

## Looked After Children

# Preparation for Positive Destinations through Activity Agreement Programmes North Ayrshire Council

## Contact for Enquiries

Roseann Burns  
Team Manager  
Rosemount Project, Irvine  
01294 213733  
rburns@north-ayrshire.gcsx.  
gov.uk

The Crisis Intervention Service, which sits within North Ayrshire's Health and Social Care Partnership, developed a programme of activities with partners. These activities helped young people involved with the Crisis Intervention Service to gain useful skills and build their confidence.

## Background

The Crisis Intervention Service sits within North Ayrshire's Health and Social Care Partnership and provides a range of intensive support packages to young people and their families as a direct alternative to young people being accommodated by the local authority.

Through the delivery of tailored support programmes it transpired that many of the young people involved with the Crisis Intervention Service were not prepared or ready to move on to further education, training placements or employment due to a number of factors including complex family problems, substance misuse, offending behaviour and school difficulties. These issues were further compounded by the fact that youth unemployment in North Ayrshire is amongst the highest in Scotland.

To ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people were given the best possible opportunities to support them into further education and employment a successful funding bid enabled the Crisis Intervention Service to plan, programme and deliver comprehensive employment programmes via Activity Agreements.

The employment programmes aimed to:

- Create new opportunities for young people to learn and developing skills which will enhance and develop their potential
- Provide structure, routine and purpose
- Enhance literacy and numeracy learning
- Increase young people's confidence, motivation and aspirations for the future

- Increase young people's independence and future career/employment options
- Equip young people to play a full and constructive role in society

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## Key Activities

Activity Agreements were delivered over a 15-week period either on a group work or individual basis dependant on need and circumstances. The programmes also incorporated the skills section of the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award. Young people were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and were involved with staff in identifying the programme content.

Programmes included: Basic First Aid, Food Hygiene, Driving Theory, Healthy Lifestyles, Interview Skills, Compiling CVs, Budgeting, Emotional Wellbeing general health, and sessions with Work Coaches from Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

Programmes also included a community project that has involved young people linking in with local resources, for example Eglinton Country Park and giving something back to their local community.

The Activity Agreements are delivered in partnership with Education and Youth Employment and Community Development (Economies and Communities). More recently Housing Services has joined the partnership as they recognised the positive impact that the programmes have had as a preventative and diversionary measure for young people involved in anti-social behaviour. Local venues such as community centres and Kilwinning Sports Club have been used to deliver the programmes. This approach has encouraged and empowered young people to become involved in local groups out with the Activity Agreement.

To further develop programmes, the Activity Agreement groups have also been involved in an initiative with the National Portrait Galleries for Scotland. The initiative is called "Untitled" and is a visual training programme informed by contemporary Scottish art, which has created new training opportunities for young people through innovative methods of collaboration. The creative outcomes of this initiative have been exhibited locally in a "pop up shop" and featured in a major exhibition in the National Galleries for Scotland in January 2016. The range of skills that the young people have developed in the work they have carried out with the National Galleries include photography, theatre make up, prop design, script writing, interview techniques, customer service, furniture recycling, and light installation.

The young people's achievements are recognised at "Celebration Events" which take place at the end of each 15-week programme. These events are attended by young people, family members,

senior managers, and partners. Young people are awarded a range of certificates to reflect the achievements and progress they have made through participation in Activity Agreements.

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## Benefits and Impacts

The Service used tools such as the Essential Skills Profile and the Rickter Scale, which focus on a range of core, personal and learning skills, to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the programme. With the use of these tools young people highlighted significant improvements in the following:

- Working with others - 100% increase
- Motivation - 83% increase
- Confidence - 83% increase
- Problem Solving - 77% increase

94% of the young people that took part in the programme moved on to positive destinations.

Overall there was a reduction in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents among the young people involved in the group. There was also an increase in use of local resources and facilities by the young people.

Several individuals that took part in the programme have seen improvements in their own circumstances directly related to completing an Activity Agreement:

- A young person who was awaiting court dates for a serious offence had high levels of attendance and motivation and did not re-offend during the programme. The young person's Criminal Justice Social worker was able to detail the young person's commitment to the programme in the court report resulting in a community disposal (Community Payback Order). The young person continues to desist from offending.
- One young person is pursuing a career in theatrical make up as a result of their involvement with the National Galleries.
- The structure and support offered by the programme had a positive impact on one young person's Kinship Placement. This placement was breaking down with homeless accommodation being sought as an alternative placement. Significant improvements have now been reported by all parties.
- One young person took on the role of peer mentor following completion of an Activity Agreement and has now commenced a Social Care Course at Ayr College.

Feedback was sought after each session using What Went Well (WWW) and Even Better If (EBI). This approach enabled staff to gain

an honest perspective from young people when the session was fresh in their mind. This also enabled the programme content to be amended if required.

A feedback questionnaire was also distributed at the end of the programme and a focus group was facilitated by an independent chair person.

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## Learning

The partnership approach to the programme enabled the maximising of skills, experience, and resources. This approach has also ensured that the young people are experiencing the expected outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence (3-18) together while acquiring the skills and awards that will move young people towards a more mainstream option.

Pursuing a diverse and creative approach, for example the partnership with the National Portrait Galleries, not only placed the young people's creative ideas at the core of this initiative but it encouraged the young people to discover skills and talents that they may not have the confidence to develop. The range of skills that the young people have learned, such as script writing, customer service, light installation, and furniture recycling are important in terms of future employment in the creative industry or the social sector.

The use of credible evaluation tools such as the Rickter Scale enabled staff to evidence progress and young people to self-assess and evaluate their own progress.

North Ayrshire intend to continue to deliver 15-week employability programmes to young people which will incorporate the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award's Skills Section.