

Case Study



Project

Callan Bridge & Legarhill Project Co-ordinator

Organisation

Callan Bridge & Legarhill Ozone Youth Group

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Contact

Ann Loughlin

Contacts details

96-97 Callan Bridge Park
Armagh
County Armagh
BT60 4BT

About the Organisation

Callan Bridge and Legarhill Ozone Youth Group is run by a small number of dedicated local volunteers. It has grown from a group meeting in a run-down, three bedroom flat to an organisation spread over several sites with groups for pre-school, 8 to 12 year-olds and 13 to 18 year-olds.

The Callan Bridge and Legarhill area is a deprived suburb of Belfast and the group are able to provide diversionary activities for young people to keep them away from anti-social behaviour and crime.

Project overview

The project funding was mostly used to employ a full time project co-ordinator to drive the project forward and create strong working partnerships with local councils, businesses and community groups. This was needed to secure the longer term sustainability of the group as the volunteers were having difficulty coping with the high numbers in the group.

The aim of the project is to give children and teenagers opportunities to do healthy activities, develop social skills and take part in the community.

What has it achieved?

The project has made some clear impacts such as:

- Previously inactive and unmotivated teenagers are using the project frequently.
- Users are becoming more active, developing their social skills and staying out of trouble.
- Community benefits due to reduction in vandalism and a stronger feeling of safety amongst local residents.

How did the project get people involved?

Coverage in the local media and through word of mouth is how the project has managed to grow. Getting volunteers involved has been much more difficult. Local people were used to complaining about things but not used to taking action. It took a lot of hard work to get people on board with the project in the beginning.

Within the community people are much more willing to be part of something that is already popular and successful as they see it as something that will work.

Despite early success in recruiting volunteers it still remains their biggest challenge.

What was innovative and what worked well?

Despite early difficulties in getting volunteers to support the project, they have actually become its biggest strength. Their dedication and willingness to take action has led to the success of the project. They have taken the project from a group meeting in a run down flat to one that operates from 4 indoor locations and a new outdoor area.

The use of sport as a tool for helping tackle other social issues has been very successful. They have also been able to expand the activities available to include IT and social activities. This allows the project to appeal to a wider population.



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Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Although there has been no formal monitoring of the change in people's physical activity rates, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of the users have increased their levels of physical activity since joining the group.

It was thought that the lack of capital investment would be to the detriment of the project. But they have managed to get along with donations and in-kind contributions of both equipment and services to progress the project to its current position. However, this is not a long term sustainable approach and without some form of capital investment the project will struggle to continue.

The future...

The project will get bigger and be more beneficial to the community when local businesses and councils become more involved. Project activities will include teenagers contributing to murals in the local area, including bus shelters, as well as planting flowers. The outdoor area will have a great impact on the local teenagers, providing a base for fun games and tournaments. It will attract press attention, which in turn will bring people's attention to the area.

Local teenagers will be able to gain sports qualifications from the project and go on to further education or employment. There are vacancies in local councils for people who can gain these qualifications. The project intends to build more partnerships with councils and local businesses that may result in future funding. The project will apply to the Big Lottery Fund in the future. The project wants to improve the lives and opportunities of its teenagers, clean up the surrounding area and give Callan Bridge and Legarhill a new image.

Lessons from the project

The Callan Bridge and Legarhill Ozone project can teach us a lot about what is and isn't successful when setting up a youth group project.

- *Getting support from local residents as volunteers on the project is both the most difficult aspect and the most important to early project success.*
- *A lack of capital investment is a challenge but one that can be overcome by forming partnerships with other local groups and businesses for support with services and equipment.*
- *There is a limit to what a volunteer group can achieve. All of the volunteer force work full time and can only commit limited amounts of their time to the project. The most important area for their time is in delivering services to young people and this has been to the detriment of the long-term development of the project. It has taken a full time project co-ordinator to come in and progress the work on developing partnerships.*
- *However this should not detract from the importance of the project volunteers. Without their involvement in the project, local people would be less likely to get involved. It is the familiarity of the volunteers that helps embed the project in the local community.*
- *Persistence does pay off. It took the group around 12 years to be able to develop the outdoor common area for sports use. This was mainly due to issues over ownership.*
- *To be able to fully understand the impact of a project like this there is a need for greater investment in resources for monitoring and evaluation.*