

Strategic Priority 4

Reaching Out – breaking down barriers and working with all segments of society



The World Organization of the Scout Movement



The Essex Experience

The Results

A progressive programme of activities with young people in danger of social exclusion, delivered by volunteers from outside Scouting, often with no experience of working with young people, run by Essex Scout County. The basic programme of activities is a weekend camp for around 300 young people, preceded by five days training for 30 or so volunteers. The training is run by Scouters in Essex.

The project is now in its seventh year and over seventy different organisations contribute to the success of the project. The majority of the finance to support the programme has been achieved through networking, made possible by using the contacts necessary to deliver the programme for young people and recruit the volunteers. Partnerships have also been developed with local District Councils, businesses and Charitable Trusts. Some funding was received from the community fund, which enabled a full-time community development worker to be employed. This has contributed greatly to the success of the project.

"Weeks after, everyone was still talking about it." (volunteer)

"Our students have developed real friendships and a sense of identity." (teacher)

"Participation by Police Officers from Basildon in the Essex Experience reaps considerable benefits for everyone involved." (Basildon Police representative)

The Reasons

To demonstrate to young people, volunteers and external organisations the excitement, benefits and the magic of Scouting.

To demonstrate to local Scouting the benefits of community integration and partnerships.

To use Scouting to reach out to young people who are 'on the edge'.

The Methods

The Essex Experience is a multi-activity residential weekend for young people, aged 12-15 years. These are young people who have problems and are likely to become socially excluded. They are supervised during the weekend by a team of volunteers who act as role models to the young people. The volunteers are recruited from businesses, local authorities, etc. and attend a five-day training course immediately prior to the weekend. The involvement of all of the volunteers is fully supported by their employers. The event is supported by a team of Scouts together with volunteers from other organisations.



Young people have the opportunity to take part in many new challenges

Here is what some of the people who are involved said about the Essex Experience:

"I found out what it was like to live out in the open and never do drugs." (young person)

"The behaviour change that I witnessed was incredible." (volunteer)



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The training provided to the volunteers by the Scout Leaders and other professionals is based on Scout Leader training and covers topics such as teambuilding, leadership skills, emergency aid, communications, safety, welfare etc.



The volunteers receive training to help them provide a weekend of fun activity

In addition to providing the volunteers with the skills necessary to provide a weekend full of fun and activity for the young people, it also enables teamwork to develop and friendships to be formed, which are also necessary if the event is to be successful.

The event also offers members of the older Sections the opportunity to be involved which contributes to their various awards.

Our Learning

The learning for Essex Scout County is:-

- Scouting has incredible human and physical resources, which can, even for a weekend, create life-changing experiences for young people and volunteers from outside Scouting.
- Scouting needs to understand the advantages and benefits of real partnerships - Scouting needs to respond to the community needs and priorities.
- Community Development programmes require salaried staff for daytime interactions - volunteers cannot engage community leaders

effectively, no matter how good their intentions are.

The learning for one of the Scout Leaders after his first experience at the event was:-

- The weekend was fun and personally challenging for all involved.
- The young people who participated thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the feedback from contacts shows that the weekend can have a positive, longterm influence on the behaviour of the young people.
- Events such as the Essex Experience can be run on a smaller scale too - at District or Group level.



Young people design challenges for others – which often means getting wet

Our Future Plans

Through participation, discussion and interaction our intention is to encourage local Scouting to derive the benefits of "Reaching out". Scouting exists within the local community it serves and needs to become more visible to all facets of that community. There are major benefits to be accrued through real partnerships within the local community.

To continue to further develop the programme young people, who have participated already, have the opportunity to return for two other events, the District Challenge Camp and the District Star Challenge which provides them with



Young people take part in a local environment project

opportunities to develop particular skills. There is also an opportunity for former participants to run the 'Hard Rock Café' which is an important facility for the young people during the camp. A conservation project is also being developed.

A quote (Celtic Reflection) from Martin Wallace sums up the Essex Experience

"the edge is in fact always the centre of renewal"

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