

TILLEY AWARD 2003

Project Title: Bay House Self- Development Course
"Putting the Unity back into Community"

Category: Partnership Projects

Name of Police Force: Lancashire Constabulary (Western Division)

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SUMMARY:

Bay provides supported accommodation for 16-25 year olds based in Alexandra Ward of Blackpool. The focus of activity, it has 14 bed spaces with an average stay of 7 months. Bay House residents have a history of; homelessness, criminality, poor education, family estrangement etc.

Bay has been a key Police partner for 4 years, engaging in a variety of Problem Oriented Approaches. This operational partnership enabled this project's development. As a result of this joint working a number of issues were identified lack of; self-esteem, confidence and teamwork. Representatives from Bay, Police, Lancashire Fire & Rescue and Leisure Development, all already acquainted through the Community Safety Partnership Youth Issues Working Group, set up a sub-group to address the presenting problems. In order to ensure compliance with the operational objectives of each partner agency, clear objectives and shared goals were established early. A number of consultation meetings took place with residents, it soon became clear established Development Courses such, as Princes Trust were too ambitious for some young people. A need for a foundation Personal Development Course was identified and the working group took this forward for development.

A 6-module course was designed which specifically addressed the complex and multiple needs of this hard to reach group. These modules were;

- Week 1 - Motivation/Attitude/Behaviour
- Week 2-Team Building
- Week 3 - Interview Skills
- Week 4 - Presentation Skills
- Week 5 - Community Project
- Week 6 - Presentation Afternoon

The course modules were designed to engage participants in a variety of classroom based and outdoor activities promoting trusting and cohesive relationships among peers, increasing self-confidence and esteem and preparing participants more fully for embarking on employment. The final week of the course - a presentation afternoon in the austere surroundings of Blackpool Town Hall was attended by a number of dignitaries where the participants each gave a short presentation. At the end of the afternoon, they were all presented with a certificate and gift from Western Division's Superintendent, providing them with a real sense of achievement and recognition for their efforts.

Due to the length of stay at Bay, potentially it could have been difficult to track their progress for any meaningful length of time. We have, however, been successful in tracking them for 12 months and the outcomes are very impressive. Six young people participated, only one has re-offended and the two prolific offenders have not re-offended. All six are now sustaining their own tenancies and five are in paid employment.

In conclusion, the course was designed to motivate and encourage change; by the end all participants had been furnished with the necessary skills and knowledge to make meaningful life changes. We didn't expect immediate results and it is pleasing to see they are all continuing to grow and develop 12 months on.

INTRODUCTION

Bay House provides supported accommodation for 16-25 year olds. It is situated in the Alexandra Ward of Blackpool an area of severe deprivation, poor housing and high crime rates. Bay provides much more than just accommodation, which sets it apart from some of the other schemes in the town. It is staffed 24 hours per day by a team of highly skilled Project Workers, offering a keyworking system. It boasts the only Lottery Funded Social Inclusion Officer in the North West, who runs a comprehensive programme of activity, support and mentoring. Residents are encouraged to engage in training or employment and issues such as lack of life and social skills, offending and family problems are addressed. Bay already has a very successful partnership with South Shore Police adopting a Problem-Oriented approach for approximately four years. This project was designed to compliment the operational interventions already in place, in order to provide meaningful long-term solutions for this hard to reach group. Scanning and Analysis using both SARA and the PAT Triangle contributed to the effectiveness of the programme.

Bay receives referrals from a number of statutory and voluntary bodies within the town, including:

- Youth Offending Team
- Probation Service
- Social Services
- StreetLife
- Salvation Army
- Housing Advice

This means a number of our residents have complex and multiple needs on arrival. Many of them have prolific criminal histories, poor educational achievements and are isolated from their families.

With an average length of stay of approximately seven months, this gives ample opportunity for young people to be supported and encouraged to embrace change. This course was designed to provide the participants with the basic skills and knowledge to make life long changes, we then offered them support and encouragement to effect those changes - the rest was up to them! As a result of the success of this project, the Community Safety Partnership Youth Issues Working Group have adopted the course delivery as a commensurate part of their annual action plan (See Appendix A).

SCANNING

The aim of the project was to develop a personal skills course in order the residents of Bay House could reach their full potential. The objectives were to develop a programme specifically tailored to meet the complex needs of this group, these were:

- Improve confidence by involvement in Leisure activity
- Divert participants away from crime and anti-social behaviour
- Develop social and life skills to improve social inclusion
- To assist them in achieving their full potential

As this was a multi-agency project, the working group set clear and concise objectives with shared goals at the outset, this ensured the project met with the working requirements of all participating organisations and delivered a meaningful and effective course to the young people. Throughout the duration of the project, the outcomes were kept clearly in mind, the young people selected for the course were picked because of their offending behaviour, chaotic lifestyles and inability to integrate into a wider peer group. Additionally, the young people involved in the course, were considered unsuitable, due to their chaotic natures to participate in other more established courses such as Princes Trust. All partner agencies identified a current gap in the provision of development courses for this marginalized group. There was no course designed to bridge the gap between chaotic lifestyle and Princes Trust. This course was designed to act as a foundation course for more established, nationally recognised courses. The course was a priority as in order to reduce the offending of the young people we needed to address some of the fundamental issues they faced. Their offending was having a detrimental impact both on Bay HA, Police and the local community.

The core members of the working group were all active participants in the Community Safety Partnership Youth Issues Working Group. This meant they were all fully aware of the issues faced by the young people, together with the impact their behaviour has on local communities. The working group was particularly effective because the officers attending were all sufficiently senior within their own disciplines to be able to make positive decisions about the commitment their organisations could offer, this meant there was limited talking and maximum action.

ANALYSIS

Each agency used their own analysis tools to demonstrate the problems. Bay and Police used the PAT Triangle to assist in the analysis (See Appendix B). Bay HA was able to demonstrate a number of individuals living in the housing project were failing to progress in their development of life and social skills, a number of them had failed to complete Princes Trust Development Programmes or other training delivered by statutory providers. Police were able to demonstrate high crime levels in the Alexandra Ward where Bay House is located. Although, Bay House residents are not solely responsible for these high crime figures, the local community do tend to blame them for the ills of the area, this negative relationship with neighbours contributed both to the residents low self-esteem, social exclusion and sense of injustice being wrongly accused. Leisure Development and Lancashire Fire & Rescue had both previously worked with Bay residents and were able to assess the sense of hopelessness and apathy common among the residents. There are also a vast number of unsupervised HMO's in the Alexandra ward, which further contributes to the areas bad reputation. Deprivation, transience, seasonal employment and poor housing all have a knock on effect on the general "run down" feeling of the area.

Many of Bay's residents are victims of crime and disorder as well as having led a life of crime and anti-social behaviour, which gives little reassurance to the residents who live nearby. The community have a perception of the residents in Bay House; in one instance a member of the community suffered from criminal damage and blamed it on the residents of the hostel because the offenders were all wearing baseball caps. There was no evidence that the residents had committed the crime and they were not seen to do it but the aggrieved was quick to make judgement and just assumed it must have been them.

There are numerous reasons for residents engaging in criminal activity, in some cases they perceive it to be out of economic need as they find it difficult to cope with the bureaucracy of the benefits system and therefore often opt out of that system and sustain their lifestyles through crime. In some cases however, they merely engage in criminal activity due to boredom and thrill seeking, this course sought to offer alternative activities and to broaden their outlook on what is available. They have no goals and most are vulnerable people who dream of family life. Some of them are estranged from their families, may have come out of care and often have slept rough on the streets. The youngsters think that no one believes in them and they often stop believing in themselves.

All members of the working party felt it was important to consult with the young people on the course delivery. A number of consultation exercises were undertaken and throughout the course feedback on the course format was encouraged. As a result there have been a number of small but significant changes to the next course. It was very important to realise that whilst, as professionals, we could clearly see what the problems were, we needed to understand how the young people perceived both the problems and the solutions.

RESPONSE

It was clearly identified through Analysis there were issues around:

- Motivation
- Behaviour
- Team Building
- Employment and Training Opportunities
- Community Relations
- Confidence Building

As a response to this, a six modular self-development course was designed. This response was appropriate as having investigated existing courses we found there wasn't a course specifically tailored to the needs of this group delivered by any other organisation. The course was attended one day per week for six weeks both in-house at Bay and away from the centre. The final week consisted of a presentation afternoon at Blackpool Town Hall attended by a number of dignitaries.

Week 1 - Motivation Attitude and Behaviour - This section was delivered jointly by Police and Bay HA and focussed around looking at how your own behaviour affects the response you receive from other people. This was a particularly useful session for the young people and provided a sound basis for the rest of the course. Through the use of several mediums, including video, flipchart and role-play, we encouraged them to look at how they respond to people and situations together with the reaction their behaviour provokes in other people. The second part of the day focussed on conditioning beliefs, attitude and motivation and the effects this can have on behaviour. At the end of the day, we set some personal goals, which we asked them, to each write down on a post card. We then posted the cards back to them three months from the completion of the course, so they could see whether they had achieved their personal goals.

Week 2 - Team Building - A charity football match between Bay residents and South Shore Police had demonstrated to us that Bay residents were not very skilled at operating as a team. At the football match the Police Officers shouted encouragement, demonstrated trust and praised each other. The Bay players, in contrast, offered each other no encouragement, criticised and put each other down and showed no trust at all! This aspect of the course was delivered by Leisure Development who spent a day Abseiling and Rock Climbing with the group. These activities were specifically chosen because they require teamwork. At the conclusion of the day, each resident was showing encouragement to their peers and trusting their teammate with their safety during the abseiling. This not only taught the young people valuable lessons to take forward in life, but also improved the dynamics of the group greatly.

Week 3 — Interview Skills - The course participants had, without exception, failed to finish school. Many of them had received no interventions through CareerLink and had no experience of job interviews. As a result they were ill prepared to attend interviews and were mostly unsuccessful when they did. This session was delivered by Lancashire Fire & Rescue and covered all aspects from completing an application form, preparing a Curriculum Vitae and attending Mock Interviews. It was interesting to note, that at only week three, one of our most hostile participants got so engrossed in this activity, that he actually attended the Bay Office and asked to borrow the "interview suit" so he could make a good impression!

Week 4 - Presentation Skills - Whilst we recognised that it was unlikely our residents would need to do many formal presentations, we felt that the skills involved in delivering presentations were transferable to so many other aspects of life, it was a valuable module. Not least because presentations skills are a great confidence builder. Police and Fire & Rescue delivered this

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Week 5 - Community Project - The participants and working group felt it would be appropriate to undertake a community project. This would both encourage the participants to take some responsibility for their environment but would also encourage the local community to accept them as members of the community, which had previously been an uphill struggle. This module

was delivered by Bay and Lancashire Fire & Rescue and involved a dog fouling evaluation of nine local streets. At the end of the evaluation, which lasted six weeks, Environmental Health agreed to put extra signs up in the worst affected streets, increase the number of bins and paint large yellow, fouling dogs, with a red cross through on the pavements to remind people to be responsible dog owners. This small but effective project resulted in the participants being invited to the Local Area Forum to talk about their success.

Week 6 - Presentation Afternoon - This was the climax of the course, taking place in the austere surrounding of Blackpool Town Hall Council Chambers and attended by:

- The participants
- Mayor
- Deputy Mayor
- Superintendent - Police
- Area Commander - Fire
- Sergeant Major - Army
- Bay-Chairman
- All members of Working Group
- Families and Friends

The format of the afternoon included a small presentation by Bay to outline the significance of the event, the previously mentioned presentations by the young people and an awards ceremony presided over by Police Superintendent who gave each participant a certificate and gift for successfully completing the course. Everyone was then invited into the Mayor's Parlour for tea and sandwiches.

The Self-Development Course was clearly owned by the young people who attended it, however, each agency maintained their own professional ownership by recognising the input of each organisation and supporting each other in evaluations specific to each organisation and their own respective operational objectives.

There were few costs involved in the delivery of this initial course. Indeed the course only cost £21 in total, in addition to the staff costs, which amounted to approximately ten hours each for the four working group members. As a result this was a project with minimal costs and maximum returns.

We experienced a number of challenges with the project these included:

- Encouraging young people to volunteer
- Sustaining their interest and motivation
- Ensuring the course was delivered cohesively
- Operational commitments of Partner Agencies

These challenges were overcome, by securing the commitment of each agency's Senior Management to ensure Officers were relieved of operational pressures in order to meet these targets.

As this was the first of these courses, we embarked on a comprehensive process of review with the working group meeting at the conclusion of each module to respond to feedback from both each other and the participants. At the conclusion of the course, there was a formal de-briefing meeting in order to evaluate the entire course and to plan for the future delivery of the course.

Bay has had a long-established Problem-Oriented Partnership with South Shore Police, which has previously received national recognition. This course is seen as an extension of this relationship and demonstrates all agencies on-going commitment to proactive responses. As a result, the South Shore/Bay relationship underwent a review and some changes were made to the operational relationship. These included:

- Number of link Police Officers increased, to ensure better coverage on shifts
- Some link Police Officers now trained as Motivational Mentors

ASSESSMENT

This course was designed to increase self-esteem, reduce offending, improve employment/training prospects, increase confidence, encourage young people to develop their life and social skills and to assist them in building trusting relationships with other young people. Evaluation demonstrates this course fully met its objectives, whilst many of the outcomes could be considered subjective, in terms of increased self-esteem, confidence etc., and have been evaluated through on-going Bay House resident reviews, we have been able to focus our objective evaluations on re-offending rates, community cohesion, employment and maintenance of unaided tenancies. Follow-up could have been difficult as Bay House is designed to provide interim accommodation to young people of approximately six to twelve months, whilst they develop the independent living skills required to sustain their own tenancies. However, we have been able to track the course participants for 12 months now and have found:

- 1 Joined the Army - No further Offending
- 1 Full-time Employed - No further Offending
- 2 FA Football Coaches, Employed - No further Offending
- 1 Part-time Employed/Full-time Mother - No Further Offending
- 1 Voluntary Work - Reduced Offending

We have eliminated offending in all but one young person, with the one still offending now being tracked and monitored through agencies such as the Youth Offending Team, where previously he had not been engaged with local services. All of the young people have now successfully moved on from Bay House and are sustaining their own tenancies independently. This course has prevented any displacement difficulties as transience has also been reduced as they now having nothing to run away from!

The Project was evaluated by the working group and also received some external evaluation from the Community Safety Partnership Youth Issues Working Group. Additionally, funding has now been granted by both Community Safety Partnership and Lancashire Partnership against Crime to continue with future courses. All available data has been used to evaluate the project, including evaluation forms from participants, feedback from course leaders and evidence-based data such as offending rates, instances of anti-social behaviour, employment records etc.