

## 2021 Trustees Report for Westgate Youth Project

Westgate Youth Project provides a range of youth club activities to children and young people with hidden disabilities. The project will give an increased sense of belonging, improved knowledge and skills and improved resilience.

We continued operations until Thursday 12th March 2020. We then ceased delivering face to face youth work due to the COVID-19 national lockdown. We consulted with young people, parents, and carers on a regular basis via email, telephone, social media, and surveys, how we could best support them during the lockdown.

We followed National Youth Agency guidance (and continue to do so.) Face to face youth work was not a safe or practical option; young people did not want to take part in virtual youth club sessions.

Throughout the 16 months that the project was closed we delivered monthly activities to young people's homes. Examples of these are:

- A sunflower growing competition.
- Cross stitch kits
- A list of 100 lockdown activities.
- Mindful colouring in
- Poetry and drawing, reflecting how life in lockdown has impacted young people.
- Wildflower and cress seeds.
- Photography competitions.
- Pottery painting.

We have used our social media pages to post "how to" videos made by youth workers and post up to date government information regarding the spread of COVID-19.

The youth work manager continued to work throughout the pandemic and has offered advice, support and signposting to parents, carers and young people via telephone, email, and social media.

Westgate Youth Project reopened its doors for face-to-face youth work on Thursday 8th July 2021.

Westgate Youth Project delivered its services every Thursday evening until Thursday 12th March 2020, when face to face sessions ceased due to the first National lockdown.

The sessions are split into two, one and a half hour groups. 6-7.30pm for young people aged 10 -14, and 7.45 – 9.15pm for young people aged 15 – 19.

Thereafter activities and newsletters have been sent to young people monthly.

Westgate Youth Project is a targeted provision for young people with hidden disabilities. A hidden disability is defined as any disability that is not immediately apparent.

Many of the young people that attend the project have Autistic Spectrum Condition, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Mental Health Problems. Some of the young people have co morbid diagnoses of ASC, ADHD, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, Mental Health Problems, and other sub type conditions such as Pathological Demand Avoidance.

One young person has a severe hearing impairment and a global development delay. Another has a diagnosis of ASC, Type 1 Diabetes, and a severe nut allergy. One young person has multiple diagnoses of Conduct Disorder, ODD, ASC and ADHD.

Many of the young people that attend the project are “looked after “either in residential children’s homes, short term, or permanent foster care. Some young people have experienced neglect and abuse and suffer PTSD from childhood trauma.

Some young people attend specialist schools out of the local area, so are isolated from their peer groups during their social leisure time.

Some young people attend local mainstream schools; however, struggle to become part of their school community due to their hidden disabilities and social communication needs.

The Covid – 19 pandemic has impacted our young people significantly. Prior to the pandemic this group of young people already experienced isolation and a lack of community due to their hidden disabilities, albeit directly through discrimination and bullying, or indirectly through travelling out of the local area for special education, therefore having very limited local connections during their leisure time.

The initial and subsequent lockdowns increased the isolation that these young people experienced, in turn impacting many of their mental health negatively.

The project was closed for face-to-face youth work from Thursday 12th March 2020; we reopened for face-to-face youth work on Thursday 8th July 2021.

During lockdown we maintained contact with young people, parents, and carers through competitions on social media. We delivered activities to young people’s doorsteps and offered signposting and support for young people as appropriate.

When we reopened in July we were, quite frankly, blown away by the amount of young people that returned to the project after 16 months of closure. For us, this was confirmation that this is their project, a place where they feel safe and a place that they can meet with their friends with whom they share so much in common.

We were surprised since a common element of autism is routine, once something is no longer routine it tends to be very difficult to re-engage young people.

We did of course lose some young people over lock down, some moved away, some were no longer in our age range and some quite simply didn’t come back.

We have however had a steady stream of new members and enquiries since reopening.

The young people that we work with are at very different stages in their journeys. Some have experienced significant change with regards to a sense of belonging. For example, one young person who has a very difficult time at school and only leaves the house other than for school, has become a young leader, helping to set up at the beginning of the session, serving young people in the tuck shop and signing them in. Another young person, new to the area with no friends locally attended her first session as a very quiet, reserved young lady very quickly became a very popular, engaging member of the project. One young person came along after his carer contacted his concerns regarding his child's lack of friends. It is very difficult for this young man to engage with his peer group due to his disabilities. Other young people tend to struggle with his behaviour. However, he joins in group activities, youth workers manage his behaviour, and I am confident that in time he will feel safe enough to be himself and start to make connections with other young people.

Amongst most of the young people that attend the project there is a great camaraderie, they tend to take part in activities together as opposed to operating separately.

At a young person's initial visit to Westgate Youth Project, they complete a Wellbeing self - assessment form. This is based on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale indicating positive mental health and gives a primary indicator of a young person's mental health and wellbeing. This is completed annually and is used to measure the impact of work with a young person and distance travelled.

The feedback from parents and carers is particularly important to us as young people are sometimes unwilling or unable to communicate their own feedback to us, especially while they are still in the process of building trusting relationships with the youth work team. Parents and carers regularly send along the siblings of young people that already attend the project when they are old enough. Most new young people that attend, do so because a friend has recommended the project to them.

We collect feedback and suggestions from young people through dialogue, using user surveys and young people's evaluations.

During staff briefings at the beginning and the end of each youth work session, observations regarding young people are discussed and recorded on youth work evaluation forms. Key data is taken from other internal information such as case studies, attendance figures and records regarding individuals such as 1:1 interventions and Early Help

In addition to this we work closely with most parents and carers of the young people attending

The young people that attend Westgate Youth Project are all unique in as much as they may have Asperger's, "moderate Autism and/or ADHD coupled with co morbid diagnoses of often severe anxiety, a global delay, other mental health problems or mild physical disabilities. Therefore, their individual learning styles and needs vary greatly.

Some young people thrive in mainstream schools and college, some attend specialist schools, some are home tutored, and some are not in education, employment or training, due to for example permanent exclusion and waiting for a new school place, the inability to attend school due to mental health problems

or inconsistent schooling due to constantly being moved around foster placements and care homes.

Often young people will report that they are excluded from classes because their behaviour can be misinterpreted as rude and disruptive, or teachers do not have the time to answer a question in a way that they understand. Often young people appear to understand what is being said, but on checking back with them they do not.

During the period that the project was closed we delivered to them a variety of activities that they could do at home. These included mindfulness, photography, pottery painting, cross stitch, and growing plants from seed. Through these activities young people were able to cultivate skills such as internal and external awareness, focus and concentration, hand eye coordination, patience, self-care, and gratification.

Most young people were keen to engage in these activities, emailing progress photos of their plants, some amazing photography for competitions and photographs of their completed cross stitch and paintings.

Those young people that chose not to engage were for the most part older young people who were in fact quite suited to life in lockdown. For them it removed the need to go out and engage with the world. It released them from the social pressures and ensuing anxiety by which they are bound in everyday life. These young people tend to rely on parents and carers to encourage them along to youth club.

Since reopening, young people have taken part in sports activities, such as football, table tennis and boxing. These activities encourage team spirit, self-discipline, sportsmanship, turn taking, dexterity, agility, and hand eye coordination.

Some young people are too self-conscious to take part in group sports activities. However, when offered a small group activity such as boxing, they have been more comfortable taking part and have found that they have excelled.

We recently had an African drumming workshop where young people learnt important life skills such as turn taking, listening to instructions, patience, and synchronicity. This group of young people are intrinsically motivated to move. They were all able stay engaged, listen to instructions and as a group produce a piece of music. Out of 23 young people present for this activity, only one chose to sit out. On investigation this young person was struggling at school and spent the time speaking with a youth worker for support.

We collect evidence in the form of a Wellbeing self – assessment completed by young people when they first join the project. This involves 14 questions which provides a score of wellbeing and is then completed annually to measure distance travelled and the impact of the work with everyone.

We collect feedback from young people through dialogue, user surveys and young people's evaluations.

Young people participate in the planning of activities that we deliver. So should they wish to gain more information or skills in a specific area, we work with them in a way that enables them to learn, in a way that suits their individual needs. We then check their understanding using conversations, games, quizzes and fact or fiction cards.

The project was gifted a camera from a local company this year. Through photographic competitions and photography projects using the camera, we are also able to have visual examples of how the young people have honed their creative skills and how they see the world.

We work closely with the majority of parent's and carers; this allows us to build a good working relationship and get better insight into the impact of our work. This is particularly important for young people with speech, language, and communication needs.

We also make use of other forms of information such as youth worker session evaluations and staff observations, which are recorded and recognition of achievements such as certificates and accreditation.

Most of the young people that attend The Westgate Youth Project face adversity regularly, albeit, bullying, transitions between foster placements, care homes and key workers, changes in locality, discrimination through ignorance due to the lack of visible indicators of disability, or inconsistent education due to their needs not being met. Young people often change school regularly in a bid to find the most appropriate therapeutic environment.

When young people become members of The Westgate Youth Project, they become a part of a community; one of the main aims of the project is to provide an inclusive, safe environment for young people who share common factors and experiences. In turn becoming part of a community and developing a sense of belonging, reduces isolation, improves mental health and wellbeing, in turn increasing the resilience of the young people.

Sadly, throughout the early part of the pandemic the project was forced to close for 16 months. During that time many young people became isolated, and their mental health suffered. The parent of one young person contacted the project for support. The parent has hidden disabilities; she was concerned because her son was being bullied at school. She was supported by the youth work manager to address the issue with the school and gain an outcome that was positive for her son.

Another young person arrived at youth club when we reopened after lockdown. She asked to speak with a youth worker; she was very distressed regarding an incident that had happened during lockdown while with a group of friends. Youth workers were able to calm her, discuss the situation with her and signpost her to a relevant agency for specialist support. Despite being a regular attendee at club for a year before lockdown, she had never voluntarily spoken to a youth worker; however, felt empowered enough to seek support from us when she most needed it.

Because of the varying needs of the group and the fact that some have been attending for several years and some have been attending for several weeks they are all at very different places on their individual journeys.

Young people are offered the opportunity to try new things, with each new thing that they try so their confidence, self-esteem, resilience, and sense of agency grows.

One young person with ASC and ADHD requires substantial support from youth workers; this young person only very occasionally engages with her peer group and will take part in activities only with one-to-one support from a youth worker. She is reticent to take part in activities because she doesn't want to stand out as different or do it wrong and draw attention to herself. However, when boxing was introduced as an activity, she took part with great enthusiasm. She also took part in African drumming. This young person found the confidence to take part in new opportunities, enjoy them, learn from them, and feel empowered by her successes in them.

At a young person's initial visit to The Westgate Youth Project, they complete a Wellbeing self – assessment form. This is based on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale indicating positive mental health and gives a primary indicator of a young person's mental health and wellbeing. This is completed annually and is used to measure the impact of work with a young person and distance travelled.

In addition to this we work closely with most parents and carers of the young people attending the project and gain regular feedback from them.

Parents and carers in general are very good at communicating with us if the young person has any current concerns outside of youth club, if they will be away and a young person will be unsettled or in respite care for example. We are then able to ensure that we are aware of each young person's current situation, able to keep an open dialogue and put youth work interventions in place if the need arises.

Equally young people, their parents and carers share with us positive outcomes that they have experienced or observed as a result of taking part in Westgate Youth Project activities.

We collect feedback and suggestions from young people through dialogue, using user surveys and young people's evaluations.

During staff briefings at the beginning and the end of each youth work session, observations regarding young people is discussed and recorded on youth work evaluation forms. Key data is taken from other internal information such as case studies, attendance figures and records regarding individuals such as 1:1 interventions and Early Help Notifications.

An important part of adolescence for any young person is to be accepted as a member of a peer group. Being accepted by one's peers and functioning as part of a group as well as independently is an important part of growing up, trying out different roles and personal and social development.

For young people with hidden disabilities there are many barriers in place that must be removed in order for them to become a part of their peer group. If they are at a mainstream school other young people don't tend to accept them due to their unseen differences, if they are at a specialist school it tends to be out of area, so none of their peers are available during their social leisure time.

By being a part of the community that is The Westgate Youth Project these young people are able to gain solidarity and social affirmation from being a part of the group. They are able to interact with their peers and use the skills that promote personal and social development in a safe environment. Young people have the benefit of youth workers to facilitate conversations and support the social structures that will help them to come together and work as a group.

For the majority of our young people this is the first time that they have experienced being part of a peer group where they can interact socially without facing some degree of discrimination.

Child A has attended The Westgate Youth Project since June 2019. He is 14 and has multiple diagnosis including ASC and Conduct Disorder. Child A's siblings and mum also have hidden disabilities.

Initially upon attending the project, Child A did so inconsistently, preferring to stay at home in his room playing computer games. When he did attend the project he chose to spend his time talking with youth workers about his computer games and how he would prefer to be at home playing them. He didn't engage with other young people.

During the period that the project was closed due to the Covid - 19 pandemic Child A's mum contacted the youth work manager. Child A was being badly bullied at school (he attends a mainstream school) and mum was at a loss as to how to get a resolution to the issue, things were becoming progressively worse. The youth work manager worked with Child A's mum over the course of a few weeks in order to support, advise and signpost her towards a positive resolution for Child A.

Once the project reopened in July 2021, Child A began to attend The Westgate Youth Project again, this time regularly, he became a weekly attendee. In September 2021 Child A expressed an interest in becoming a young leader. Being a young leader comes with the responsibility of arriving early at youth club to help youth workers set up. Signing other young people in at the beginning of the session and serving in the tuck shop.

Initially Child A struggled with the social interaction necessary to greet and engage with other young people arriving at youth club, he found the dialogue and patience required to serve at the tuck shop a challenge. However, with the support of a youth worker the distance travelled by him over the last 4 months has been amazing.

Child A's mum contacted the youth work manager to say that he came home from youth club "made up" with his new position and responsibilities.

Child A has gained many skills in his new role. His social communication has improved, he is able to help other young people with a lesser understanding of finance how much money is required for their purchases, if they have enough

and how much change they would have. He can multitask, signing young people in whilst writing their names down. He has gained in self-esteem and resilience through his new role; he has gained life skills that will support his personal and social development.

It is a privilege to work with this young man and see the positive change that he has experienced over the last few months.


We learnt that no matter how carefully we plan and incorporate the participation of our young people into our planning that things can and do still go wrong, we must remain flexible with the ever-changing dynamic of the young people that we work with.

When lock down occurred we assumed that we could transition to virtual youth work without too much fuss. We sent out surveys to young people, planned virtual sessions, emailed young people and their parents and carers, put together consent forms with information regarding online safety and a handbook of what to expect from a virtual session. Despite positive feedback from many young people when we came to deliver these sessions there was no uptake.

We hadn't considered the fact that the young people that attend the Westgate Youth Project do so predominately to meet their friends in their social leisure time, take part in new opportunities and workshops and be physically active. Many of our young people suffer from social anxiety and often take part in an activity with very little verbal interaction. For these young people sitting at a computer was a huge barrier.

Fortunately, we have been able to reopen for face-to-face youth work successfully. This period of closure has reinforced for us the value of youth work and we hope to spend time putting a plan in place with the young people if there are any further periods of lockdown.



	CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES	Charity Name		No (if any)		CC16a	
		Westgate Youth Project		1176956			
		Receipts and payments accounts					
		For the period from	Period start date	To	Period end date		
		01/04/2020		31/03/2021			
Section A Receipts and payments							
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year		
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £		
A1 Receipts							
BBC Children in Need	13,137	-	-	13,137	12,533		
CAF (Co-op)	1,386	-	-	1,386	627		
Charities Trust	500	-	-	500	1,871		
Henry Smith Charity	-	-	-	-	7,500		
Community Fundraising	410	-	-	410	556		
Other Grants	1,000	-	-	1,000	570		
Subscriptions	705	-	-	705	700		
Other Income	896	-	-	896	1,332		
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	18,034	-	-	18,034	25,689		
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).							
	-	-	-	-			
	-	-	-	-	-		
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-		
Total receipts	18,034	-	-	18,034	25,689		
A3 Payments							
Staff Salaries & Expenses	10,180	-	-	10,180	17,189		
Admin & Training Costs	270	-	-	270	297		
Holiday Activities	-	-	-	-	1,290		
Rent	1,000	-	-	1,000	1,000		
Youth Work - Session Resources	429	-	-	429	909		
Workshops					858		
Activities Insurance					487		
Equipment renewals	209			209	285		
Marketing & Publicity	240	-	-	240	56		
Depreciaion of Assets	451			451	501		
Other Expenses	267	-	-	267	821		
Accountancy	300	-	-	300	-		
	-	-	-	-	-		
Sub total	13,346	-	-	13,346	23,693		
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)							
	-	-	-	-			
	-	-	-	-			
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-		
Total payments	13,346	-	-	13,346	23,693		
Net of receipts/(payments)	4,688	-	-	4,688	1,996		
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-		
A6 Cash funds last year end	15,825	-	-	15,825	13,829		
Cash funds this year end	20,513	-	-	20,513	15,825		

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Bank Account	16,693	-	-
	Petty Cash	65	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>16,758</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	Agreement Error	OK	OK
	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>	Equipment	3,845	-	-
	Fixtures & Fittings	210	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total	4,055	-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Accountancy Services	unrestricted fund	300	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	