

## Great Lever Voice Report for end of grant – August 2006

Amount of grant: £10,000 for one year's funding  
 Date of grant: 16 December 2005 and 21 April 2006  
 Area: Bolton (Great Lever)

| Project   | Input                                      | Outputs  | Leverage   |
|---|--|--|--|
| Funding for resources and equipment to deliver vocational courses for 13-19 year-olds; IT software, hire of room, resources such as DVDs, motivational awards, theory driving tests, AQA awards, to help to engage with disillusioned and unqualified youth in Great Lever. | £10,000 as two payments of £4785 and £5215 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>69</b> young people have achieved over <b>100 qualifications</b> including Assessment &amp; Qualification Alliance (AQA) in job preparation, interview skills, positive parenting, food hygiene, health and safety.</li> <li>• <b>53</b> young people attending the project are now working or in training/education.</li> <li>• <b>6</b> of the young people have returned to the project as volunteer young leaders.</li> <li>• At the beginning of the project mainly girls engaged on courses but now boys have recognised the benefits – <b>4</b> are studying for their <b>CSCS certificates</b> to allow them opportunities to work on building sites.</li> <li>• <b>70% of young men</b> and <b>82% of young women</b> attending the project are <b>no longer considered</b> in the <b>NEET</b> category.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Received funding from Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) to pursue qualifications.</li> <li>- Funding from Health for Bolton for young people to receive aerobic classes.</li> <li>- The project feels funding was granted due to the success displayed by the project within the town.</li> </ul> |

Great Lever Voice was established in March 2004 after recognising a gap in provision for young people in the Great Lever area, aged between 16 and 19, who mainly fell into the NEET category (Not in Employment Education or Training). They decided to form a group to provide vocational training and offer aspirational workshops to the young people to find a way to contribute to their community and lead a better life.

### National priorities

#### Community Capacity and Sustainability

The various initiatives conducted within the project have led to great success in engaging with young people within Great Lever, many of whom left school without any qualifications or had not attended school for some time.

The project has succeeded to engage with the participants by tenacity: the project workers approached the young people, and their families, direct, sometimes at their homes. This

approach has seen a dramatic improvement in engagement in community activity leading to greater community cohesion. Many of the participants have returned to the project as volunteer young leaders. Two young girls have returned to the project as peer mentors.



The participants have recommended the project to their friends which has increased participation. Great Lever Voice also receives referrals from other parts of the town as their success becomes known within the town.

Sustainability of the project does depend on funding. The participants are unable to contribute to any form of funding or subscription themselves. The number of young people wishing to participate in the project, and consequently the need for it means that from a participation point of view the project is sustainable. The amount of referrals and enquiries that the project receives leads Great Lever Voice to believe there is a real need for this kind of activity in this area and others in and around Bolton. The project has promoted the Fair Share Trust Programme as its only funder.

## **Social Capital**

Each month the project receives details of young people considered as NEETS in the Great Lever area. They compare figures to previous months. In January 2006, the project had 146 young people considered NEET and by July 2006 there were 86 young people in this category, and whilst they accept that this number will usually decrease during the year as young people join training schemes etc., they believe they can attribute a significant fall in these figures to the project.

It has broken a cycle of inactivity and disinterest by offering opportunities that appeal. It has cultivated confidence and interest in job hunting, and provided further training that has helped the young people to recognise the issues of their local community.

Danielle now works full time at Woolworths and is going to Bolton College in September 2006 to gain more qualifications to enable her to apply to be an air hostess. She is now a Millennium Volunteer and helps with a young group within the project. She has gained 7 qualifications from New Directions.

*“I was unemployed but Great Lever Voice helped me find a job that’s suitable with me. I try my best to join activities with Great Lever Voice in my spare time as I’ve enjoyed the activities that I’ve already been on and gained qualifications. I would like to become a mentor so I go as often as I can to assist as I want to help others like they’ve helped me.”*

Katie has achieved 6 New Directions qualifications since joining Great Lever Voice. She is going to Wigan College in September 2006 to gain more qualifications to enable her to apply to join the police.

*"I had dropped out of school and had no idea what to do with my life. My Mum was threatening to throw me out because I was hanging about the house and we were arguing. We now have a better relationship and she is very proud of my achievements with Great Lever Voice.*

*I have enjoyed being on the project, meeting new friends, being part of a team. I had someone to share my problems with who would listen to me without giving negative comments. I have now become a confident, assertive and understanding person from joining this project. I did not want to leave the project so they suggested I become a mentor. They are sending me on courses with CVS to become a peer mentor so I'll be studying Child Protection, funding etc. I would love to become a volunteer leader so other young people like myself can be put on the correct track."*

Some courses offered, such as basic hygiene, can help the young people to obtain jobs more easily if they achieve recognition by obtaining a certificate in that subject. It gives them confidence and aspirations to go out to seek employment.

### **Enhanced liveability**

Some of the initiatives have included parenting classes, aerobics, manicure, hygiene, junior sport leader courses, most of which have led to some form of qualification, and which can then help to secure jobs or further training. A lot of participants who have completed one course are then motivated to take part in other courses.

This increases their confidence, wellbeing and helps them to integrate into the community and back into family life. If they go on to further training and employment this leads to a better standard of living and subsequently better job prospects and self-belief.

### **Local priorities**

The local priorities identified for this Fair Share area by the panel are:

- Community Capacity Building and Cohesion
- Liveability, Environment and Health
- Community Facilities/Assets
- Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety

### **Community Capacity Building and Cohesion**

The project had clear objectives when it began but has developed enormously over the course of the year. Following initial success of the courses, and the obvious commitment and communication by participants to friends, the project has been able to identify and subsequently offer a wide range of courses and initiatives which has enhanced the opportunities and skills obtained by the participants.

After a few months it became clear that the number of participants was increasing. The team recognised that additional courses were needed to satisfy the needs of the young people. A further application for funding was made to Fair Share to pay for resources to enable further courses to take place to meet demand.

The number of courses intended to take place under the project increased enormously and consequently the skills and knowledge given to the young people increased. The project leaders report on the great improvement in attitude and demeanour of participants and that they now feel they belong to their local community. They recognise the issues affecting the community and realise that, with help, something can be done to help alleviate these problems. Their enjoyment and participation has led some of the young people to return to the project as volunteers and mentors. They recognise that they have gained confidence and skills to enable them to seek further opportunities. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, they want to help other young people in their community to achieve the same.

The project has been approached by unexpected parts of the community and the project workers have developed their own skills in helping these people. Examples of some of these include young people with drug and alcohol problems, young female prostitutes and the success of young mums encouraging other young mums to attend parenting classes. Project leaders have recognised that they needed extra training to cope with some of these issues and have attended training courses to enable them to work with drug and alcohol misuse young people up to Tier 2 and are working towards providing AQA awards in drug awareness with young people.

At first the project found it difficult to engage young men from the area and feedback told them this was because they felt they would be entering a classroom environment. This has been overcome by the project leaders taking the young men through AQA courses, at their own pace, (i.e. 10 hours in 2 hour sessions) in a friendly environment and in subjects with which they identify. At the start of the project 5 young males took part in courses. This has improved significantly. At the end of the first year 33 young men attended the project.



They have also engaged their interest by encouraging them to work on laptops to learn, for example, Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) which is by multiple choice. They have enjoyed this challenge and when they get an appropriate score the project leaders personally take them to a registered mobile centre to do a similar test. They feel a real sense of achievement from this.

*“So far the Fair Share has helped me with my interview skills and how to upgrade my cv. They have helped me achieve my CSCS card and they are now helping me find a job.”*  
Lee Bowyer

*“I have completed my CSCS test. I have been attending the course for About 5 weeks. This course has really helped me with my confidence.”*

John Davies

## **Liveability, Environment and Health**

Various initiatives conducted within the project focused on health and liveability incentives. For example, courses have been held on food hygiene, first aid, health and safety, as well as many sports initiatives where the work of the participants is recognised by certificates or some form of accreditation. Many of the young people on the courses have been out of formal education or have obtained no formal qualifications within the education system. This project provides an alternative way of engaging them to achieve qualifications in vocational subjects. These are often in subjects that interest them more than the conventional subjects taught at school and consequently lead to more interest and relate more to their lifestyles.

Six teenage mums attended Positive Parenting Classes where they obtained an AQA award in Positive Parenting. They enjoyed being part of a group where they could share their concerns. Each of the girls attending the course said they felt more confident to care for a new baby, how to feed it and the importance of hygiene. The girls recognised that by attending parenting, healthy eating and other classes can help them to give their children a better lifestyle.

All young people taking part in courses within the project continue to prepare cvs and a portfolio of their achievements. This gives them the confidence to apply for jobs and further training. Many return to the project on an informal basis as they are keen to share their experiences and let the project workers, and other young people, know of their achievements and progress.

Feedback from participants is that they feel it is great that there is someone there to help them stop being bored, to help them to complete application forms and to advise them on their unique issues.

The encouragement and motivation between the participants, and general interest in bettering themselves, translates to happy and healthier young people. Young people participating in the project identify the centre as somewhere they can go to and feel safe, receive informal counselling and are able to discuss their problems in a friendly, non-judgemental environment.

## **Community Facilities/Assets**

The majority of courses are held at the offices of the Great Lever Management Committee. The project is currently looking at a building on allotments close by to do additional work.

## **Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety**

It is believed that crime statistics for Great Lever have fallen. This information has been gathered as a result of speaking to local residents who believe the reason for this is that, as a result of the healthy participation in the project, young people in the area are now more occupied. They have engaged in training or found employment which in turn has increased their confidence and skills and feelings of self-worth.

The Chairperson of the local Residents Association has provided feedback that residents are pleased that Great Lever Voice is in the area. The project is invited to attend events and have attended two events recently to provide aromatherapy, hand massages and manicures. General feedback from local residents and other professionals in the area, including the local Housing Manager, express that they feel the work of Great Lever Voice is invaluable.

A local resident who is also a policeman has started to volunteer with the project. He says:-

“I like to go to the project because it builds better relationships between the police and the young people. These young people realise the police are normal people who have families and are doing a job to pay for their own bills.”

Two young ladies who have been in trouble for working the streets joined the project and obtained qualifications. They are now in further education. Any young women attending the project who are sexually exploited are referred to After Care workers.

### **Wider Community Benefits and Impact**

- 55 young people have taken part in various courses within the project and 71 qualifications have been obtained.
- 52% of the young people who have taken part in the project are now working or in training/education.
- All participants leave the project with a cv and a portfolio of achievements.
- Out of 33 young men attending the project during the first year, 10 have gone on to full time employment, 10 to further education/college, one to further training and one receives activity allowance.
- Out of 36 young women attending the project during the first year, 7 have gone on to full time employment, 8 to further education/college, 3 to further training, 2 to voluntary service and 3 receive activity allowance.

The project leaders can see a real difference in the attitudes of young people taking part in courses. They feel they have all increased in confidence, gained new skills and feel they now have purpose and access to more opportunities.

It is also felt that the young people who take part recognise that they are part of the community and confirm this by becoming volunteers/mentors with the project.

Great Lever Voice has built up a successful relationship with their local branch of Asda supermarket. They have negotiated with management for young people from the project to visit their premises to help them study for an AQA award in “Business Studies – Supermarket Industry”. As a result of the good relationship that has been established, Asda has agreed that any applicants for jobs from the project will be fast-tracked.

Asda has also approached Great Lever Voice to ask them to work on a joint project to build a sensory garden for children with disabilities. It is hoped that the young people working on this project will be able to obtain AQA qualifications in relation to this work.

Another example of the impact of participation in such a project again involves Asda. Three young men were taking part in the AQA business studies course and were due to attend Asda to obtain information for the course. The young men informed the project leader that they had visited supermarkets and been asked to leave. The project leader asked them why they felt they

had been asked to leave. They said they had gone into the supermarkets wearing hooded tops and baseball caps. The project leader suggested they did not wear these in the supermarket. The three young men did this, obtained the information they needed for the course and were pleased that they had not been asked to leave.

Young people who had completed an AQA award in aerobic boxing were asked to do a demonstration at a local event which was a great success. As a consequence the five young people were asked to demonstrate at another event but three of them were unable to attend as they now work on Saturdays.

Wider impact has meant that other agencies are referring young people to the project as its success becomes known within the area. Agencies also regularly approach them to check their criteria as to whether they can refer people.

Participants are recommending courses to their friends. The courses offered are viable alternatives to the education system the young people have encountered. They can relate it to real life situations and recognise the vocational value of the courses.

National and local priorities have been met during the first year of funding. Community capacity has been met as a result of participation in the activities offered by Great Lever Voice. Enhanced liveability has been encouraged by the provision of healthy eating, health and safety, childcare projects. Great Lever Voice has identified a definite need for this type of project in such an area and, as such, they can continue to deliver and expand the project.

The success of the project can be seen in the fact that young people approach the project to ask to join. They appreciate that they obtain valuable support and often for the first time have aspirations to obtain a job or further training and that a good future is possible.