

Beacon Theme	Positive Youth Engagement
Authority name	City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Case Study title	Youth Opportunity Fund
Theme (if applicable)	Hard to reach
Also linked to these themes: Partnerships, citizenship, structures for youth engagement, social inclusion.	
Summary Strategy developed to engage young people at local and district wide level in the design of grant giving procedures.	
Background Wakefield District is in the heart of Yorkshire and the Humber, covers some 339 square kilometres and is home to 319,800 people in a diverse range of city, urban and rural communities. Approximately 61,000 (19%) are aged between 5 and 19 years. Wakefield has undergone major social and economic changes over the last 25 years. The loss of traditional industries has had a severe impact on local communities and the industrial heritage has also left a legacy of poor health, preventing many from re-entering work. The Council has continued to make real progress in the last three years in tackling some of these areas, becoming a thriving manufacturing, retail and distribution centre, taking full advantage of its place at the heart of the region's transport network and significant progress has been made on key flagship regeneration schemes. However, the district continues to face a number of challenges from its economic legacy. Wakefield is a historic seat of regional government in Yorkshire and for two centuries provided the county headquarters of the former West Riding of Yorkshire. Today the City retains its strong tradition of public services employment with the headquarters of the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly and West Yorkshire Police all located within the City Centre. The make up of the Council is predominantly Labour, holding 41 of the 63 seats, Liberal Democrats with 3, Conservatives 14 and Independents 5 seats. This case study explores how young people were engaged in the delivery of Youth Opportunity (YOF) and Youth Capital Funds (YCF) in Wakefield District.	
Key issues/problems Recruitment of hard to reach young people to grant giving panels Raising awareness amongst hard to reach young people of the opportunities that the YOF and YCF offer them and their peers. Developing mechanisms that hard to reach young people find friendly, practical and understandable and by which they can make clear decisions.	

What you did

We started the process by identifying a sum of money that could be distributed to young people to enable them to achieve a particular goal. We asked groups of young people (from local authority funded and voluntary organisations) to each create a “brick” with a simple request on it that would be part of a “Democracy Wall” blocking off the Town Hall.

We arranged for the Leader of the Council together with appropriate portfolio holders and officers to attend the Town Hall and meet the young people and hear their requests. The wall was symbolically knocked down when councillors and officers agreed to discuss the issues raised there and then. Subsequently each participating group was awarded £250 towards their chosen goal.

All the young people engaged in this process were invited to join the YOF/YCF grant giving groups to help put together basic rules and criteria for the distribution of the much larger sums now involved.

Using the wider media and previous contacts we then recruited more young people to three locally based Area Panels to supplement the district wide remit of the central group (“Dosh Donors”). Members of the Area Panels were given training before starting to consider bids from their local areas.

Because we wanted to engage hard to reach young people at the heart of our YOF/YCF strategy we made sure that the decisions we were asking them to make were within their level of competence.

We have augmented our programme of separate group meetings with joint social events and ‘residential’.

Key outcomes

The young people’s panels include young people with physical and behavioural disabilities and anger management problems, as well as those who are succeeding in education. We also have young people of differing ethnicity and levels of engagement in existing youth provision.

These young people have shown they can work together, listening to and understanding each other’s viewpoints. From this foundation they are now able to meet with applicant groups and realistically judge applications for YOF/YCF funding.

Young people engaged in YOF/YCF grant giving	37
Value of grants awarded 2006/7	£169.000 YOF
	£170.000 YCF

Impact

We have been able to focus the distribution of YOF/YCF monies on the aspirations of young people in the district. The young members of the grant giving panels have become more aware of the issues that surround decision making of this kind. They have also improved their understanding of the lives and aspirations of young people who are different from them.

Resources

The major resource in setting up and running the YOF/YCF grant giving process is youth worker time. Wakefield Council also commissioned an external organisation to facilitate the original Democracy Wall exercise.

Expenses incurred for transport, residentials, and training materials are being met through the YOF/YCF Administration Budget.

Who was involved?	
Youth work colleagues from the local authority and the 3 rd sector.	
Barriers and how were they overcome	
Initial disbelief amongst young people that they would really be able to make important decisions on funding were overcome in stages through the Democracy Wall exercise and subsequently through training and experience.	
Access issues for young people with disabilities were comprehensively addressed.	
Youth workers prioritised the time needed to enable the full involvement of hard to reach young people in the process.	
Contact by letter, telephone, text, and in person to cement engagement.	
Critical success factors	
Starting the process with the Democracy Wall Exercise.	
Involving young people in developing the grant giving criteria for Wakefield.	
Enabling young people to become involved in their own local grant giving group	
Commitment to the engagement of hard to reach young people.	
How would you do it better?	
Allow young people to make mistakes and learn from them.	
How did this improve one person's life?	
One young man was persuaded to apply for YOF funding to put on a RAP DJ night at his youth club. Subsequently he met with the RAP artist and wrote his application. When the YOF panels supported his bid he asked if he could join his local YOF/YCF Area Panel. He has now taken part in a training and evaluation residential and is a full and vociferous member of his panel. Delivery of the RAP DJ event will be a milestone in the journey for the young man to improve upon previous behaviour.	
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