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Enthusiasm Trust and Community Space Challenge: Impact Evaluation.

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
Background	1
Research objectives	1
Research approach	1
The report	3
Acknowledgements	3
2. Young people's engagement with Enthusiasm (CSC).....	4
What types of young people get involved in Enthusiasm programmes?	4
How do young people hear about Enthusiasm and CSC	4
How do stakeholders promote enthusiasm?	5
What makes young people get involved?	5
What activities do young people get involved in?	6
Why do they stay?	7
What activities would young people be involved in without CSC?	9
Summary	9
3. The benefits and impacts	10
Impacts on young people.	10
<i>Educational attainment</i>	10
<i>Self awareness</i>	10
<i>Raised aspirations</i>	11
Impacts on community.....	11
<i>Young role models</i>	11
<i>Less anti-social behaviour</i>	12
<i>More respectful behaviour</i>	12
<i>Stronger families</i>	13
<i>Intergenerational understanding</i>	13
Environmental impact	13
<i>Environmental quality</i>	13
Summary	15
4. Summary and looking forward.....	16
Evaluation findings	16
Barriers to success	16
Moving forward	17
<i>Different environmental volunteering activities</i>	17
<i>Different social enterprise activities</i>	18
<i>New rewards and incentives</i>	18
<i>Promoting success</i>	18
5. References	19
6. Interviewees	19

1. Introduction

Background

The Enthusiasm Trust is a voluntary & community organisation set up in 1992 and a registered charity. Enthusiasm delivers projects, working with 11 to 18 year olds who are most at risk of offending and social exclusion. Enthusiasm have three core programmes to fully engage and support young people from local communities; Triple R which is a mentoring programme, The Key a personalised and accredited learning programme for young people and their Universal services which comprise a range of activities to promote personal achievement, social skills, team work and encourage positive engagement with their community. .

Over the last decade there has been a growing interest in the role that environmental volunteering can have in improving people's lives, this is reflected in a large number of national and regional programmes such as: Environments for all, Experience corps, 'Do-it', Millennium volunteers, Russell Commission, 'V' (Youth volunteering), Year of the volunteer 2005, Commission on the future of volunteering and Muck in for 4 life. Community Space Challenge (CSC) is a programme which builds on these experiences. For Enthusiasm it is a programme which cuts across their core activities in that it offers opportunities to young people who are engaged with Enthusiasm to become involved in environmental volunteering activities. Some young people who are involved with Enthusiasm are also involved in CSC, some young people are involved with Enthusiasm and have not been involved in CSC, and in addition there will be some young people who have been involved in a CSC activity but who have not got a further link with Enthusiasm.

As an organisation Enthusiasm has been keen to explore ways to extend their reach into the local community and to explore opportunities for diversification and greater sustainability. In December 2011 they secured funding to explore the impact of their work on young people and to explore potential for new social enterprises. They engaged researchers at the University of Derby and funding consultants 'Generate' to undertake this work. This report presents the findings of the impact research.

Research objectives

The aims of research were:-

- To build a body of evidence of impact regarding environmental volunteering services on young people, and on the community
- To provide an overview of the types of young people who have participated in the past
- To document aspects of previous projects that encourage young people to participate and to achieve, and those that discourage young people from participation or from sustained engagement
- To identify the key resources that underpinned successful project delivery
- To identify specific achievements of young people that are attributable to the programme

Research approach

Evaluations of these previous volunteering projects has demonstrated strong evidence of positive impacts of volunteering for the individual, these include building social capital, social inclusion, health and well-being, and developing skills (O'Brien, et al, 2010). Specifically for young people the National Youth Agency (2007) found that all groups including the deprived benefitted from volunteering which improved

self-confidence, teamwork skills, having fun, cooperation, compromise, listening to others, communication, meeting people and making friends. However, the research does recognise that different groups of young people gain different positive experience from volunteering, for example, the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) (2002) found groups with no qualifications benefit most in gaining confidence, building self esteem and gaining increased familiarity with a work situation. The study also found volunteering was perceived to significantly impact on reducing social exclusion to this group (IVR, 2002).

Research specifically associated with environmental volunteering (Measham and Barnett, 2008) identified five models of environmental voluntary action, namely activism, education, monitoring, restoration, and sustainable living. They also identified attachment to a particular place or location and desire to care for the environment as the main attraction for voluntary work concerned with the environment. O'Brien et al. (2010) summarised the main benefits of environmental volunteering 'as a means to bring people together to develop confidence, help them participate in improving local community places, developing a common sense of place, a sense of ownership and shared identity'. Dalgleish (2006) found that environment volunteering can be particularly beneficial for young people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives, such as addiction, homelessness and mental health problems, 'to get back on their feet and become fully integrated into communities'.

Based on these previous evaluation findings it was clear that the potential impacts that might be expected are associated with attitudes and changes in values. These were best explored using qualitative research approaches. This facilitated the exploration of issues associated with engagement, participation and achievement of young people, with corroboration from community stakeholders, and Enthusiasm staff. Additional contextual information from monitoring data was also used.

The evidence used were from the following sources:

Data Source	Application
Enthusiasm monitoring data	To profile the young people who participate in Enthusiasm activities generally, and specifically those that volunteer on environment programmes.
Other social and economic neighbourhood data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation	To profile the local area to provide context for the impact and opportunity assessments.
Interviews with staff	To identify good practice, unique aspects of the programme, critical resources, and facilitate access to young people
Interviews with young people engaged with Enthusiasm	To profile challenges in their lives, reasons for participation, likes and dislikes about the programme, personal impact and future plans
Interviews with community members or community leaders	To identify impact of Enthusiasm work to date and potential for development social enterprises

The research report is based on interviews with four members of Enthusiasm staff, and six community stakeholders. Young people who were involved with the environmental projects were invited to attend focus groups at Enthusiasm by the

workers. Five focus group sessions were held with 20 young people participating in discussions of whom eight were female, their ages ranged from 11 to 15 and their duration of involvement ranged from four months to six years.

Prior to the interviews a series of question schedules were developed with the approach to the research and its associated tools being approved through the University of Derby's Research Ethics Approvals process.

Data records held by Enthusiasm are based on personal files and it is difficult to extract from these files those young people who are involved specifically in CSC programmes as a sub-set of those involved with the range of other Enthusiasm activities. The report therefore uses the monitoring data provided by Enthusiasm for CSC for one year of activity to demonstrate the types and level of activity as well as the numbers and characteristics of young people involved.

Similarly the report presents Index of Multiple Deprivation data to establish the context of the work that Enthusiasm does but there are no readily available data resources that present the potential impact of Enthusiasm's work at a neighbourhood level. Data that might once have been available, for example reported incidences of crime or anti-social behaviour are no longer because budget cuts have removed that capacity and expertise from the Police Authority.

The report

The findings of the evaluation are presented as follows:

- Section two: Young people's engagement with Enthusiasm which profiles their responses to thematic issues
- Section three: Benefits and impacts which looks at how Enthusiasm has changed their lives and those in the community by referring to testimony from both young people, and local stakeholders
- Section four: Summary and recommendations which brings together the key messages from the impact research, and looks forward to suggesting ways in which Enthusiasm could develop further based on the testimonies presented to the researchers.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all those who participated in the research, particularly staff members who facilitated the research with the young people and the young people themselves who offered their honest and often humorous responses to the research questions.

We are also indebted to Ashley Lewis of Street Pride who provided the photographs.

2. Young people's engagement with Enthusiasm (CSC)

What types of young people get involved in Enthusiasm programmes?

Enthusiasm works primarily in the Allenton and Osmaston areas of Derby. The table below sets out the index of multiple deprivation (IMD) scores for the local areas that comprise Chellaston, Sinfín and Alvaston within which young people who engage with Enthusiasm are most likely to live. The table shows that these are areas of disadvantage within the City.

	IMD 2010 Score
Alvaston	31.87
Sinfín	28.57
Chellaston	15.89
Derby	24.02

N.B. nationally the scores range from 0.53 - 87.8 with the highest number being the most deprived.

Young people who engage with Enthusiasm's CSC programme are monitored with key information being provided to the funder. Analysis of these monitoring reports for the last year show that 109 young people were attracted to the programme who had not had any contact with Enthusiasm before. Of these individuals, 69 were female, 34 were male with 6 having missing records. Their ages ranged from 9 to 17 years and their engagement per quarter year ranged from 1 hour to 22.5 hours. The young people who engaged for the longest periods of time also tended to be those who were assessed to be at risk. Twenty two of those who participated were assessed to be at a low or occasional level of risk of offending according to the Youth Inclusion Programme criteria.

How do young people hear about Enthusiasm and CSC

The CSC programme is a voluntary, universal programme for any young person between the ages of 11-18 who wish to get involved. There are a number of ways which young people hear about the projects offered by Enthusiasm. The provision offered by Enthusiasm is widely promoted using a range of media including articles in the local newspaper; The Derby Evening Telegraph, and posters placed in local venues such as Community Housing offices and schools. Whilst young people mentioned the full range of avenues through which they had heard about Enthusiasm, local community events such as fun days and school assemblies had proved interesting and engaging.

Young people also hear about Enthusiasm during their time involved with other activities such as through attending another youth club or by being involved in the programme Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP). Enthusiasm staff delivery PAYP programmes and have an opportunity to talk with and engage young people in the CSC activities. Enthusiasm staff themselves are often in a position to see young people in and about the community through their own networks and families. A number of the research participants told us that they had heard about Enthusiasm through their older brothers and sisters who were often part of the same friendship groups as the Enthusiasm staff. The element of personal recommendation is a very effective means of engaging young people in the project. Where young people were hearing about the project through the personal recommendation of older siblings (some of whom may have been involved in the project themselves) or through friends they are more inclined to make the first steps in attending a session..

A further way in which young people become engaged in Enthusiasm programmes is through more formal referral processes. Enthusiasm run a mentoring programme (The Triple R programme) which itself takes referrals from the Police, Social care, Housing, school, Enthusiasm staff themselves or through self-referral. Young people are referred to the mentoring programme for a variety of reasons such as school truancy, or exclusion, or being involved in or at risk of becoming involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour. As part of the mentoring scheme young people agree targets which may or may not include involvement in CSC activities.

How do stakeholders promote enthusiasm?

Stakeholders were highly complimentary about the work of The Enthusiasm Trust and sought opportunities to raise the profile of their activities. This happens in one of two ways. Many of the stakeholders are involved in a range of groups and meetings of these groups provide opportunities to promote the work of Enthusiasm to other members. This raises the profile of Enthusiasm and promotes activities to potential new stakeholders.

Stakeholders rarely found ways to promote Enthusiasm directly to young people themselves but offered opportunities for Enthusiasm staff to promote their activities to young people through the provision of stalls at local community events.

What makes young people get involved?

Young people and Enthusiasm staff alike were very clear that Enthusiasm offers young people a unique opportunity to make a difference however the messages which young people first hear about the type of activities which Enthusiasm offers are important in encouraging initial engagement.

For many of the young people in the communities in which Enthusiasm works, the concept of environmental work; cleaning up the community and doing good works is not one which has huge appeal. Enthusiasm staff told us that the idea of environmental work had to be carefully presented as a way of getting new skills.

'When you mention about environmental work they don't want to do it. When you mention the skills you get, they do want to do it!'

Staff member, The Enthusiasm Trust

Some young people told us that their lives contained long periods of boredom and inactivity. Enthusiasm offers a popular and interesting alternative. 'It sounded good' or 'there was lots to do' were regular responses from the young people who participated in the research. One young person told us

'People were suggesting it was something fun and good to do- to help in the community.'

CSC volunteer

Some young people told us that their lives were blighted with problems and many admitted to needing help and support. Enthusiasm provides this in many ways. Young people told us that they often wanted someone to talk to; someone they could go to for advice; somewhere they could go to get a hot drink or a meal. Enthusiasm staff provide all of these areas of support and some young people told us that this is why they both got involved and stayed to work on the projects. There was a genuine sense of gratitude for this provision.

'Thanks for your help – it will always be appreciated.'
CSC volunteer (19 years old)

Some young people admitted that they felt that they had lost their way and needed a new chance to get back on track with their lives. Many young people fail at school because the environment and demands are difficult or antagonistic to them. A referral to Enthusiasm by school makes attendance more relevant in helping them work on their problems and issues in a different way.

A very popular aspect of the CSC project is that volunteers receive rewards for their contribution. Rewards vary from vouchers for meals to trips to interesting activities such as theme parks, bowling, skating, or water sports. This is a very great incentive for young people and stimulates both interest and attendance at CSC activities. The provision of rewards has stimulated some debate amongst local community members. Staff reported that they sometimes get challenged about their 'rewarding naughty young people'. The staff however are very positive about the system of rewards. Many of the young people involved in CSC projects have not received positive rewards or praise in their lives and the reward system is a good approach to teaching that hard work can result in a positive outcome. One of the young people supported this view:

'They [Enthusiasm] teach you that you have to work for it. It's like the school prom. I can't go but I do have a chance to earn it back. They teach you this here.'

CSC volunteer

Young people also saw the incentives as a particular benefit. Being able to go out for a meal, or to try new and exciting activities such as skating, bowling or water sports helped young people develop new insights into the world and of the possibilities which were open to them. Without Enthusiasm, many of the young people would have had a narrow life experience, seldom moving away from their communities or leaving Derby.

What activities do young people get involved in?

Young people reported a range of activities in which they had been involved however, whilst a range of activities were described the more regularly cited were

- Litter picking
- Tidying up gardens particularly around the library
- Big clean ups
- Jubilee celebration fun day
- Cleaning up graffiti and helping to design street murals
- Delivering leaflets
- Visit to the waste recycling centre.
- Residential

For most of the young people involved in CSC activities it is the first time they have ever been involved in activities of this sort.

Monitoring data suggests that in any quarter of a year an individual may volunteer for between 1 hour to 22½ hours – the average duration being 3½ hours.



Figure 1: Helping to improve the open spaces in our local community

Why do they stay?

Having engaged in the CSC activities, young people want to stay and continue their involvement. There are a number of reasons for this.

Young people living in the target areas for CSC projects are subject to a degree of deprivation which can often be expressed through family breakdown, complex family structures, poverty and a lack of positive role models. Enthusiasm challenges these situations by providing opportunities for young people to be themselves and to learn about personal and community wellbeing in a safe and secure environment. This sense of security and personal space was seen as a very positive aspect of the Enthusiasm projects. Young people liked the safe atmosphere.

[I like] the atmosphere- no fighting no arguing. It's like one big family.'

*'It's safe to be ourselves.'
CSC volunteers.*

For some of the CSC volunteers, Enthusiasm offers a real lifeline where they can continue to find sanctuary, a hot meal and a hot drink. Enthusiasm staff told us that some young people were more likely to have personal conversations in informal settings because it is less intense and more natural. CSC activities provide a 'better way of having 1:1's' Conversations of this sort allow Enthusiasm staff to monitor a young person's social and family situation and to make provision for support either directly by providing meals, drinks and emotional support or through referral. The purpose of this research was not to explore individuals life situations and young people did not tell us about the difficulties which confronted them however they spoke with pride and dignity about the contribution they were able to make to the community through prolonged engagement with the CSC activities and for some the

reward they received was expressed simply by saying that the staff '*help you*'. Or that '*they get you takeaways*'. Some young people told us that the takeaways represented the only meal they had eaten that day.

The research participants were quick to acknowledge the vital role that Enthusiasm projects play in alleviating boredom, helplessness and hopelessness.

'They stop you getting bored. I'd sooner litter pick than do nothing'

Young people readily acknowledge that their lifestyles prior to getting involved in Enthusiasm were not desirable but they expressed a sense of frustration at the lack of local opportunities. Having found Enthusiasm, the organisation satisfies a need for a more positive way to conduct their lives. Young people told us

'It's better than being out drinking and getting in fights.'

'It gets you off the streets so you're not terrorising people!'

CSC volunteers

One particularly important aspect which determines the length of time that young people stay involved in the CSC project is the contribution made by the staff. Young people were particularly positive about the example set by staff as positive role models. The youth and personal backgrounds and experiences of the staff are particularly important in helping young people identify and then model positive ways of being.

'The staff are young - they can relate to you because they have had similar life experiences'

CSC volunteer

In particular, young people used the word 'respect' to describe the relationships they developed with the Enthusiasm staff. Many tried to explain the concept of developing mutual respect: that respect needed to be earned and not expected.

'The youth workers give you respect but you have to respect them back!'

CSC volunteer

The idea that respect is not an instant reward but one which has to be earned and is ongoing and developmental might explain why young people wish to stay to develop the relationships which they deem to have value in their lives. The concept of respect was a recurrent theme and one which will be picked up again in section 2.1 below.

Respect was not the only outcome which young people described. Many explained that by staying with Enthusiasm they were able to gain skills and qualifications which they deemed useful in getting a job or going to college. The fact that they were able to do this in an environment which was so dissimilar to a school environment was of particular importance. With skills, confidence and respectful relationships young people told us that their confidence continued to grow. They recognised this as an ongoing process which took time and therefore stayed with the project because they saw that personal development made them feel better about themselves and could lead to better life chances.

Of course for some young people, a sense of fun and camaraderie is what drives them to maintain their attendance at Enthusiasm. The incentives are a popular

outcome of CSC activities and certainly young people were animated and excited when they spoke about their adventures skating and doing water sports however young people enjoyed the fun activities and the sense of achievement that these engendered.

The Enthusiasm staff explained that once young people

'realise they get respect from the community, this gives them a sense of achievement. For some young people this will be the first time they have received praise.'

Staff member, Enthusiasm Trust

What activities would young people be involved in without CSC?

Young people, Enthusiasm staff and stakeholders were all quite clear that without Enthusiasm, young people would be leading a less than desirable existence often perpetrating criminal and antisocial behaviour. Young people would be involved in risk taking behaviour such as smoking, drinking and taking drugs. They might engage in anti-social behaviour such as smashing windows, walking the streets and being involved in 'general naughtiness and bad behaviour'. Some young people admitted to arguing with their parents and 'hurting people's feelings'. On a more serious note some young people told us that might be involved in '*criminal behaviour which might lead to getting locked up*' or simply '*getting in trouble with the police*'.

Contrary to perpetrating undesirable criminal and anti-social activity, some young people told us that without Enthusiasm they would have been the victims of such issues. One young person expressed this by telling us that without Enthusiasm he would spend his time

*'Being a victim - getting beaten up
CSC volunteer'*

Summary

The Enthusiasm CSC activities are both Universal in that any young person can get involved but also provide a targeted service to which young people can be referred. Young people here about Enthusiasm and its activities in formal ways through active promotion and informally through friends and family. Once engaged in the CSC activities young people tend to stay involved for considerable periods of time. The reasons for this are varied but include

- A safe and secure environment
- For sanctuary and sustenance
- To alleviate boredom
- Rewarding relationship building
- The development of new skills and achievement of qualifications leading to better life chances
- Fun and friendship
- Incentives
- Positive reinforcement

Without Enthusiasm projects, young people would be involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour as both perpetrators and victims.

3. The benefits and impacts

Previous research (O'Brien et al 2010) has suggested that environmental volunteering is associated with a number of sets of benefits for the volunteers themselves, for their communities and for the environment in which they live. This section explores the benefits and impact for these three areas using testimony from young people, the enthusiasm staff and other community stakeholders.

Impacts on young people.

The benefits of Enthusiasm are manifold and range for small changes in personal behaviour and the development of personal insights by young people to large scale regeneration of community areas. Whilst some outcomes are easy to measure such as the improvement in attendance by young people, other impacts are more difficult to measure. Enthusiasm keeps record on the types of activities which they provide however they also employ interesting ways of monitoring outcomes such as by through the making of short DVD films and the production of scrapbooks by the CSC volunteers. These approaches allow Enthusiasm staff to monitor the soft outcomes of the CSC activities. This section deals with a range of benefits that Enthusiasm and the CSC activities in particular bring to young people and their communities.

Educational attainment

CSC activities provide young people with an opportunity to learn both formally and informally. The opportunity to gain accreditation through programmes such as The John Muir Award, or ASDAN awards exists for some of the CSC volunteers. Enthusiasm also provides 'in house certificates' and the opportunity to learn numeracy, literacy and First Aid skills. Some of the CSC volunteers do not achieve in school and the recognition through formal accreditation makes both the young people and their families proud. It can also help young people to move into positive outcomes such as college courses, work-based training or paid employment.

Self awareness

For any young people, informal learning gives rise to new understandings about their behavioural issues, how bad behaviour impacts on both themselves and those around them and to find ways of managing their behaviour. One stakeholder had particularly observed the changes as a result of the CSC activities.

'They still have bits of attitude but that's human nature. They seem more happy, open, talkative. They don't go off on one. They might be sulking for 5 to 10 minutes and then they come round.'

Community activist and volunteer

Young people said that Enthusiasm provided an environment which allowed them to develop self-discipline and self-control. They told us that the projects had provided them with an opportunity to reflect on themselves and their behaviour

'There's a devil and an angel on your shoulder. When you are here you are not doing stuff that's inappropriate. It helps you to control yourself'.

12 year old CSC volunteer

Raised aspirations

Both staff and young people told us that CSC projects had provided opportunities for career learning. Young people told us that they had new ideas about jobs such as working with the elderly, working in environmentally related jobs, and youth work.

CSC projects provide an opportunity to learn new knowledge, skills and attitudes however there are many other benefits to getting involved in CSC activities. Most notably, young people indicated that they understood the value of attending CSC activities in helping them secure a better future for themselves. Attending Enthusiasm enhanced their behaviour at school and could lead therefore to better outcomes in GCSE examinations

'If I was really naughty, Enthusiasm would help me think about how being naughty can affect your GCSE's and getting a job in the future.'
CSC volunteer

'I think more about myself and my studies and what might happen in the future.'
CSC volunteer

Young people regularly saw a more positive outlook on life as a result of the Enthusiasm projects. This positive outlook translated into higher aspirations for themselves. Young people in the age range 16-19 told us that as a result of Enthusiasm

'I am unemployed but seeking construction work'.

'I'm doing my construction card so that when I go on site I can be safe.'

'I'm going to college in September to do mechanical engineering'

Two young people told us that they were now considering going to university, one to study a music-related course and one to study business.

Impacts on community

Young role models

Understanding the consequence of action and the impact of negative behaviour leaves a lasting legacy with the young people who participated in the project. They often saw themselves as role models for the children coming up behind them. Having turned their own behaviour around, they felt more confident in providing more positive messages to the children and young people in their communities. The new knowledge that they themselves could provide inspiration was a very life changing experience for some of the participants. One community stakeholder recognised the impact of Enthusiasm on developing future role models.

'One lad, he and his parents have nothing. From four years ago he was a wild animal and now he is a pillar of society. This is what Enthusiasm can do.'
Community activist and volunteer

The young people who participated in the research regularly referred to or used the concept of 'respect' to speak about a new way of looking at both themselves, the staff at Enthusiasm, their communities and the adults who they came into contact with. What is evident from the research is that the CSC projects and the Enthusiasm

provision as a whole have allowed young people to understand and apply the concept of respect in more productive ways.

'Before I came I thought respect was about 'don't let no one trample over you'. Now I understand that respect is about being kind, being nice to people, being generous, helping people out with their problems'.

CSC volunteer(19 years old)

Less anti-social behaviour

Without Enthusiasm, young people, staff and stakeholders were all clear that there would be more crime and anti-social behaviour leading to further breakdown in local communities and a less desirable environment. Young people need guided and facilitated activities which lead to positive outcomes for themselves and those around them. Enthusiasm provides these opportunities through CSC and also promotes these good works so that young people receive the recognition for their efforts.

'For the young people there would have been less opportunity to do things on a practical level. This would have resulted in anti-social behaviour and crime. They would have been more vulnerable to other groups who could have diverted them into bad behaviour. They wouldn't have had an opportunity to build a sense of belonging and wellbeing. There wouldn't have been all the good news stories!'

Neighbourhood manager

Enthusiasm has provided a positive approach to challenging gang culture in the areas in which they operate. Young people denote their membership of gangs by wearing logos or colours associated with their own particular group. This heightens the awareness of each gang amongst community members particularly younger children and can be very intimidating. Enthusiasm has dilutes this by discouraging the wearing of colours and logos. One stakeholder told us that this had been a particularly effective approach.

'Even little kids of four years old could tell you the colours of the gangs but now it doesn't revolve around gangs. It hasn't disappeared. Enthusiasm tries and discourages the wearing of gang colours. This makes the gangs seem less important. It is a lot safer. WE had 50 feral children and now we have 2 or 3. I don't think anyone can do anything about these. I do know of failures but very few.'

Community activist and volunteer

More respectful behaviour

Many young people had started to realise the sources of their anger and this had lead them to find ways of controlling inappropriate behavioural responses. Young people told us that they had '*become more mature*' '*learned to take turns*' and had learned how to '*treat people more equally*'. Issues such as using more appropriate language and communication styles in a variety of situations were lessons which were valued by the young people. Better self-esteem has also lead to a reduction in bullying behaviour. One young person summed this up saying that she was no longer '*horrible to other people*'. This was exemplified by one community stakeholder who told us that one young female CSC volunteer had insisted on escorting her back to her car at the end of a CSC project which had gone on after dark. The community stakeholder commented

'We have systems in place to keep us safe but this young girl was not to know that. She wasn't prompted and she did this off her own back. It was really lovely'

Street Pride employee

The staff recognised that young people are 'hard work' when they first begin attending Enthusiasm activities however as they begin to recognise their contribution their confidence grows and they are empowered to share their own ideas and begin to get more involved. This provides positive reinforcement which can translate to improved behaviour outside Enthusiasm. One young person who had contributed to cleaning up their community through a gardening activity tried to improve the garden at his own home; an activity which would not have happened prior to the CSC activities.

Stronger families

Both staff and young people told us that the families of the CSC volunteers had benefitted. Young people felt that parents were happier when they knew their children were out of the house and doing something positive in a safe environment. Staff told us that often the parents are 'amazed' by the change in the young people. Parents are proud to know that their children are involved in positive activities which benefit the community. Parents often attend the fun days and community activities which their children have helped to organise and this can be seen to positively reinforce the young people's improved behaviour. Staff also told us that many young people have unrealistic expectations of their parents and can often exhibit a 'want, want' culture and that this can be particularly prevalent at Christmas when family budgets are stretched. By introducing young people to the needs of others, this can help to reduce this attitude. CSC projects have included visiting old people's homes to take presents. This can change young people's perceptions of need. Staff told us that as a result the young people are less demanding on parents who in turn do not get into so much debt.

Intergenerational understanding

Young people see themselves as important new role models for the children coming up behind them. This is also reinforced by the adults who live in communities who no longer see the young members of the communities as '*trouble causing hoodies*' but as people who have a real contribution to make. Not only have CSC projects resulted in improved behaviour in younger children but Enthusiasm staff told us that during a recent community tiding activity on the canal a number of adults came out and joined the young people to help with the clean up. One stakeholder explained that CSC activities changed the perceptions and stereotypes which surrounded young people.

'These projects have a huge impact on the perceptions of young people. It breaks down the perceptions which are negative. This naturally gets dialogue going and has a positive impact on community cohesion'.

Neighbourhood manager

Environmental impact

Environmental quality

The community benefits in a number of ways. As a result of CSC activities the communities are cleaner and '*it's a nicer place to be for everyone*'. Young people told us that this improved '*the quality*' of the area, improving respect amongst members of the community, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and improving the future outcomes of everyone. An example of this working in practice takes place around

bonfire night and Halloween. CSC activities have included a project to design ‘no trick or treat’ posters which have been used by the local residents. This has engendered a greater sense of personal safety particularly amongst elderly community residents.

Stakeholders told us that the resource which Enthusiasm brings to communities is highly valued particularly at a time of austerity. Public services are increasingly stretched and would not be available to upgrade and maintain public spaces or to clean up litter in the way in which CSC activities do.



Figure 2: Before environmental improvement works



Figure 3: After environmental improvement works

The areas in which the young people are living are often low quality urban environments with environmental degradation a daily reality. The photographs below give a 'before' and 'after' demonstration of the impact of their activity. The work that the young people undertake in cleaning up dog dirt, litter and graffiti enhances the physical appearance of places and encourages nature to rehabilitate areas and bring interesting wild-life. Young people have both made and erected bird feeders and have enjoyed the new bird life which has resulted. Young people have demonstrated a protective attitude to their new flourishing neighbourhoods. When a garden area was vandalised having received attention from CSC volunteers staff told us that the young people were genuinely 'wounded' but could see the need for their commitment to go back and re-tidy the area.

Young people told us that they felt staff benefitted from Enthusiasm and CSC activities. They recognised the importance of work in people's lives and believed that staff received a genuine benefit from knowing that they had made a genuine difference to someone's life. Young people believed that by continuing to attend CSC activities and making a commitment to the projects they were demonstrating their gratitude and appreciation to staff for their hard work and support. They also noted with some mirth that the Enthusiasm staff had an opportunity to enjoy the treats and to have a laugh at the same time as working!

Summary

Enthusiasm provides a valuable opportunity for young people to learn new knowledge and skills. It also provides a safe space for young people to learn about themselves and to develop more appropriate behaviour. Our research has shown that these projects inspire young people to try harder, and contribute their time and skills in a way which engenders genuine respect from the adults and children around them. Young people undertaking CSC projects have contributed to a genuine improvement in their communities both in terms of the environment and a general sense of safety and wellbeing.

4. Summary and looking forward

Evaluation findings

The evidence collated by the evaluation research for CSC and Enthusiasm reflects the findings from other research into the impact of environmental projects in that young people who participate gain a number of benefits ranging from improved confidence and maturity, an improved attitude to learning with raised aspirations, better relationships with adults and other people in the community and a different friendship groups.

The types of young people who participated in the research were often those who admitted that were if not for the project they might find themselves engaging in anti-social behaviour or in trouble with the police. Not all young people who participated in the research or indeed, who participate in the project saw themselves in this way. Some just wanted something to do or came along to be with a friend. Monitoring records suggest that one in five young people who have had some form of engagement were at risk, but that those who were at risk had a much higher level of engagement. Consequently evidence supports the view that the young people who are engaging in the project are those who are socially or economically disadvantaged and who might become disengaged in the future.

Community impacts also are positive – one community stakeholder said they wanted to say ‘thank you - it is a simple word but they are doing a fantastic job. I hope that it carries on’.

‘It would impact on our work if they weren’t there and there are very few criticisms that come to us. We only hear if something goes wrong and we don’t hear these things. We have a good relationship with them’.

Neighbourhood manager

Members of the community recognised the massive contribution which is made by Enthusiasm staff in general. The organisation is tightly managed and very focussed in their work. Some stakeholders would like the opportunity to provide more on-going support and would like to be more involved in the decision making processes. This would have the impact of increasing community ownership and engagement and would lead to future sustainability.

Many of those who engaged in the research spoke with great warmth and gratitude for the efforts of the staff at Enthusiasm. The commitment and passion of the Enthusiasm staff for their jobs is one of the great drivers of Enthusiasms success. This is widely recognised by the young people and community stakeholders. They and the staff are part of the community they serve. Their way of working is recognised as one of the key reasons for the success of the project in that they take the time to develop meaningful relationships with young people and engage them in the decision making process rather than telling them what to do.

Barriers to success

Whilst the overall view of Enthusiasm and the CSC projects is very positive amongst young people, Enthusiasm staff and community stakeholders there are a number of issues which impede its success. These factors are summarised below.

- Enthusiasm staff told us that the planning cycle limited the type of activities which they could offer. Having to make a commitment in September for a full year of activities meant that flexibility was limited and there was little chance to respond to situations in communities as they arose.
- One of the main barriers to taking CSC activities forwards was a lack of time. There was a frustration that CSC funding would soon end and that the good work of CSC would not be able to develop in a way which would meet its potential.
- Enthusiasm staff were particularly concerned by the Coalitions Governments use of environmental projects as a punitive measure. Young people on remand wore fluorescent jackets whilst undertaking community environmental work. Young people developed a sense of scepticism over getting involved in Enthusiasm projects because they did not want to be associated with such negative images.
- Land ownership is a barrier to project development. There are areas in communities which would benefit from CSC attention however landlords are often absent or will not give their permission for such work to go ahead. As a consequence CSC activities can only take place on publicly owned land or where a land lord has given their permission
- Health and safety requirements mean that young people cannot use equipment which might be seen as dangerous. This limits the use of hedge cutters and 'strimmers' which would otherwise make the environmental projects easier.
- The use of incentives is seen as a means to encourage young people to participate but if the incentive is not commensurate to the activity then their use becomes skewed and the voluntarism aspect of the project becomes diluted to the extent that young people see the 'reward' as a payment rather than an occasional demonstration of recognition.

Moving forward

Different environmental volunteering activities

There were a range of views about what activities and projects Enthusiasm might develop in the future. Young people had a number of ideas of activities and projects they would like to be involved in. These included

- Jet washing pavements to remove dirt and weeds
- Improving other parks where 'little kids play'
- More work to help the elderly
- Visit the cancer ward at Christmas to give out presents
- Provide food for the homeless at Christmas
- Have more fun days
- Hold cake sales

Both staff and young people told us that they felt visits to other areas to see how CSC activities were conducted would be helpful in getting and sharing new ideas and to meet new people from other areas. The latter could have particular significance in helping young people develop confidence in travelling to new areas and breaking

down the gang culture which often exists between different communities. As a measure of the popularity of the CSC programme, young people told us that they wished that they could attend more regularly, to respond more quickly to environmental issues as they arose and to be able to provide support to on an individual basis such as to help tidy up an old persons garden.

In addition to CSC activities, young people told us that they particularly valued their 1:1 time with Enthusiasm staff and wished to have access to more of this resource.

Different social enterprise activities

Young people engaged with Enthusiasm were also keen to develop activities that would contribute to the organisation's sustainability through engagement in a range of social enterprise activities. These were suggested to a workshop which was held as part of the social enterprise development work and included:

- Garden clearing
- Van and car wash
- Bike Repair
- Clean houses
- Celebration cakes
- Burger Van
- T shirt printing
- Lemonade stand

This provides an important reflection both of young people's commitment to Enthusiasm and also their active interest in developing entrepreneurial skills on behalf of their community.

New rewards and incentives

Young people also had ideas about the type of rewards they would like to receive. Some of the ideas they contributed would seem impractical or dangerous however all are recorded below. These included

- Motor cross
- Bungee jumping
- Skydiving
- Visiting Thorpe Park
- Visiting a music studio

Promoting success

Enthusiasm makes a big impact on the young people and communities in areas of Derby. The work is much appreciated but throughout the research there was a sense that this good work could be promoted more. Stakeholders and staff suggested that Enthusiasm needed to develop better methods of communicating with beneficiaries and community stakeholders and leaders. Those stakeholders who participated in the research found ways of spreading good news about Enthusiasm through forums and meetings but often people told us that this did not reach far enough and certainly more could be done to engage the interest of more young people.

5. References

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6. Interviewees

Alison Martin, Councillor

Paula Solowij, Derby Homes

Zoe Nettleship, Street Pride

Toni Leatherland, Neighbourhood Manager

Gary Wooley, Resident/member of OSCAR (local community group)

Ashley Lewis, Street Pride

Enthusiasm staff: Carla, Ryan, James and Rachel.

International Centre for Guidance Studies

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