

Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



Engaging the voluntary sector

Area: Enfield, London Borough, North London, population approximately 280,000

“Without the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) at the heart of the process many of the young people we engaged with would have remained marginalised. Our networks enabled us to quickly and effectively access the hardest to reach so that their voices and opinions were heard and are shaping the future of youth service provision in Enfield” - **Claire Whetstone, Chair Youth Matters Steering Group, November 2007**

Challenges

- Involving the VCS – the main provider of children’s and young people’s services in Enfield
- Building capacity across the board
- Working with limited and short-term funding
- Reaching and engaging the very hard to reach

Key Actions

- Set up VCS chaired Youth Matters’ Steering Group
- Set up Children’s Trust sub groups – each chaired by a different agency to maximise buy in
- Used VCS established networks and credibility to access and engage hard to reach young people
- Interviewed more than 1000 young people to determine their views on the borough, to map deprivation and to prioritise spend.
- Engaged in a variety of accessible and fun ways e.g. voting machines; drama workshops
- Taught young people to put funding bids together, to cost projects and determine need
- Set up diverse Young People’s Panels – members nominated by each agency – all bids to go through it

Key Implementation Tips

- Access established/credible networks through the VCS
- Take advantage of VCS’s less hierarchical and flexible ways of working to get things done
- Take time to plan strategically across all agencies
- Link multi-agency gains to each agencies own agenda – have collective and specific agendas
- Capacity build through genuine multi-agency working
- Alignment into Youth Support Service – support Connexions changes
- Identify a high level local authority champion (vital on VCS led panel)
- Develop specific mechanisms to engage the hard to reach
- Consult young people on the specific not the general – ask only if you are prepared to change

Impact

Having the VCS at the heart of the process has enabled Enfield to quickly and effectively access and engage many young people, including those from traditionally marginalised communities. These young people are now among those responsible for the development of youth services in the borough.

Services such as a pilot transport scheme for disabled young people, which will enable them to book transport at weekends and have the freedom to go places without parents or carers. A football club run by Spurs at a special educational needs school in the borough - the idea and bid put together by one of the pupils.

As well as identifying what services they want, they have also identified potential barriers. For example, many young people said they felt unsafe travelling around the borough. So Enfield launched its Community Help Point Scheme (CHPS). Businesses signing up to the scheme – who are Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked and child protection trained by the council – have a CHPS logo in their window identifying their premises as a safe place for young people.

It is early days and more needs to be done. Issues over capacity and funding remain challenging but anecdotally at least many young people in Enfield say they feel much more involved in the process.

To find out more, contact

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