

Darlaston Collaborative:
Report from Programme on Tackling Pupil Exclusion and Behaviour

In March 2004, a partnership was set up to coordinate Darlaston Collaborative 'innovations' project. The partnership consists of:

- Darlaston Community Science College;
- Joseph Leckie Technology College;
- Rhythm Rooms Art and Media Centre;
- Ground Work Black Country.

The partnership agreed that the innovations project should work to the following objectives:

- To target those pupils classed as 'hard to reach'.
- To work with pupils in new and innovative ways.
- To act as an alternative to mainstream education when necessary.
- To work together to manage excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion.
- To look at ways to re-engage excluded pupils back into education.

These objectives have been successfully achieved to date as follows:

To target those pupils classed as 'hard to reach'

Referrals were made to the project through a weekly liaison meeting. These were attended by heads of schools, years and houses, education welfare workers, school nurses, learning mentors, the police and other relevant agencies. The names of pupils that we considered would benefit from the project were put forward and discussed. All these proposed pupils were to be excluded or were at risk from exclusion and were having difficulty working within a mainstream school setting, or needed some long term intervention to re-engage them. This ensured that the project continued this identified 'hard to reach' client group.

To work in new and innovative ways

Darlaston Collaborative has worked alongside two outside agencies, each with very different roles:

- Rhythm Rooms Art and Media Centre, set up in 1999, is used by the school to teach excluded pupils English, maths and art, off site, for 36 weeks per year. It is run by staff with particular expertise in working with 'hard to reach' young people with a wide range of personal difficulties, many of whom would almost certainly have been excluded without this additional provision. The centre also provides music workshops every Friday, including teaching sound engineering, percussion, guitar and multimedia creation (i.e. CDs) to name but a few.

- Ground Work Black Country is an environmental regeneration charity that helps to improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the profitability of businesses in need of investment and support. There are some 50 groundwork trusts nationwide, four of which are located in the West Midlands.

Motiv8 is a City and Guilds accredited programme run in partnership between Darlaston College and Ground Work Black Country. It is targeted at 13-17 year olds who can be referred to the programme if they are at risk of being excluded from school. It is designed to stimulate an interest in learning by engaging young people in practical activities, discussion groups and workshops.

We have been able to work with about 20 young people in our first year. The programme entails one-to-one discussions, action plans and reviews to check the progress of and any concerns that the young people may have. To date we have completed 14 City and Guilds profiles of achievement and 12 basic first aid certificates with heart start.

The Motiv8 group has also worked with Urban Voice to write, produce and act in a drama production based on historical events in Darlaston. This project, involving research and museum visits to gather information for their production, was widely applauded.

Furthermore, 10 young people completed a garden project during the summer holidays, working with Age Concern to help maintain and improve gardens for the elderly.

(See below for sample Motiv8 activity programme and comments from participants)

To act as an alternative to mainstream education when necessary

Not all pupils respond to the normal school environment. The referral process and the ability to work with outside agencies such as Rhythm Rooms and Ground Work Black Country, gives pupils the opportunity to continue with education if they are underachieving. The off site provision provides a safe and stimulating alternative to school and works on other issues such as social and emotional needs.

To work together to manage excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion

In addition to weekly liaison meetings and links with the outside agencies, a partnership has been created between Darlaston Community Science College and Joseph Leckie Technology College. This link has enabled managed moves of pupils – pupils at risk of exclusion from one school would be transferred to the other for a trial period. Transferred pupils work in the learning support unit at school as well as being included on the Motiv8 and Rhythm Rooms programmes.

This has benefited pupils by giving them a chance to escape their reputation and peer groups, with engagement and attainment both increasing significantly.

To look at ways of re-engaging pupils back into education

The project has successfully re-engaged some pupils back into lessons in school, with positive effects. However, in some cases it has not been possible to re-engage pupils back into mainstream education, but they have made good progress off site. Several students have been working towards GCSE English and maths, while others have been placed onto college courses. Attendance throughout has been excellent, especially as many pupils had a previous attendance of less than 50 %.

Motiv8 sample programme January – April 2004

Week	Session details	Equipment	Preparation
6 Jan	Discussion groups Paperwork	Forms, folders	Paper work
13 Jan	Planning CV videos	Video camera	
20 Jan	Planning for programme Cinema trip	Video camera	
27 Jan	Spray paint design and plan for residential	Video camera	
3 Feb	Visit art gallery	Video camera	
10 Feb	Spray painting	Video camera	
17 Feb	Half term		
24 Feb	Go-karting	Video camera equipment	Book session
2 Mar	Connexions visit		Book session
9 Mar	Project DJ		Book session
16 Mar	Project DJ	Video camera	Book session
23 Mar	Residential Wales Black Mountains	Including, canoeing, climbing,absailing,high ropes course, gorge walking, land kart building	Book session
30 Mar	Water world	Video camera	To book
6 Apr	Easter break		
13 Apr	Easter break		
20 Apr	Re- start programme		

Comments from some of the young people on Motiv8

'I have learnt a lot from Motiv8. They have also helped me to respect and work well with others, I have really enjoyed being on this programme.'

'I have learned how to express my own opinion about things and I am more motivated thanks to Motiv8.'

'Throughout our activities I have learnt a lot of new things. The whole activity plan has been great and I have learnt how to work in a team. I have really enjoyed the scheme! Angela, Terry and Debbie make the activities fun and enjoyable; we have a laugh!'

Summary

The projects discussed in this report have proved to be a great success. All the young people involved would have almost certainly been excluded, were it not for their involvement in the programme. Some pupils have successfully completed subsequent college courses and others are expected to gain GCSEs in core subjects. We aim to continue developing the programmes to enrol an increasing number of young people in most need.