



cohesioncounts
building and measuring community cohesion

Engagement through sport and dance

Groundwork report for
Cohesion Counts

Project: ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SPORTS & DANCE (YOUTH FOCUSED COMMUNITY COHESION)

Project location: ALT, OLDHAM

Organisation: GROUNDWORK OLDHAM & ROCHDALE

Organisations' key activity: Groundwork is a federation of Trusts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, each working with their partners to improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the success of local businesses in areas in need of investment and support.

What are the background issues that led to community cohesion projects being needed?

Alt is an estate of approximately 500 homes, mainly council housing with some private, and is due for massive regeneration within the next 10 years. Unemployment, teenage pregnancies and Anti Social behaviour are very high in the area. In addition, the level of regeneration planned for the estate has led to feelings of apathy among residents, and in the most recent Oldham wide "You and your Community" survey Alt was highlighted as an area where people had a very low sense of belonging in their Neighbourhood.

Why is the project appropriate for this area/neighbourhood/community?

Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale have delivered youth diversionary activities in Alt since 2008. Initially our work was for fifteen months with the overall aim being to tackle a number of social issues, perceptions and concerns through positive youth action and involvement.

During this time Groundwork was able to develop relationships with children, young people, parents, residents and professionals working in Alt.

Strategically – Groundwork's Youth Services Manager attended monthly area action teams and community councils were representatives from organisations working in West Oldham discussed and identified problems throughout the ward

Grass roots – working on the ground in parks and open spaces Groundwork's Youth Works team were able to identify a felt need.

Groundwork found a common theme being a lack of youth provision. Groundwork was keen to develop a new form of youth provision in Alt that involved residents and parents volunteering and participating in session.

What were the project's aims and objectives?

This project aimed to bring young people and older people together in finding a common ground, break down barriers and explore intergenerational issues across Alt through using activities which promote respect and a greater understanding between generations.

Objectives:

1. Deliver 56 sessions over an eight-month period
2. By using the influence of sport and dance the project will target previously disengaged young people and residents.
3. Participants in the project will be encouraged to attend local meetings allowing them to participate in local decision-making.
4. To help build a stronger sense of community by involving local people in volunteering
5. The project aimed to promote respect and a greater understanding between different ethnic backgrounds.

Who was the project intended to benefit, how were participants recruited and who did it benefit?

The project intended to benefit children and young people aged 8 – 20 yrs and provided parents, residents and the elderly with volunteering opportunities.

Participants for the project were recruited through existing links with young people, active residents and partnerships. Marketing material was also produced, initially 750 leaflets were distributed and posted to households in Alt and 10 posters were displayed in the community (local shops, community buildings and Alt Primary School) to advertise weekly activities and volunteering opportunities. The leaflets were electronically circulated through the West Oldham area action team and also uploaded on to Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale's and our Oldham website.

HMR coordinated a press release in May and sent a photographer along to the dance session.

A further 1000 leaflets were produced and distributed in September following concerns over a drop of attendance at Dance Uni sessions.

Participants being children, young people, parents and residents benefited from the project. The marketing material Groundwork produced increased residents and parents awareness of volunteering opportunities available to people living in Alt.

What actually happened?

Two sessions were delivered a week, Dance Uni on a Monday evening at the Arc Centre 6.30pm – 7.30pm by Total Dance and a Multi Sports session delivered on Cherry Avenue Kick Pitch 5pm – 7pm on a Thursday evening delivered by Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale's Youth Works team.

Dance Uni – Mainly attracted children and their parents, attendees participated in a dance and movement session. Street dance and gentle exercises allowed participants to dance to chart/dance music. Fresh fruit was provided and enjoyed by the participants during breaks that allowed participants to talk about common interests and concerns.

On a weekly basis we had four volunteers supporting the Dance Uni sessions, these volunteers took on the role of signing people in, preparing the refreshments and supporting participants in completed the questionnaires.

Four months into the project a new dance tutor was introduced to take over the sessions, attendances decreased from this point.

Multi Sports – A range of team games were played including football, basketball and cricket, with football proving the most popular. Staff encouraged older young people to lead on organising the games, setting the rules and picking the teams. Allowing young people to develop confidence and communication skills. In-between games staff spent time talking informally to young people about what they like and dislike about their community.

Staff were concerned that the project was only attracting boys so in summer we took arts and craft equipment with us to sessions. This attracted more girls aged 8 – 12 yrs and their parents; the parents took on more responsibility for the arts and craft activities and we supplied them with the materials and arts books (for ideas). In late September early October the girls started to drop off, we tried to maintain contact with their parents but the parents didn't want to continue volunteering with the arts and craft due to the weather (being cold).

The multi sports sessions allowed for new friendships to develop, previously the younger children (8 – 12 yr olds) would be playing on the kick pitch until teenagers (13 – 17 yrs) would appear. The teenagers then pushed the younger children off the kick pitch and would play their own game of football, leaving the younger children with nowhere to play. The project allowed staff and volunteers to encourage both age groups to play together and form new friendships as both sets of

age groups had the same interest (football). Over the course of the project the teenagers started to accept the younger children and involve them in their games with little input from our staff.

Staff encouraged the teenagers to be positive role models and increased their awareness that the younger children will be influenced by their behaviour.

Following October half term sessions in November and December were hindered by bad weather and restricted lighting.

From attending the West Oldham Area Action team I was able to identify hot spot locations for youths causing a nuisance and anti social behaviour so before and after multi sports sessions our team went to these locations and promoted and encouraged young people to attend our sessions.

What went well and what would you do differently?

I strongly feel that consistency is the key to the success of this project, having sessions on the same evenings and times for an eight-month period. Staff felt accepted by the community and developed positive relationships with children, young people and their parents.

The project received promotional material from Oldham Athletic Community Trust on "Kick Racism out of Football" magazines; leaflets and badges were shared out between young people during October half term.

Having carried out this piece of work Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale feel like a stakeholder in the community through our developed relationship with local young youths and parents.

Reflecting on the project our team feel that having a monthly community event would have strengthened the project. Whether it being a football, cricket or rounders match or line, street or ballroom dance competition. These events could have included representatives from organisations working in Alt participating in them to help build links and relationships. Participants could have included the police and PCSOs.

We would like to have introduced a more formal volunteering offer, by producing volunteering descriptions for each position, each volunteer undertaking an induction, each volunteer completing a next of kin form, producing a personal development plan for each volunteer and having an appraisal with each volunteer to identify any training needs or further areas of development. Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale have taken this into consideration and have implanted this approach of working with volunteers in their Volunteering Works scheme.

It was reported in May that staff delivering the multi sports sessions have found it difficult to attract young people to the kick pitch from playing on the orchard on Cherry Ave. Staff took the approach to be flexible and moved the sessions to and from the kick pitch and orchard. Staff consulted with residents regarding the young people playing on the orchard and residents felt happy that young people played there and welcomed us bringing our equipment and resources.

In October our team tried to make contact with Glodwick Cricket Club and arrange a cricket tournament for local youth youths with the view of signposting young people from Alt into the Cricket Club. Staff presented this idea to local youths after a multi sports session at Cherry Ave TRA but the youths were unwilling to participate. The lads said that they knew the club existed and have been to their training sessions in the past but wasn't interested in a cricket tournament. The lads said that they used to walk to cricket training and felt comfortable to walk in the future but would rather play football. On reflection we could have asked a coach from the cricket club come to a multi sports session and do a taster session.

What else should people know about this project?

During the summer months we took arts and craft resources along to the multi sports sessions to attract more girls and potential volunteers. This proved successful and attracted a wider audience.

When we delivered the project we found that the majority of people who attend our activities were white British. We marketed the whole estate to try and attract young people from different backgrounds. We also promoted our activities on Our Oldham website in the hope that young people from neighbouring communities would come to sessions. However this didn't happen.

I attend the ARC centre monthly management committee meeting and supported the group in keeping the centre up and running. Dance is proving popular and a new form of provision has been established at ARC, Line Dancing now follows Dance Uni on a Monday evening.

Phil Woolas visited the ARC (27/08/09) and was impressed with the Dance Uni concept.

The scheme leader for the project went on long term sick in September and has since left the trust. His assistant has stepped up and since led on activities with a replacement assistant covering sessions.

The concept behind this project is going to be used in East Oldham, Groundwork have received funding from iCoCo to deliver Dance Uni and a weekly football league session for six months.

Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale are going to continue delivering youth activities in Alt one night a week through existing funding from target well being.

In total the project attracted 4 volunteers through Dance Uni and a further 8 Volunteers in the mutli sports sessions.