

Tired of hanging around: Using sport and leisure activities to prevent anti-social behaviour by young people

London video transcript

Voiceover (VO): Don't be fooled – these are not regular fire fighters whose proud parents have turned out to see. Not so long ago some of these youngsters might well have been causing the local fire service real problems.

PETE WATSON

LIFE TRAINER:

We was getting attacked – young people were firing fireworks – throwing cans at us – actually attacking and abusing us.

NIGEL HALL

GROUP MANAGER YOUTH ENGAGEMENT LONDON FIRE BRIGADE:

The amount of false alarm calls and rubbish fires was actually effecting our main duty which is to save lives.

VO: Nigel Hall – who was then serving in Tower Hamlets - recognised that this was a problem that conventional policing was not managing to address. So he persuaded the London Fire Brigade to launch the LIFE programme – its own answer to antisocial behaviour.

RON DOBSON

LONDON FIRE COMMISSIONER:

We had to find a way of treating its root cause and in that way provide more of a service to the public. So the LIFE programme was designed to engage with the youth.

TREVOR MEERS

BOROUGH COMMANDER HAVERING LONDON FIRE BRIGADE:

We don't have a lot of spare cash but we have a lot of resources – a lot of equipment and a lot of buildings so therefore a programme of this nature could be run anywhere really with the right commitment – from individuals and the support of partnership agencies

NIGEL HALL:

The Council were involved right from the start – but the main people from the Council was the Youth Provision Services and the Youth Offending teams – and later on - as the programme developed – the Safer Neighbourhood teams.

VO: What appealed to the potential partners was the prospect of being able to refer young people to a 5 day course that would instil respect and self belief.

PETE WATSON:

They turn up on a Monday morning here and a lot of them, they turn up with their hoodies on, their baseball caps, and they sit down with their heads down – and what we like to do is give them a bit of self esteem.

YOUNG MAN 1:

Really it's like not knowing each other and we've got to work together on this course.

YOUNG MAN 2:

Me and John didn't know each other when we come here – didn't know anyone – we've all just got along – and we're good mates now you know.

YOUNG MAN 3:

And actually like – working as a team is a lot easier than working on your own.

NIGEL HALL:

Rolling out a hose is impossible to do on your own – you need a team. Climbing up a ladder needs someone to foot it – the activities were chosen because they have to do them as a team. We've got a Youth Forum within the LIFE programme. We invite young people back to change the programme if we need to. We have a feedback process at the end of the programme so people can comment on the good bits and the bad bits.

VO: But what evidence is there that the enthusiasm continues once the 5 days are over?

JANE HADLOW

14-19 STRATEGY MANAGER HAVERING:

We've found that some of the youngsters come out of this wanting to join other cadet forces, across other public services and uniform services They can now see the relevance of getting their English and their Maths qualifications, of working with other people but also being focused on their school work.

COL. MARK BRYANT

COMMANDANT AREA ARMY CADET FORCE:

And we're getting youngsters who leave this course and join the Army Cadet Force – and they are doing really well – they're doing absolutely fantastic.

VO: Better future prospects – fewer malicious call outs – the LIFE Project has established an awareness amongst its project partners of the real benefit to the community.

RIC KASHMAN

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE MANAGER HAVERING:

It's hard for partners to say – well I'm putting my money or my staff into it – and what actually happens? Here there is an incredibly positive product in which they can actually see the change for themselves – because they will have been referring the kids in and they can actually see what happens by the end of the week.

RON DOBSON:

There's been a real positive benefit in actually starting to prevent attacks in the first place - and actually formed a bond between local communities and the London Fire Brigade.

NIGEL HALL:

The Parade at the end is all about rewarding the young people for what they've done during the week. And it's about the young people seeing that people in uniform do care about the young, They're here to look after you – and behind the uniform there is a name.

MOTHER 1:

Wouldn't usually get up for anything – but he's been getting up for this - and he enjoys it – loves it.

MOTHER 2:

I think he's sort of realised the responsibility they have on each other – working as a team.

MOTHER 3:

He's just very proud of what he's done and it's boosted his self confidence.

YOUNG WOMAN 1:

I think before I didn't really know what I wanted to do with myself – I wasn't bothered where I ended up after school

VO: What those on the programme confirm is that anti-social behaviour makes problems for all ages.

YOUNG WOMAN 2:

Bullying – name calling – just stuff like that

YOUNG MAN 3:

When you're out and around the streets and that - it's like you're all in different groups and that – other groups will say things to you and you'll say things back.

VO: First established in London – LIFE programmes are now running in many other parts of the country as well - often working alongside charities like Catch 22 which are dedicated to giving all young people a chance in life.

RON DOBSON:

I think a regional approach to projects like LIFE attacking antisocial behaviour is very important because we gain efficiencies and economies of scale.

NIGEL HALL:

We were at the receiving end of antisocial behaviour and the same people who were receiving the antisocial behaviour really now want to make a difference – so it's bringing the 2 sides closer together with a better understanding of each other – a common understanding of each others problems – so you end up with a WIN/WIN situation.