



ON SIDE YOUTH ZONES NETWORK –

Ambition and Impact



Introduction

OnSide Youth Zones primarily focus on providing open access youth services to all young people from across their borough/ district regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity or culture. Additional targeted services support young people facing challenges or personal struggles to succeed.

“I am doing more sport and I feel happier and healthier.”

Mahdlo, Female, Aged 15

“The staff are amazing and want the very best for the youngsters. They go above and beyond to truly make a difference to young people’s lives - especially those who are disadvantaged.”

Stakeholder, Mahdlo

Young people and their families tell us about the transformative effect we have on their lives. We sought to quantify this through an independent evaluation. The findings of that research report (published in late 2019) have prompted us to reflect on what we are working to achieve, how we achieve it and the evidence we have of our impact to date. We will continue to work towards these goals making a tangible difference to young people across the country.



Goal 1:

Give young people a safe exciting place to go to have fun, build their social networks and support their personal development

Youth Zones deliver a high quality universal youth offer that enables all young people to come together, meet new people and participate in developmental activities that build confidence, self-esteem, social skills, communication skills, and team working skills. By engaging in new experiences or taking on challenges they learn from experience, problem solve and overcome setbacks, building resilience and motivation.



How we achieve the goal

Provide high quality affordable spaces for all young people to come together to have fun, make new friends and grow in some of the most deprived parts of the country.



Increase the Network of Youth Zones to provide more young people with a safe place to grow.



Provide 40hr plus of meaningful activities through a universal youth offer in each Youth Zone that enables young people to engage at a 'try', 'train' or 'team' level to support personal and social development.



Provide youth work support to help young people believe in themselves, make positive life choices and gain the skills they need to 'live, learn, work and achieve'.



Work in partnership with a network of public and voluntary sector organisations enabling the multiplier effects of joint working and resources to have greater impact, with each organisation strengthening each other's work.



Evidence

- **100%** of stakeholders said that the Youth Zones provided a safe place for young people to have fun and grow
- **95%** of young people said they felt safe at their Youth Zone (4% said 'sometimes')
- **92%** of parents of 2 year plus members said their child had learnt new things

Confidence

- **77%** of members are more self-confident
- **100%** of stakeholders said their Youth Zone improved young people's confidence

Social Skills

- **75%** of members have more friends, this increases to **87%** of those eligible for FSM
- **73%** of young people 14 plus feel less isolated as a result of their membership
- **68%** of members say they are better at mixing with people who are different from them
- **100%** of stakeholders said that it improved young people's social skills

Emotional skills

- **66%** of young people thought they were better at bouncing back from setbacks and disappointments

Analysis of outcomes by gender, disability, ethnicity and age show no significant differences with the exception of cohesion which is stronger for Junior members. The strength of impact does increase with length of membership across all indicators. Those who have been members for two years or more are around twice as likely to 'strongly agree' that there has been an impact compared with those who have recently joined.

"I just have more of a social life, met lots of people, do lots of different activities, I have fun with my friends & learn new things" As a result, "I feel it has helped me grow which made me think more sensibly & behave better in general."

Wigan Youth Zone, Female, Aged 11



Case study

D is a 16 year old member of Mahdlo. Prior to coming to the Youth Zone she reports she was "getting into trouble, being stupid". She has now been attending for over 3 years and goes 4-6 times a week, taking part in a wide variety of activities including sports, the gym, climbing and art. She tells us the Youth Zone has had a major impact on many aspects of her life. "Just coming here has done me good I am more active, I feel happier, [and have] more friends. It's changed my personality, I've done so much better. This place has been amazing for my confidence". This has helped her do better at school. "I went back to school & listened more. I've done better in exams. I'm better at school, better at home and my mum & dad are happier with me. "

Goal 2:

Help young people to lead healthier, happier lives

We support young people to improve their physical health, emotional health and wellbeing, and emotional self care (healthy behaviours).



How we achieve the goal

Provide a varied engaging and developmental sports offer, universally available every session, that both supports young people to move from inactive to active and increase their activity levels.



Support a significant proportion of disabled young people to access the Youth Zones engaging in sport and increasing social interactions.



Provide a full holiday provision - often with subsidised places for disadvantaged young people.



Support the 'influencing factors' on young people's mental health and wellbeing through our universal offer including; social connections and inclusion, having a sense of purpose, feeling in control, healthier lifestyles, resilience, meaningful participation, addressing bullying and cohesive communities'.



Delivering targeted interventions to support emotional health and wellbeing preventing escalation e.g. mentoring to build resilience and emotional intelligence; tailored fitness programmes, cookery and nutrition training to improve physical health; and learning and employability initiatives'.



Evidence

Health

- **78%** of under 13s thought they were healthier and **66%** of over 13s; (perhaps reflecting a greater awareness of healthy lifestyles and decreasing levels of physical activity)
- **65%** of those with a disability considered they were healthier
- **95%** of stakeholders considered that it helps people lead healthier, happier lives



Emotional self care

- **74%** of young people aged 14 and over said they understand more about the dangers of smoking, drugs and alcohol
- **97%** of stakeholders said that it supports young people to make healthier choices



Physical Health

- **70%** of members believe that they are more healthy physically
- More young people are doing more activity for more days per week. Those doing little or no exercise has halved (**34% to 18%**) and those doing significant physical activity (4 days or more per week) has almost doubled (**21% to 37%**)
- **100%** of stakeholders said that it moved people from inactive to active lifestyles



Emotional health & wellbeing

- **73%** feel happier about their lives (**89%** for those on free school meals)
- **100%** of stakeholders said that it improved young people's mental health



The Way Mentoring

C is an incredibly witty, intelligent and competitive individual, with a sharp sense of humour and an infectious laugh however he was struggling to interact with peers and manage his anger; he was also experiencing several health-related complications. He was referred to the mentoring programme and matched with Mentor N based on their common interests, similar personalities and Mentor N's previous experience supporting young people with emotional & behavioural difficulties. Since being matched C has made great progress, doing many active pursuits together that C didn't ever think he would be capable of including his mentor teaching him how to ride a bike; something C was adamant he wouldn't be able to do at the beginning of their match.

C has now graduated from the mentoring journey with outcomes including:

- A healthier lifestyle which resulted in mentee C not needing medical intervention
- Techniques for managing his reaction to situations that make him angry
- Increased self-confidence and social skills

Goal 3:

Enable young people to better face the challenges of life

We support young people to develop the emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills), problem solving skills, confidence and resilience to deal with the challenges they face, to strengthen their wellbeing and promote success in life.



How we achieve the goal

Provide a safe environment, supportive relationships, positive adult role models and positive experiences through the universal offer.



Deliver universal and targeted activities that enable young people to overcome challenges and achieve.



Deliver targeted programmes such as mentoring and key working to support young people to develop the ability to understand and manage emotions and build resilience.



Offer more specialised 'trauma informed' support through our targeted programmes and partnerships for those experiencing adversity (e.g. counselling and key worker support for those at risk of child criminal exploitation or experiencing adverse childhood experiences).

Evidence

Self Awareness

- **77%** know what their strengths and weaknesses are (asked of those 14yrs plus)



Ability to manage own emotions

- **59%** are better able to control/manage their feelings better



Empathy

- **65%** are better at understanding how other young people are feeling enabling them to show greater levels of empathy and understanding



Resilience

- **73%** of young people feel less isolated (asked of those 14yrs plus)
- **66%** thought they were better at bouncing back from setbacks and disappointments
- **92%** considered that they had a trusted adult who they could speak to



- **78%** of parents consider that the Youth Zone has had a positive impact on their child's life, a figure which rises to **95%** amongst those whose children have been attending more than 2 years
- **71%** of parents of 2 year plus members believe that their child's membership had had a positive impact on their family life. This figure rises to **79%** amongst frequent attenders (4 or more times per week)

Case study

K's story illustrates the importance of being there for young people through their personal journeys to strengthen and increase the long term impact of targeted programmes. "K, age 14 was referred to Manchester Youth Zone's 'Senior Choices Programme' after several reports of anti-social behaviour. With the support from course leaders K returned to mainstream schooling. Whilst on the programme, the police reported that there were zero complaints received about K and his teachers reported he was making great progress.

After completing the programme, his attendance at school dropped dramatically and the anti-social behaviour restarted culminating in an arrest; it became apparent that more support was needed. A meeting with all professionals working with the family resulted in K being placed back on the Senior Choices Programme.

K opened up about his involvement with drugs and older gang members and openly said that he feels lost when he's not on the programme. Whilst on it, he has positive role models to speak to about what is going on in his life, and he gets to go out and do normal things that someone his age should be doing.

He is now involved in community volunteering with the Youth Zone and has returned to school.



Goal 4:

Support young people to raise their aspirations and fulfil their potential

We support young people to be ready to learn and work by raising; aspirations, sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, communication and interpersonal skills, and fostering a determination to succeed. Young people have a better understanding of the career opportunities available, the skills required, an improved sense of how their life experiences can be valuable in the workplace and are supported to move into employment, education or training.



How we achieve the goal

Provide a range of experiences and opportunities that support young people's personal and social development increasing their self-esteem and belief they can change their lives.



Support young people to address the challenges they face enabling them to better engage in education or sustain employment.



Build understanding of the opportunities available locally and how to access them through universal provision e.g. careers events and targeted programmes.



Provide targeted educational support for those disengaging with education to help re-motivate and build a stronger sense of self belief for example Inspiring Futures and employer mentoring.



Deliver employability programmes, such as Get a Job, to support young people to be more work ready and access meaningful employment or training opportunities, in line with their aspirations.



Evidence

Aspirations

- A 2015 study showed a **17.2%** increase in aspirations amongst Youth Zone members



Ready for work/learning

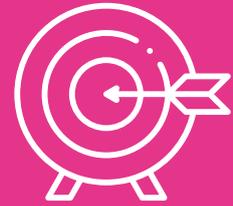
- **78%** say staff and volunteers at the Youth Zone encourage them to prepare for the future
- **68%** feel better prepared for the future – this increases to **79%** amongst frequent attenders
- **66%** are more confident in getting the qualifications/experience needed
- **66%** are clearer about what they need for the job/work they want in the future
- **58%** report getting better marks in class/perform better at work/training
- Results were particularly strong for White British members. National research shows white working class pupils achieve the lowest GCSE grades and are most likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)*
- High levels of improvement in aspirations and preparedness for the future amongst White British members were strongly positive findings
- For both our Inspiring Futures and Get a Job programmes **87%** of participants reported an increase in workplace skills and attributes



*Sutton Trust: Class differences, 2016

Achievement

- 17 of the 20 schools with a high density of young members attending a YZ, for which there was data, had improved their Attainment 8 Scores or had seen less decline than the national average
- Of the 1,669 NEET young people who have participated on Get a Job across the OnSide Network, 83% moved into employment, education or training (**24%** of participants had a disability or additional need)
- **97%** of stakeholders consider that the Youth Zones effectively support all young people to achieve their potential



Case study

D, a 13 year old male member at The Hive in Wirral who attends 2-3 times a week, reports he is doing better in school because of the Youth Zone. He has said if it wasn't for the Youth Zone he would be at home playing video games now he is active playing football and climbing which has helped him feel 'happier, more confident' and less isolated. "Playing with other people has made me see how other people talk and behave and I can learn how to mix well with a variety of people. I'm more pushed to meet more people, then I have more confidence to push myself in school. I'm more confident to ask questions or to go into situations I'm uncomfortable in. I can concentrate longer". As a result he reports he is enjoying school more, getting better marks and feels more prepared for the future.

Goal 5:

Strengthen communities by supporting young people to be empowered, active, responsible citizens

We increase social cohesion and build a sense belonging through our universal offer. We develop leadership skills and support young people to feel empowered and be more active in their community. We promote positive behaviours to create safe communities.



How we will achieve the goal

Bring diverse young people together strengthening social bonds and building awareness and understanding of different cultures and communities within our universal and targeted programmes e.g. through celebrating diversity and 'hate crime' awareness projects



Aim to challenge stereotypes of young people and champion young people's perceptions.



Support young people to have a 'Voice' in the development and running of the Youth Zone, locally within their community and nationally.



Deliver citizenship based programmes to help young people feel more connected to their local community and empowered to achieve change.



Provide opportunities for young people to 'give back' to their community either by volunteering in the Youth Zone or in the local area.



Support young people to understand consequences and make positive choices in their engagement with their community.



Evidence

- **90%** of stakeholders said we strengthened local communities by supporting young people



- **94%** said Youth Zones raised pride in the local area
- **97%** of stakeholders thought that their area was better since their Youth Zone opened
- **66%** of parents of 2 year plus members believe that their child's membership made a positive difference to the community

Citizenship

- **65%** of members felt more a part of their community as a result of attending their Youth Zone
- **65%** felt that they could make a positive difference to their community
- **97%** of stakeholders said it was good or very good at encouraging people to volunteer/ take part in social activity



Cohesion

- **65%** say they are better at mixing with people who are different from them
- **97%** of stakeholders said that it made a positive contribution to community cohesion



Amongst stakeholders:

- **96%** said that their Youth Zone had made an impact on supporting them achieve their objectives
- **97%** of stakeholders said that the Youth Zone worked effectively with them in their role



Safer Communities

- **66%** of members say they are more likely to stay out of trouble
- Local stakeholders credit the Youth Zones with reducing crime and anti-social behaviour for example:
 - Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service credited the Youth Zones as having made a significant contribution to the significant fall in deliberate secondary fires started.
 - In Oldham police reported a **30%** reduction in ASB involving young people and a **40%** decline in young people being victims of street crime
 - In Wigan police reported a **77%** reduction in ASB in nearby Mesnes Park post Youth Zone opening
 - Chorley - Police report a **49%** reduction in nuisance & criminal behaviour by young people since opening



Case study

Tyler, aged 14 and a friend became litter picking sensations cleaning up the streets of Blackburn. He was inspired by the Youth Zone's Youth Ambassador Project to become more involved in their community through social integration, social action and team building. Tyler explained "Through doing the Youth Ambassador Project I gained the confidence to believe that I could make a difference in my community. I bought myself a litter picker and set off around the streets, all together we have collected 44 bags of rubbish. When I finish doing my local area I want to go into different areas and make a difference there. I had noticed a lot of litter lying around the streets, it makes the area look really scruffy and I was worried about the harm it would cause to wildlife. After researching I found the 'Keep Blackburn Tidy' page on facebook and knew this was something I could get involved with". The boys have since gone on to set up their own social media pages to persuade others to get involved with cleaning up the streets of Blackburn with Darwen.



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