

Waterboys September - November 2008

Introduction

Through partnership working with Social Services leaving care team and Dreamweavers, a Subsidiary of Bradford Motor Engineering project (BMEP). HALE have been able to develop and run a programme focusing on health and other social issues two days a week lasting for 10 weeks using a canal barge as a venue.

The aim of the programme was to offer some of the hardest to reach and engage young men, the opportunity to gain accreditation by completing a full crew members training course available through Dreamweavers. Throughout the programme various aspects of informal learning around health and social issues has taken place, with many participants beginning to recognise and acknowledge barriers that prevent young people making healthier life choices.

"It's hard to live a healthy lifestyle when you have very little money and your mates encourage you to spend what you have on booze and fags". Adam

The participants have taken part in discussions regarding diet and nutrition, exercise, smoking, substance use/misuse, sexual health and the disadvantages of getting involved in criminal activities. Several of the participants spoke openly about their experiences within the criminal justice system and how they wanted to make changes, but felt unable to find a path out of this lifestyle. Through speaking so openly individuals have begun to develop new friendships and take advantage of social invites, helping them get involved in positive social activities.

"I went to Dickies last night and he has shown me how to get online and use facebook, so I can meet new people". Andrew

All the participants live on low incomes and for many of these young men the programme has given them further opportunity to gain support in independent living, by taking part in cooking sessions, learning how/where to shop and address money management. Participants have also been able to explore alternative pathways into employment, education and training through inviting a careers adviser to spend time with them during the programme. Various other agency workers spent time with the group and some participants have begun to make some positive decisions with regards to their futures.

"I want more for my daughter than I ever had and getting involved in this has helped me start looking at my future and what I really want to do with my life". Danny

All participants have worked well together and have begun to recognise and identify their strengths and weaknesses when working as part of a team. This has brought about a good use of communication and delegation skills and given each participant the opportunity to peer mentor, whilst ensuring their own tasks have been completed.

Project Report

Increased aspirations

By taking part in the waterboys programme participants have been able to complete the full crew course, which is an accreditation around boat handling skills. The course entails learning the basics of managing a boat, how to navigate the waterways system, health and safety legislation of boat handling, checks and procedures needed to ensure a boat is in good maintenance, correct navigation of locks and other aspects of working within a boat project. This has given them the opportunity to experience alternative employment avenues and begin to recognise their own interests and how these can be met within the employment they seek.

A careers adviser from EASA spent some time with the group to look at gaining entry into further education and employment. Lots of information on opportunities to gain entry into the employment market was provided and some of the participants have made arrangements to go to the EASA office and look at CV building and take part in a job match programme that the service provides. Three participants who were recently signed up to new deal through the unemployment office have been offered work placements with Dreamweavers. This will give them further opportunities to develop skills already learnt through accessing the programme and learn new skills that could be beneficial for future employment

Ability to make better decisions around sexual health

Within the programme the boys have had the opportunity to work with specialist health workers such as Nic Davies and Saeed Khan from the PCT health development team, on issues around sexual health and behaviour. This aspect of the programme gave participants the opportunity to talk about their experiences of sex and relationships. Many members of the group were very open and honest about their unsafe sex practices and expressed concerns about their own health in regards to STIs. From this information we were able to offer a Chlamydia screening service and all participants took part, but it was explained to the group that they should access a full sexual health screen if they were concerned and information on these services was provided. A contraceptive kit and condom demonstration complimented this aspect of the programme, and through using the Frasier guidelines condoms can and were distributed. This gave the participants the opportunity to look at their own sexual behaviour and make informed decisions around changing their own attitudes to unsafe sex practices and future relationships.

Ability to make decisions around substance use/misuse

Also provided was a day with workers from the young people's drug and alcohol service where the participants gained an accreditation on drugs and alcohol awareness. This was very relevant to this group as most of them use drugs and alcohol within their recreation time. The group were able to contribute their experiences of drug and alcohol use and recognise safe and unsafe situations that can arise when involved in this type of lifestyle. The course gave the opportunity to ensure the participants could make informed decisions when taking part in drug and alcohol activities and offered them support in accessing services that could help if they thought they had developed a dependency. The activity was well delivered and received. It did

not come from an autocratic angle and gave the group a safe and secure environment to explore safe drug and alcohol usage. Other information was provided on other services for young people around different social issues. The participants really enjoyed the session and had fun whilst taking part in informal learning.

Increased environmental awareness

The programme has given participants the opportunity to become involved in many different pieces of work being carried out around environmental issues. The participants have worked alongside the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to help clear and create safe pathways for local people to access the canal and surrounding areas. They have also taken part in providing bat/bird boxes and worked on providing Otters with safe habitats to help maintain the natural wildlife of the area. During this type of work, individuals began to understand the importance of protecting our wildlife and environment and started to point out other patches along the towpath that needed attention. After a couple of weeks into the project some participants started catching the train to Shipley and walked along the canal to the boat mooring. Whilst doing this they started to report such things as fly tipping and other rubbish that is left by the waterway. Showing that they were concerned about the neglect of the waterway and that they were fully engaging with the project. The participants also took part in a milepost ceremony that Dreamweavers were conducting. (Please see attached sheet for feedback from Dreamweavers Manager).

Increased knowledge of local services

All participants were informed of services available in the area statutory and non – statutory. Discussions were held around services that offer support around housing needs such as Bradford City Centre Project, Shelter and Night stop. The participants were given the HALE guide to what services there are available in the Shipley area and information on the youth café and the teen health project. Other services information was offered such as, housing benefit, Job centres, council departments, local Citizens Advice Bureau, benefit agencies and local education institutions.

The Manager from the local youth café joined the group for a day of environmental work. He was very impressed with the groups commitment to the work they were doing and found the project very valuable in giving these hard to reach young people the opportunity to enjoy and achieve whilst also addressing other outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda. From this time spent with the group the youth café manager has identified that some of the participants would be beneficial to the youth café management board and he has invited them to go along to find out what it would entail. One participant would like to volunteer within the café and is currently waiting for the next open college network community nutritional skills course to be delivered, so he can attend and gain a certificate in food and nutrition skills.

Increased healthy living knowledge

Whilst taking part in this programme participants also got the opportunity to learn and put into practice food and nutrition skills. Each participant took part in a cook and eat activity, where they cooked lunch for the whole team. Through this activity they were able to recognise that cooking homemade dishes is not very difficult and it is much cheaper and healthier than relying on convenience food or takeaways. Participants were able to learn new skills and also develop

their knowledge of nutrition. Some participants commented that they do not eat socially very often and that they had enjoyed this element of the programme.

Improved social networks

Most of the participants have become good friends and have begun spending social time together. One participant who was experiencing some problems within his social circle was befriended and invited out on many occasions by other participants, so he didn't have to rely on his present social contacts. By the end of the course the participants were communicating much better with one another and some solid friendships have been formed.

Other aspects

During the programme participants have been making their own remote control model boats. A participant from the first waterboys programme has been delivering this piece of work and has developed a small instruction booklet that can be used for future programmes. This aspect of the programme gave participants the opportunity to learn about what makes a good sailing vessel, how to build a remote control boat, how wind etc can affect a sailing vessel and by adjusting certain aspects of their models how they could avoid their boat capsizing or being destroyed by weather conditions. It has also given participants a memento of their time spent on the waterboys programme. For the instructor it has given him experience of peer mentoring and the opportunity to experience delivering information within a professional capacity. The entire group have commented that he was really good at showing them what to do and why/how certain adjustments needed to be made to their vessels. This participant is one of the group that has been offered work placement with Dreamweavers.

Difficulties and challenges

This programme has run well, although there were some issues regarding behaviour. On many occasions some participants had been taking part in rough and tumble play. These were young men who live and learn from the streets and imposing impossible restrictions would not have helped and would have probably created barriers to them fully partaking/experiencing the programme. Therefore, it was decided as a team, to deal with the issue by presenting the group with extra groundrules, explaining that any future bodily contact would result in that/those participant/s being excluded from the programme. This worked well and the play fighting stopped. There were also issues of bad language that needed addressing. Once again the group was spoken to and asked to keep their bad language to a minimum. Due to some personal and project based issues 3 participants left the programme early.

This was a large group and it has been identified that future groups need to be smaller, i.e. 6 participants, as at times some participants felt they were not instrumental in running the boat.

Participants comments

"I look forward to coming on a Wednesday and Thursday. It's better than sat on my own in my room". Luke

"I love doing the cooking and I have learnt loads. I hope I get a place on the nutrition skills course". Richard

"When I first came to the boat I thought I would just doss about, but I've learnt loads and don't want it to end". Andrew

"The drugs and alcohol session was great and I didn't mind talking about what I get up to and I've learnt lots". Jason

"I haven't had a spliff since I did that drugs thing the other week, because I don't want to end up schizophrenic". Andrew

"I'm going to prison soon, but by spending time with you lot I know I need to make changes if I want to have a decent life". Liam

"I feel so much calmer these days and I'm sure it's because I come here". Richard

"I cook at home now and I even invited my sister and her kids round one night for tea". She couldn't believe I'd cooked it". Adam

"I've got so much out of this course and I can tell you workers do it from the heart, not just because you get paid". Danny

"It's been a pleasure working with the lads and they have all shown they are capable of a hard days graft and can behave maturely". Paul, staff member

"Just watching the lads get stuck in is great and they are all really supportive of each other. They seem to grow a little each session". Rachel, staff member

As with all HALEs work the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda has been addressed and there have been some significant outcomes.

Staying safe = young people are able to make informed decisions as to their physical and mental health through gaining knowledge of safe sex practices and substance use/misuse.

Enjoy and achieve = Attend and enjoy. Through attending participants achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation whilst building further social skills

Make a positive contribution = Participants began to develop positive relationships, develop self-confidence and successfully begin to deal with life changes and challenges. Through working with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust participants have helped create some safer walkways and support the natural habitation of local wildlife.

Be healthy = participants took part in informal discussions about health particularly sexual health and substance use/misuse. Practical cook and eat sessions gave the participants the opportunity to discover healthier ways of eating and gain knowledge in nutrition, which has helped them make some small changes in their diets.

Achieve economic well-being = Although none of the participants have gained employment through taking part in the programme. Some have started to recognise that their social interests could be included when looking at the type of employment they seek. Three participants are now on work placement with Dreamweavers and it may be possible that employment opportunities may arise through this.

Feedback from Professionals who have worked with the Waterboys

Hi

Just a swift note to say that on Thursday the water boys supported Dreamweavers in the installation of mile posts ceremony.

They drove the 2 boats and generally interacted with the guests. There were about 2-3 dozen people and the conduct of the boys was excellent. They received many favourable comments - some given to them personally - and some fed back to me. Most noticeable was the boat handling skills - particularly of Adam with the Lady Rani.

I spoke to the group personally at the end of the day so they are aware of how impressive their behaviour was.

Cheers Trevor
Dreamweavers Manager

WATERBOYS PROJECT.

In my opinion the Waterboys course has been a great success and the partnership between H.A.L.E., the Leaving Care Service and Dreamweavers has been a very positive collaboration. Between us we have actively engaged 9 young males with turbulent lifestyles, behavioural and social difficulties and some with history of criminal tendencies.

I believe we have made a very positive contribution in these young people's lives and have put a lot of hard work and input into improving their social and personal development. We have actively engaged them for three days a week and provided some basic learning and a routine which they would not have otherwise had. Between our three agencies we have instilled to some degree the values and ethics of working together as a team and as individuals. We have managed to get these young people working and delegating together all towards a common goal and have helped them to improve some of the life skills needed for positive personal development. We have encouraged domestic skills such as cooking and cleaning, making informed choices with regards to healthy eating, budgeting and planning, helping one another with various tasks and interacting with members of the public whilst providing a service. They have made some positive contributions to their surrounding environment with clean-up days for the local wildlife trust and general tidying up of the waterways.

Rachel Greene has also provided some very beneficial, informative and educational workshops for the group that have raised some awareness about some very real issues that these young people will encounter on a regular basis such as; sexual health issues and awareness, drug and alcohol issues and awareness. Rachel has introduced some visitors from local youth projects

and careers advisors which could be beneficial to the young people involved with the project. Hopefully these sessions will help these young men to make more informed and sensible choices with regards to their health, development and everyday lives.

During their time on this course we have dealt with many issues that have arisen due to the dynamics of the group. We have had to deal with behavioural and anti-social problems, issues that have arisen surrounding bullying and issues concerning illegal substances. We have tackled these issues constructively and professionally and have helped the young people to understand the consequences of such actions and behaviours.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this project and would happily be involved in the future. I have enjoyed working with Rachel and have found it to have been a positive and beneficial learning experience all round.

Mark Hofsteede, (Leaving Care Service).

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Date: 29 June 2009

Dear Rachel Greene

RE: Waterboys 22nd October 2008

I just want to take this opportunity to give my thanks for allowing me attend the Waterboys project session on the Leeds to Liverpool canal. I was not sure what I was letting myself in for, but found I had a great experience and one where I learnt a great deal from both the young people and from the staff members within the project.

It was great to see the young people gaining accreditation in recognition of their learning whilst enjoying the work they do. It was excellent to see three young people in particular leading the parts of the programme and taking key responsibilities and demonstrating that peer education is key to the other young people in grasping concepts on their level. The other young people clearly benefited from this and were gaining opportunities and skills that will help them in future employment. I built a good understanding from the young people as they lead me through the procedure of opening canal locks and generally staying safe on the canal, which was both interesting and hard work. Whilst opening the locks I was able to talk to the young people and they explained how the project has helped them achieve goals as part of their economic well being.

I particularly liked the conservation aspect of the project and as I am from the Shipley area, I can see first hand the impact the work has on the area and that the young people's positive contribution is key to helping Shipley thrive to become a good place to live and visit. It was hard work cutting back the bushes, but the young people and staff all worked well together to complete the job whilst getting fit at the same time. It was worth the hard work ready to be greeted to a fantastic lunch and having the opportunity to see the young people interact with each other whilst sitting around a dinner table.

Overall a brilliant day and already a number of young people have visited Shipley Youth Café, which is a massive positive for both the young people and our projects. I look forward to being given another opportunity to attend in the future.

Regards
Philip Briggs
Shipley Youth Café Manager