



Youth Works Evaluation

Janice Webb Research was commissioned to independently evaluate the effectiveness of the Youth Works programme. Seven Youth Works programmes were examined - Bacup & Stacksteads, Burnley, Darwen near Blackburn, Nelson, and Colne in Lancashire; Bury in Greater Manchester; and Bridgend in South Wales.

Youth Works Programmes

Youth Works provides young people growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with the skills and opportunities to develop their personal skills to reduce crime and improve their social, physical and economic environments. (Youth Works Mission Statement)

Youth Works programmes run a variety of activities for children and young people aged from 8 to 25 years. Activities can be preventative, diversionary, skills based, remedial, community based and environmental. During a sample month in the seven Youth Works programmes, a total of 30 staff members and 11 volunteers:

- Ran a total of 141 sessions, which provided over 500 hours when young people were off the streets and given a positive use of their time.
- Worked with nearly 1,000 individual young people, with attendances totalling 2,239.

Impact of Youth Works on Crime & Nuisance

There is evidence that crimes typically associated with young people, and juvenile nuisance, have been reduced in areas where Youth Works programmes that have been operational for more than one year. Any decrease in crime should be seen as very positive, given that changes in police counting rules is likely to result in an increase in recorded crime from April 2002.

- In Darwen, Blackburn, violent crime was reduced by more than 13% on the previous year. Criminal damage was reduced by nearly 8% and juvenile nuisance by more than 7%.
- In Burnley, vehicle related crime fell by nearly 25% in 2001-2002 compared to the previous year. Violent crime decreased by 6%. These reductions have been achieved against a backdrop of racial tension in the local area throughout the summer of 2001, which the Youth Works programme has tackled by and establishing dialogue between white and Asian young people, covering issues such as identity and community cohesion.
- In Colne, total crime over the period fell by nearly 9%. Violent crime was reduced by nearly 15%.
- In Burnley, Darwen and Bacup & Stacksteads, there is evidence that juvenile nuisance and vandalism has been reduced in former 'hot spot areas,' due to Youth Works successfully engaging the perpetrators.

Progress towards Social Inclusion

There are many examples of young people that Youth Works have helped to fulfil their potential, of which only a few are given here:

- Young people from the Bridgend and Colne Youth Works programmes, one of whom had previously been in prison, have gained places on their local Youth Council after being encouraged to write to the Council about issues affecting their neighbourhood.
- After four young men received Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) banning them from the town centre of Bacup, Youth Works engaged them in creating a Music Studio on their local estate. Rather than transferring their nuisance behaviour to another neighbourhood, the young men have instead been given the opportunity to develop new skills. Two have joined the Studio's committee.
- One young man who visited Darwen Youth Works was particularly aggressive and had been excluded from school. After attending Youth Works' informal education sessions and discovering a talent for painting, his behaviour has improved considerably along with his self-confidence. He has started to look for employment.
- Two young women who were prone to violent outbursts attended the Colne Youth Works Programme. Over the course of the year they have gained confidence and self-esteem and are now studying in their local college.

Good Practice from the Youth Works Programmes

There is evidence that the Youth Works programmes are successful for the following reasons:

- ✓ *Youth Works Programmes are established in neighbourhoods where there was formerly no or very little youth provision in order to maximise take-up and impact.*
- ✓ *Youth Works staff are able to build up relationships of trust with young people.* This, together with their availability in the neighbourhood, allows them to work with hard to reach young people, who have for example been excluded from school and mainstream youth provision.
- ✓ *The provision is geared to the needs and interests of the young people.* Participants in Youth Works programmes are allowed a say in what is provided, thus ensuring their commitment. For example, ownership of the programme is enabled through encouraging young people to be involved in the management and decoration of premises such as Drop-in Centres. This in turn reduces the likelihood of vandalism in the neighbourhood.
- ✓ *The wider community is involved, so that the chances of provision being sustained in the long-term are enhanced considerably.*
- ✓ *Youth Works looks at the wider picture, tying in with local plans such as Home Zone, using all the resources the community has such as empty buildings, green space, skills of adult residents and young people, enabling social, physical and economic regeneration.*

For further information on the evaluation, please contact Edwin Lewis, Youth Works National Development Manager on 0121 236 8565, or e-mail edwin.lewis@youth-works.com

Evaluation took the form of analysis of programme activity over the course of a calendar month; analysis of police recorded crime and juvenile nuisance incidents from July 2000 to June 2002, and interviews with Youth Works Programme Managers. Due to a number of the programmes being newly established, changes in crime statistics were only analysed in the programmes at Burnley, Darwen and Colne and compared July 2000 - June 2001 with July 2001- June 2002.