

Wath Young People's Centre – Rotherham

Brief description

Located in an ex-mining area north of Rotherham, Wath Young People's Centre (WYPC) stands proudly on the campus of the 1,800 pupil Wath Comprehensive School, a new build provision with an integrated youth facility created as part of the Rotherham Schools Private Finance Initiative.

WYPC aims to reach 25 per cent of the 13 to 19 age range in the Wath, Brampton and West Melton areas through a mutivarious provision ranging from open access to one-to-one specialist work.

Although all Every Child Matters outcomes are a key factor in the delivery of the programme, a particular specialism is young people's sexual health – an often difficult focus on a school campus in the middle of a traditional community.

Funding

Rotherham Young People's Service (RYPS) is the main funder and allocates approximately £65,000 in staffing costs, plus a non staffing allocation of £3,000. Some external funding is secured through Service Level Agreements with other agencies that require youth work time or skilled interventions. A current example is the work for Wath Comprehensive School with young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training)

Staffing

Senior Worker, Vicky Whitehead, is based at the centre, which also houses one full-time Connexions PA and sessional leaders. There is an 80 per cent full-time equivalent complement of Community and Support Youth Workers and six hours part-time administrative support.

Young people volunteer generally in the running of the centre and are involved in preparation, planning and evaluation and also run the coffee bar and reception at each open session. Currently one adult volunteer is combining work at WYPC with their ABC Level Two youth work qualification training.

The centre also offers outreach and detached work in the Brampton and West Melton areas.



Nature of provision

Which groups of young people does the project work with?

We aim to work with all eligible 13 to 19-year-old young people through our generic programmes but also offer more focused work with young people, including:

- Targeted groups of young people identified through partnership work.
- Young people who are not in education, employment or training
- Young people with special needs eg: Aspergers syndrome, autism, and young people with physically disabilities.
- Young people, who are being bullied, working through the Safe Haven Project which is run by young people who are trained by youth workers. This project operates at lunch-time in the school and all the young people taking part train in their own time.

What are the main health approaches used and activities offered?

1. The 'Healthy Lifestyles' accredited project involves work with young people at a local skate park through both centre based and outreach work.
2. An audit of local health provision in the area for young people through the RYPS 'Voice and Influence Strategy'.
3. The 'Baby Stop Think' Project

enabling young people to consider the impact of being an early parent, and which involves one-to-one and small group work.

4. Confidential services through the 'Hardware' campaign offering condom distribution and a drop-in sexual health clinic on campus at WYPC (one session for young women and another for young men).
5. We offer the services of the MIND mental health organisation and Know the Score drug project at the centre.

Our approaches are simply those of good youth workers everywhere and include creating a safe, warm and welcoming environment allied to a fully trained and consistent staff team. We build in at least two residential experiences in a year and look at current health issues, underpinned by a clear confidentiality statement that has been written by young people.

How are young people involved in shaping the project/programme?

- Our programme is structured to meet the needs of the user groups. We actively embrace the local Rotherham Voice and Influence Strategy at each session starting from profiles and plans that are produced each year that outline the things young people want to do and how these will be delivered.
- Each young person using the centre has the opportunity to participate in the area Voice and Influence Forum where the year's activities for the area are planned. This year they have been working on a planned residential which



takes place each year during the school holidays.

- WYPC supports the schools council, which is a forum of local young people.
- Two young people from WYPC are currently members of the National Youth Parliament and are voted in by young people from across Rotherham.
- To keep us young people friendly, each year RYPS undergoes a peer evaluation process that assesses the quality of youth work services and young people are involved in this as equal partners.

How does the project respond to the needs of different young people, particularly the most marginalised?

The team at the centre is able to support all young people in need who are involved with us. The workers liaise with parents and the full

range of external services including: school, social services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and occasionally, the criminal justice service. We are also able to work out on the streets through detached and outreach work when we feel there is a need.

Outcomes

How do young people benefit from their involvement in the project?

The benefits are many and various, but we believe that some of the most important are those that help build strong, resilient young people including:

- Increased self-esteem.
- The ability to challenge.
- A sense of belonging.
- Ability to share their issues.
- Increased support from workers

and peers.

- Expanded horizons.
- Young people are able to give something back to their community.

How do others benefit from the project?

The centre offers positive activities for young people and enables them to participate in services that take place in their own communities. Examples include community action work where young people and youth workers engage with the community to discuss issues around anti-social behaviour, work undertaken at the skate park and the centre's annual 'Hampers for the Elderly at Christmas' project. All have raised the centre's profile in the community.

How does the project contribute to local health priorities?

- By delivering a broad range of health activities along with advice, information and guidance.
- Through improving physical health.
- By providing drug and alcohol education and information.
- By allowing young people to access key services on site which will help to bolster their physical and mental health, including access to condoms and testing, and the tailored advice that goes with that service.
- We support reducing teenage pregnancy rates by providing sexual health drop-in sessions and the 'Baby Stop Think' Project.

How are young people's progress and achievements captured/measured and recorded?

RYPS use the EYS Management Information system to record attendance, curriculum activities and recorded and accredited outcomes. All sensitive one-to-one work is recorded on an anonymous data base. The project also has access to the Connexions database. Each young person is also encouraged to keep a record of their achievements.

Measuring effectiveness

How is the project's work assessed or evaluated?

Comprehensive management information systems such as those used through RYPS are useful, but the real strength of what we do in Wath and Rotherham generally lies in the peer evaluation schemes that are driven by young people with support from staff. Annually, area and service evaluations remind us all of the prime importance of the voice and influence of young people.

This approach has recently been extended to cover local health services – including our own health

drop in clinic – through Rotherham PCTs 'Young People Friendly' assessment and accreditation scheme.

What are the findings of any evaluations to date?

RYPS peer evaluation of the Safe Havens project in December 2007 stated that:

"There was good evidence that the project was well managed and relationships with school had benefited from this project" A Young People Friendly assessment of the health drop-in clinic will take place in late 2008.

What factors help the delivery of healthy youth work?

The centre is new and was built in 2005 under the Private Finance Initiative. Designed with young people, the specifications were generated at the first conference for young people with RYPS in 2003. Young people were asked "what constitutes an ideal youth centre provision?"

We also work in partnership with, and contribute to, Rotherham Healthy Schools' policies and practices.

Another critical factor is the confidence of the young people to access the services at WYPC.

What factors hinder this work?

Barriers caused by young people's perceptions as we are an informal education project on a school based site. We find we have to constantly explain to young people the difference



between the roles of youth workers and teachers.

Partnership/ multidisciplinary working

What other agencies do you work with on a regular basis?

Wath Comprehensive School
South Yorkshire Police
Rotherham Integrated Children and Young People's Services Locality Teams
Area Assembly Workers
Local Councillors
Rotherham PCT
Health workers
Local doctors' surgery
'Know the Score' drugs service
MIND
Connexions
The National Youth Agency

When working in partnership, what is the distinctive contribution of your organisation/project?

We are local, based on a school campus with excellent access to 1,800 local young people and we are part of Rotherham Young People's Services. The staff at WYPC are specifically trained to work with hard to reach young people and it is these varied youth work techniques and approaches that can open up new areas for our partners and sometimes new perceptions of young people's lives. We also open up the channels of dialogue between young people

and service providers, which is always a constructive process provided everyone is prepared to listen to each other.

Has this partnership resulted in greater collaboration or increased understanding between partners? Please give examples.

When in meetings at any level youth workers are advocates for young people. We have built a good reputation in the Wath area and in particular for the work we have done with the Neighbourhood Action Teams, Wath Comprehensive School and the 'Transform Schools Group' within the PFI initiative. We are also able to share and understand each others' roles and responsibilities.

Strategic impact

Do you consider this project to be innovative, in terms of healthy youth work?

- Young people's involvement in the local Voice and Influence Strategy runs through every aspect of the Wath programme, both in house, in community based work, and farther afield on residential and extended trips and visits.
- As part of this strategy, Rotherham has been ahead of the game in enabling young people to be intimately involved in the process of designing, evaluating and improving services aimed at

them; this work has in many ways led the way in terms of the national programme of young people friendly service provision known as "You're Welcome". Wath has been a part of this development, alongside its day to day provision of good quality generic youth programmes.

- The sensitive and unobtrusive way in which sexual health clinics and mental health support services have been made available to this large youth community in a very traditional setting is especially noteworthy and – given its PFI roots – is a modern model of good practice for the school, the youth service and Wath Youth Centre.
- The youth service relationship with the PCT is excellent in general in Rotherham, and this means that radical and vital health work can be achieved in outlying areas as well as in better provided town centre locations; the outreach programmes in Wath and the strong campus based clinic are proof positive of the advantages of partnership working.

How do you disseminate the learning from the project?

Via publicity and the local media, through networking, RYPS meetings, Area Assemblies and events such as the Wath Young People's Big Health Meeting in October 2008.

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