

Fairbridge West Midlands H.E.A.L.T.H Project

Brief description

Fairbridge West Midlands is one of 16 Fairbridge centres in the UK. Based in Digbeth Birmingham, work takes place with young people aged between 13 to 25 from all over the West Midlands.

Funding

- Fairbridge West Midlands is responsible for raising its £500,000 budget.
- 50 per cent of this budget comes from various statutory funding sources such as: local education authorities; European Social Fund; Learning and Skills Council; Connexions; Big Lottery Fund: health services, youth offending teams (YOTs), pupil referral units (PRUs) and schools support units.
- 35 per cent of funding is raised from corporate or private funding, 10 per cent from events and fundraising initiatives and a further 5 per cent from individuals and legacies.

Staffing

The structure of Fairbridge units is typically as follows:

- Regional Manager,
- Operations Manager,
- Partnership Development Officer
- Senior Administrator
- Three Outreach Workers
- Six Development Tutors
- Three Student Placements
- Five freelance workers
- Three volunteers and a pool of short term volunteers



Nature of provision

Which groups of young people does the project work with?

Fairbridge West Midlands H.E.A.L.T.H project works with 100 new under 16s per year focused on young people of school age who are not registered on any school roll, are at risk of exclusion from school, or have been excluded and not engaging in any provision, or struggling in pupil referral units. Fairbridge is registered as a part time alternative provision.

What are the main health approaches used and activities offered?

Health is core to the work that Fairbridge promotes with young people; positive health choices are interlinked with diet, self esteem, emotional well being, behaviour, personal strength, sexual health and a positive healthy lifestyle at all stages of our programmes.

Stage 1 – Access

Young people take on a series of activities, ranging from cooking, health and fitness, swimming, dance, music, art, indoor and outdoor climbing, caving and abseiling to enable them to learn more about themselves and how their behaviour impacts on others. The 'Access' residential is the first vital step in our long-term personal development programme. By ensuring that every young person experiences a sense of achievement, we enable them to develop the confidence and motivation to make the necessary

commitment to more specific courses.

Stage 2 – The main programme

Throughout the time a young person is with Fairbridge, they will have a key worker assigned to them. On completing ‘Access’ and with the support of their key worker, each young person will create a personal action plan and undertake a health questionnaire to identify an informal, baseline, needs assessment. On the basis of this personal action plan, young people will be able to identify and participate in courses that will provide them with the opportunities to develop specific personal and social skills, and key secondary life skills.

These courses may range from:

- Conservation projects under our own in house John Muir Award,
- Duke of Edinburgh Awards,
- Filmmaking projects,
- Music courses,
- Horse project,
- Sports,
- Outdoor residentials,
- Cooking,
- Creative arts.

All our projects have ASDAN units embedded within them and our Access Programme has been assessed by ASDAN as half a Bronze Award. Our specialised parenting courses using ‘Bleeping Babies’ can also lead to a Bronze Award achievement.

Other areas of health support and provision come through our condom distribution and Chlamydia screening programme and our partnerships with other specialist agencies that support young people’s health including Brook, Terrence Higgins Trust, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and locally run drug and alcohol services.

Stage 3 – Moving on

Young people come to Fairbridge through choice. They also choose the point at which to exit the programme.



Some will engage with other voluntary organisations and develop further skills. Others will have gained the skills and confidence required to return to school or start college. We support them to make that step.

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

Fairbridge’s under-16 programme works with young people aged 13 to 16 that other organisations find difficult to engage – giving them the skills and confidence they need to change their lives.

We encourage young people by offering them a unique combination of personal support and opportunity and opportunities in the form of a wide range of challenging and structured courses and projects, plus support in the form of a tailor-made action plan for each young person. We do this in a safe environment that challenges negative behavior and recognises achievement.

Outcomes

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

Fairbridge has a sophisticated monitoring and evaluation database that allows us to track outcomes against activity and measure these outcomes against specific interventions. Schools also send us case studies and endorsements on individual referrals, and we measure distance travelled on social literacy, confidence and self esteem in the form of records of achievement and self evaluation. Evidence to date has generally shown the main benefits to be:

- Increase in attendance at school or engagement in alternative learning opportunities for those whom a school place in no longer an option.
- Increased participation and accredited outcomes for poor performers.
- Young people learn how to make informed choices in a safe

environment that challenges learnt behaviours and actions, we don’t judge we engage, we guide and empower them to identify their own issues and plan to change them.

How does the project contribute to local health priorities?

The key cross cutting themes for Children and Young People in Birmingham are “Prevention”, “Early Intervention” and “Transition to Adulthood”.

Seven key priority areas exist within these themes utilising one to one and group work:

- **Obesity**
- **Sexual health**
- **Mental health and wellbeing**
- **Alcohol/Drug**
- **Health inequalities**
- **Smoking**
- **Infant mortality**

Fairbridge sees its services as



a conduit between mainstream provision and those vulnerable young people refusing to or unable to engage.

Measuring effectiveness

How is the project’s work assessed or evaluated?

The work undertaken by Fairbridge is assessed by external referral agents on an individual basis and at a national level as part of Fairbridge Central Assessment against key performance indicators and quality assurance tools. This found that the work that the West Midlands Team was doing with Under 16s showed good attendance and engagement on programmes leading to an increase in positive outcomes linked to accreditation and school returns.

What factors help the delivery of healthy youth work?

The work that Fairbridge promotes is based around a strong core of outdoor programmes and activities, and these fit comfortably into the current health agenda (eg outdoor activity contributes to emotional and physical health and wellbeing). Health is a focal point of Children’s Plans and the style of delivery in Fairbridge lends itself to

preventative work as well as crisis management. However, short term funding arrangements for some areas can hinder this work.

Partnership/ multidisciplinary working

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

Schools and PRUs, Behaviour Support Services, YOTs, Pupil Connect, CAMHS, Connexions, St Basil’s homeless project, foster care services, disability services, West Midlands Police, Drug and Alcohol Action Team, probation services, youth services, health and social care projects, and many voluntary and community agencies.

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

Fairbridge acts as a conduit for a number of agencies who find it difficult to engage with vulnerable young people who are hard to reach. Engaging with this group of young people and therefore providing a service that supports their engagement in universal and other specialist services is a powerful contribution.

Many schools run COPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) as an alternative to curriculum for those young people who are struggling academically. Fairbridge can provide a wealth of alternative, engaging activities that can provide the experiential learning and evidence to achieve very successful results for the individual and the school or other partner.

Has this partnership resulted in greater collaboration or increased understanding between partners?

Fairbridge has forged closer working links with schools and we have examples where we have swapped roles with school staff on certain activities and pooled resources and support during delivery. We have opened up discussions with our Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and have discussed opportunities for future collaboration. We have increased opportunities for external interventions such as CAMHS, Brook, After Care and the Health Xchange.

Strategic impact

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

The Youth Work 4 Health project is innovative in that it has piloted and benchmarked centres of reference for local children's trusts to measure learning. It provides a



very positive model for targeted youth work and the Good Practice Guidelines are a useful toolkit for PCTs, local authorities, youth services and voluntary agencies to refer to

How do you disseminate the learning from the project?

There are several in-house case studies both on request from the centre and available on our web site. We have had local publicity such as local TV news footage and

newspaper articles. Fairbridge is well known as a leading voluntary sector agency in Birmingham and works closely within the Children's Trust arrangements and the Brighter Futures Working Groups in Birmingham along with VCS Matters to disseminate good practice. At a national level learning from the project is fed into our external affairs department to lobby central government and other sources.



Contact

Claire Rigby, Fairbridge West Midlands, 79 Warwick Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B12 0NH.

Phone: 0121 773 1538. Fax: 0121 773 1538.

E-mail: wmids@fairbridge.org.uk Website: www.fairbridge.org.uk/wmids/

Published by

The National Youth Agency
Getting it right for young people

YW4H
The National Youth Agency
Youth Work for Health

Eastgate House, 19-23 Humberstone Road, Leicester LE5 3GJ. Tel: 0116 242 7350. Fax: 0116 242 7444.
E-mail: nya@nya.org.uk Websites: www.nya.org.uk/YW4H www.youthinformation.com