

Hexham Youth Initiative – Different Views

The Electoral Commission established the New Initiatives Fund to support and promote new ways of raising awareness about voting and democracy. We have awarded grants to local, community and national organisations working with different target audiences across the whole of the UK.

This evaluation report provides information about the Different Views project funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by Hexham Youth Initiative.

Introduction

The Different Views project was run by Hexham Youth Initiative and worked with groups of disadvantaged young people and individuals aged 13–19, encouraging them to become more involved in local and national youth projects and in European citizenship. The project included:

- the development of cultural exchange opportunities including an exchange visit to Europe
- sharing information about opportunities for young people to get involved in the democratic process in Britain and Europe
- training of peer educators
- the development of a dedicated website

Aims and objectives

The project aimed to give disadvantaged young people in Tynedale the opportunity to widen their horizons and increase their employment opportunities by encouraging them to participate in Youth Councils, the National Youth Parliament and local councils and forums.

Funding

A grant of £49,495 was awarded in April 2003 and the project ran for two years from April 2003 to March 2005.

Target outcomes

The project aimed to involve at least 60 young people and 30 voluntary and statutory agencies, and deliver the following outcomes:

- enable disadvantaged young people to develop their understanding of the democratic process in Britain and Europe
- develop an interactive programme about the UK government and British electoral system that can be used with young people from years nine and 10
- develop resources that can be used in a variety of groups and an information pack of easy-to-use resources and materials that can be photocopied and used elsewhere
- develop a website with a specific section dedicated to Different Views

How successful was the project?

The project was evaluated by Karren Spowart, Project Manager for the Different Views project. The main methods used to measure the success of the project were questionnaires completed by 20 of the participants and project workers' reports.

Most activities proposed in their application were delivered, with some positive feedback from young people completing the questionnaires.

The project delivered the following outputs:

- eighty-seven young people aged 13–19 took part in the project, 60 of whom were disadvantaged
- a number of young people became members of various national, regional and local youth forums and remained so after the project ended
- attendees took part in three different training courses (Peer Support, Young People & Research, and Young Movers course)
- participants got involved in campaigning on different issues, including Votes at 16

Only five of the 20 young people questioned for the feedback had been involved with any kind of participation work prior to the project, and 16 out of the 20 felt they have helped to make

positive changes through their involvement with Different Views.

Good practice

A number of areas of good practice can be identified from this project:

- involving the local council in the project meant that young people were given an insight into how their local council worked and the people who worked for the council
- consulting young people and providing feedback throughout the project meant that the young people felt more involved and that their views were valued
- running the workshops and events in the Tynedale area meant that more disadvantaged young people were able to take part

Lessons learnt

Projects of a similar nature can learn from the following lessons:

- the limited amount of staff working on the project made the project difficult to deliver
- information about the democratic process and political structures was difficult for the young people to grasp and simpler more interactive methods may have worked better
- some young people required greater support than others and would have benefited from more capacity building at the beginning of the project

Further information

For further information about this project please contact:

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Further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the wider work of the Electoral Commission can be found at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

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