

COMMUNITIES UNITED PROJECT

DEWSBURY SCHOOLS SPORTS LINKING PROJECT

(Funded by Dewsbury Area Committee & Neighbourhood Renewal Fund)

SUMMARY REPORT 2005



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Background information on Communities United Project (CUP)

The **Communities United Project** is a registered charity based in Kirklees, (CUP) was established in 1998 in response to gaps within provision (both within the voluntary sector and mainstream provision).

The project has been funded through SRB 5, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, Community Cohesion Funding, the Football Foundation, the Home Office (Active Communities Unit), Kirklees MBC and the Connexions service.

In response to the demands for its project activity CUP has expanded over time and now co-ordinates community led initiatives in Kirklees by using the popularity of football and other sporting activity as a means of engaging young people at risk, in positive activities.

CUP has gained substantial experience in developing youth activity projects, which offer ways to breach the barriers and boundaries between different communities, and to enable more comfortable social cohesion.

Background Information on the area of Dewsbury

Dewsbury together with its smaller satellite neighbourhoods is an urban area, which, like many others in the region, is home to a number of diverse communities and cultural groups. As with many multicultural areas there is a tendency in the Dewsbury area for different communities to gravitate towards specific geographic pockets of the town, so that in some residential neighbourhoods there is a concentration of a particular ethnic, cultural or religious community, sometimes almost to the exclusion of any other community or group.

This situation presents challenges for young people growing up in effectively segregated communities, as they can easily develop uninformed or even stereotypical preconceptions about other communities. They may then feel disinclined to make any extra effort required to bridge the divide between communities, areas or cultural groups, in order to find out more, or make friendships outside their own home group or community.

The organisation planned to transfer this experience to delivering a schools linking project with a sport and 'community cohesion' brief, on behalf of the Dewsbury Area Committee, Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Support Service, the three key partners and commissioning agencies.

Project Brief

On the back of the request from the Dewsbury area committee the following project brief was created.

“ To provide opportunities for young people in identified schools to participate in a programme of sporting activities comprising reciprocal hosting between schools and culminating in a festival day. A community club will be developed on the back of the programme enabling those young people to participate further in joint activities outside the school environment therefore providing opportunities for them to meet and mix socially”.

The main core aims of the project brief are to achieve the following outcomes:

- 1. Increased opportunities to mix with neighbouring communities, other children & young people**
- 2. Improved relationships between participating children, both in their own school & community, and more widely**
- 3. Increased or improved teamwork skills**
- 4. Increased awareness of other young peoples cultures**
- 5. Increased confidence and ability/skills in sporting activities**
- 6. Opportunities to participate in physical activity programmes that optimise current fitness, health & well-being.**

To be deemed a successful project these outcomes had to be reached as a minimum. Other benefits would be apparent and a bonus but the six outcomes were the paramount aims of the project

How the project worked/ what happened

Initial consultation meetings were held with all head teachers from the participating schools. The meetings were at an informative level, providing the head teachers with essential knowledge about the project and its potential positive outcomes for their school and the local community. All Headteachers gave and received feedback about the proposal and all agreed to take their place on the programme.

Phrase 1-taster sessions in each individual school

All six schools received sporting sessions in the following activities: tag rugby, rounders, athletics, football, relay games, bench ball, parachute and fun team games over a 3-week period.

The aim of the taster sessions was to enable CUP staff to develop and foster positive relationships with pupils and staff at each school. The sessions also introduced the young people to structured fun sports session, which would be the norm on the Dewsbury schools sports linking project. All of the additional sessions took part during school curriculum time.



Phrase 2-The twinning stage

The completion of the taster sessions led the project into the twinning stage.

As the project was split into two clusters, two separate cluster meetings were held with the head teachers from the respective school. The aim was review the taster sessions feedback and to plan the twinning stage in more detail with each of the schools. The feedback from all of the schools was extremely positive regarding the taster sessions and their hopes for the project.

Setting up linking stage had to be fitted in around each schools existing commitments but eventually days/ times were agreed. There were two options CUP put forward to the two cluster meetings, these were options that it was felt would work within the clusters.

Option 1- Round Robin

In this option the schools would take it in turn to host, to visit and to have on site sports when not involved in the twinning. In this option only 2 schools would be twinning at any one time. The finale to this option would be a celebration event at Dewsbury Sports centre.

Option 2- School cohesion

In this option the schools would take it in turn to host the other 2 schools in the cluster. There would be no off site sports sessions due to all the young people being at the hosting school. The finale to this option would be a celebration event at Dewsbury Sports centre.

Gareth Hamlet (CUP) discussed both options with the head teachers in detail. After deep discussions between the head teachers in each cluster it was decided that option 2 would be the preferred for cluster 1 and option 1 for cluster 2. Gareth Hamlet and Paul Lewis confirmed that CUP were happy to work through both options in the two clusters with the school. It was highlighted that the aim of the school linking was to get the young people mixing and both options provided that opportunity. GH identified the benefit of working with two options is that if one of the options is not working successfully we can always revert to the other option due to all of the schools in each cluster agreeing the same time slots for the linking sessions.

The twinning stage working plan

At the linking sessions in each cluster the groups were broken down into 3 small groups. In each of the groups a variety of sports were coached to the group over the weeks.

Teacher involvement was a useful resource at the linking sessions. Jobs the teachers participated in were photographing, interviewing (evaluation forms) or to assist with classroom based work if there is bad weather during the session time.

All the teachers involved in the project met at the beginning of the first session to discussion evaluation issues and to meet each other.

A code of conduct was drawn up for the linking sessions for the young people to follow, this was supported by all of the schools. It was stated that if CUP staff have any problems with pupils they should consult the relevant teacher.

To make the project run smoothly at each school, CUP staff would visit the hosting school a week before the first hosting session to confirm what facilities are exactly available for the project to use. This proved valuable to the project as staff could plan and prepare around facilities that were at their disposal.



Timetable

The timetable for the delivery of the project was agreed at the second meeting with all of the head teachers, agreeing on a time and day for the twinning session sessions. The following was agreed:

- Tuesdays (cluster 1) Wednesdays (cluster 2)
- 1.15pm pick up time for visiting schools
- 1.30-2.30pm twinning session hour, in cluster 2 the school not involved in the twinning due to the round robin fixture would have on site sports at their school at this time.
- 2.30pm-drop off time for visiting schools

All the head teachers were given a timetable of the working format for the hosting phrase in term of which school is hosting and on what date. To support the timetable update letters were provided to the teachers to keep them informed about relevant information in relation to the project.

Phrase 3 – The festival events

The idea of a festival event at the end of the project to celebrate the completion of the project was put forward to all of the schools by CUP staff. All the head teachers were keen for this to happen, they saw it as a great way to close the project on a celebratory note.

Due to there being two clusters, two festival events were planned.



The first festival event was at Earlsheaton Technology College and the second was at Thornhill community college. The aim of the festival events were to showcase the skills the young people had learnt over the weeks and to mix with each other one final time before the end of term. The events were identical in delivery, there were small teams of ten young people who were went through numerous skill stations trying to gather points for their team. The events lasted for one and a half hours and were attended by Councillor Iqbal and Rachel Wild a local community cohesion worker.

Parents and staff also attended the event from each of the schools involved; this was a welcome idea and a great way for people to see what the young people had learnt.

The festivals took place on Tuesday 19th and Wednesday 20th of July in the morning to accommodate the school timetable

CUP provided certificates, prizes, etc for all the young people on the project. Councillor Iqbal who spoke of his delight for the success of the project handed out the certificates to the young people.

Children evaluation feedback

To evaluate the changes in the young people four simple questions were put to them.

The questions were:

1. How much do you like mixing?
2. How much do you like visiting?

3. How much do you like making mixed teams/groups?
4. Does sport change us?

The completion of the Dewsbury school sports linking project has presented CUP with a number of qualitative results and conclusions. The project was delivered over 12 weeks with 195 children participating from the 6 schools involved. Staff had focused their time on delivering quality sporting sessions to the young people. In this time relationships between the CUP staff, the young people and teachers has grown to an impressive level. CUP staff are in a strong position to comment on the project due to these relationships and their past expertise in this line of school linking project. The major findings were:

1. All of the young people would participate in sporting activities if they were delivered at the participation level of the sports development continuum.
2. The young people displayed aversion to mix with other young people from different school in the beginning. Over time those barriers were over come through enjoyment and respect for each other's background.
3. Young people are curious about each other's backgrounds, community and school. The interest to see if there is a difference between themselves and others is extremely high!
4. Sport is a powerful tool for helping create community cohesion. The young people have created newfound friendships, which hopefully will follow them into the community of Dewsbury making it a better place.
5. Mixing with others through sport helps create community cohesion, but to embed this in the young people theoretical information regarding racism, cohesion and citizenship are needed at an early stage in the young peoples lives.



6. Peer pressure has a paramount effect of young peoples lives. The project showed in the introductory stages that the support of fellow peers was extremely high in demand from the young people.
7. To challenge prejudice more time is needed away from the sporting arena.
8. Role models for the young people play a monumental role in the young peoples actions. Having positive role models e.g. CUP staff and teachers helps creates openness from the young people to the idea of mixing with others.

9. The taster sessions in each school provided the supporting framework to the success of the project. The young people had built up a relationship with staff that had trust and respect for CUP staff. If the taster sessions weren't carried out the young people would have had too many barriers to overcome in terms of trust and respect for staff and fellow peers.
10. The young people have been powered with the knowledge of their fellow peers backgrounds to help challenge stereotypes, particularly in the light of the events in London

Teacher evaluation feedback

As part of the evaluation process of the Dewsbury Schools sports linking an evaluation of the teachers thoughts before and after the project was recorded. The process was simple the teachers answered 5 questions at the start of the project and then again at the end to review if any changes had been made in that time.

The five questions were:

1. What do you hope this project will achieve for your children?
2. What challenges do you anticipate?
3. How confident are you in the partnership?
4. How manageable do you feel the process will be?
5. Would you hope to sustain the links beyond?

To evaluate the thoughts of the teachers three cases have been reviewed. The cases have been generalised for each question.



What do you hope this project will achieve for your children?

One of the key things the teachers hoped for was interaction amongst the young people. Working together as a team was another idea that the teachers hoped the project would develop. Working together as a team covered a lot of acceptance issues e.g race and gender. Also the acceptance of each other's schools and cultures was a skill the teachers hoped the young people would develop while on the project. Fair play and sportsmanship was another skills teachers hoped to develop, understanding that winning is not everything. Finally but not the least, the teachers expected their children to develop better sporting skills will on the project.

The final evaluation showed that a lot of the hopes of the teachers were met. Feedback from the staff highlighted that their children had developed sportsmanship and fair

plays beyond their expectations. The children's sporting skills were developed as expected. Generally the feeling was also that the children on the project learn to accept each other and each other's environment. This acceptance was developed over the weeks of the project.

What challenges do you anticipate?

One of the main challenges the teachers anticipated was their children not being able to cope with losing. There was an issue around leaders and children who are leaders in their school not being able to cope with the challenge of other leaders. The children simply sharing with other schools and participating in new environments would be a challenge it was not the norm. Finally getting shy children to participate in the activities.

The project helped to bring out the shyness from some of the children. All the children participated and took part, which was excellent from the teacher's point of view.

Teachers also felt that the project developed team bonding/work skills in the young people, by the end of the project children were happy to be in and support any team they were involved in. One challenge that was not identified at the start of the project but was developed was racial conflict. In the early stages there was a minor case but as the project developed to issue disappeared. It is hoped that the project helped to raise awareness of racial issues and to combat them in sporting situations.

The final thought from the teachers in this section was the project helped to shock some of the main leaders in each school into know there are other leaders out there at other school and how to work with each other for the benefit of a team.



How confident are you in the partnership?

The general thought in this section was there was real confidence in the partnership. The main thing the teachers wanted to see was the strengthening of links between the schools, so future events can be organised whether it be sport or non-sporting. Hopes of sharing ideas in the partnership were also expected.

The project proved to be a valuable tool for skill sharing amongst the teachers. The teachers enjoyed getting involved in the project, they felt apart of it be contributing on project days. Although the project was aimed at children the teachers reflected that they too have to develop ways of mixing with each other.

How manageable do you feel the process will be?

All of the teachers felt the project was manageable; this feeling was created by CUP delivering good quality taster sessions. The taster sessions helped to develop trust in staff and CUP as an organisation to deliver the project.

After the project the teachers felt that CUP had managed the project well and the process of linking worked really well. Having good staffing levels and equipment helped to contribute to the teachers feeling the process was manageable.

Would you hope to sustain the links beyond the project?

In all of the cases the teachers wanted to work beyond the project deadline. The main thing was for the teachers on project were to create strong links with other schools. The strong links would then be used for sporting and non-sporting events.

The teacher fed back that all of their pre conceived ideas for this section had been fulfilled by the project.

CONCLUSION

The feedback from the teachers was extremely positive with regards to the project. This is a valued token as the teachers are the ones who see the changes in the children on a daily basis over the weeks of the project. The project gave the teachers chance to challenge their children in new settings and environments. The teachers were happy and in some cases surprised by the level of cohesion between the schools. All levels of the project were well managed by CUP staff. The teachers felt that the continuation of the project was paramount for the long-term development of the local schools and communities. It can be said that the project was a success for the teachers and their children from the view of the teachers.

Way Forward

The Dewsbury schools sports linking project has highlighted that a lot can be achieved in a short space of time, by using sport as a tool of engagement. The project has been well delivered and supported by CUP staff and schoolteachers. There are lots of positives to absorb, but to develop an improved project in the future there are a few alterations that cup staff feel are paramount to benefit the project and the young people involved. The recommendations are as followed:

- The creation of a community club in both clusters in Dewsbury. By developing the community clubs the young people can continue to build on their newfound friendships and can continue to improve on their sporting skills.
- Supporting theory classroom based sessions surrounding topics on racism. Community cohesion and citizenship. Sport can only contribute to the young people understanding these topics, theory away from the field of play is essential to embed good values at an early stages in the young peoples lives. By having theory to support the practise the young people will be empowered with the tools to create community cohesion and they will have a greater understanding of what is involved in it as a whole. Experts in that field of work should deliver these in school sessions. Proactive workshops rather than informative workshops would be suggested to keep the young people interested in the topics.
- To decrease anxiety about cohesion and mixing with others a peer mentor could be useful. The peer mentor (year 6) could share past experiences from the previous years project with the young people (year 5) attending this year. Due to limited free time in the national curriculum the peer mentor candidates would have to be limited. To supplement the peer mentors past experiences of the project, theory lessons providing the background details to being a peer mentor should be delivered to the selected candidates.
- External support in specialised areas of work should be realised and recruited. There is room for external delivery work in both the sporting activities and the classroom-based activities. For the sporting activities external support from local school sports partnership managers and community coaches would raise

the standard of coaching to the performance stage of the sports development continuum.

- Having one coach company delivering all the transportation jobs to and from each school. By doing this there is a settled booking which is not confusing to both schools and cup staff.
- As we mentioned earlier role models are useful tools to encourage young people with. Adult volunteers from the local community would help the young people to overcome barriers with regards to cohesion. Local volunteers could then feed into the community clubs to get involved in the sessions. The community club could then be sustained by empowered local volunteers with the skills and training to deliver community club activities without the full time help of CUP.