs such as food
- To get young people to travel to the scheme in a background of genuine fear of moving around borough
- Planning, setting up and opening the schemes in just five weeks

### Key Actions

- Got funding from local housing association (HA)
- Approached local schools to target vulnerable children and young people and identify potential teaching staff – all employed locally, many teaching assistants (TAs)
- Approached Primary Care Trust (PCT), local businesses etc for help – PCT to fund sports
- Approached schools who sent children to donate resources such as play equipment
- Involved voluntary groups such as NSPCC to work with young people
- Set up two schemes, thanks to HA funding, one targeting eight to 10; one 10 to 13/14 year olds
- Four weeks after funding granted, two schemes launched for five weeks over the summer in two different locations
- Worked with local press to get publicity for the scheme
- For younger children set up healthy eating tuck shop – helped with maths and sense of responsibility re running it
- Culminated in ‘Proud’ day for young people and families
- Now looking for funding for spring half term and Easter

### Key Implementation Tips

- Getting the right staff in place is vital to make this work – local staff/local needs
- Plan activities around staff passions – gardening, cooking, swimming etc
- Provide a wide range of activities/trips to keep young people interested
- Keep your timetable adaptable so you can take opportunities as they arise
- Knock on as many doors as you can, don’t ask for cash you won’t get it, ask for something they can do instead
- Be flexible and change to meet sponsors funding criteria
- Local businesses are a better bet than branches of national businesses
- Try to involve the wider family
- Make room in the budget to get and keep admin support
- Provide training for staff – they need to understand this is a non compulsory summer scheme – not a classroom
- Whatever you do, always have a back up plan

### Impact

It is very difficult to judge the long-term impact of one such scheme among all the initiatives and noise in children and young people’s lives. But it is fair to say that those involved in the schemes were less at risk of being influenced by or joining gangs than they otherwise would have been last summer. They had a safe place to go where their input was valued and appreciated. The feedback from the young people themselves was fantastic and what is more, even if they knew they were in trouble, they kept coming back.

By the end of the scheme many of the participants had more confidence and were less scared to move around the borough. For some the influence was more tangible with one child moving back to mainstream education from a pupil referral unit and for another, moving and settling well into a new school.

Sustainability and long-term funding are major issues and ones not yet resolved. While the support of local businesses and voluntary organisations is great to provide varied day to day activities, the funding such as that provided in 2007 by the housing association, is needed again to get the scheme off the ground in the first place.

### To find out more, contact

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