

## Supporting Young People in Wellingborough Project

July 2021 – December 2023

### End of Grant Report

#### **Background:**

From July to October 2020 Support Northamptonshire tested new engagement techniques for Community Watch during the national Covid restrictions, in association with Made with Many. As part of the Community Watch Programme, we circulated 1000 community safety packs in the Kingsway, Queensway and Hemmingwell areas of Wellingborough. The packs included art resources and a community postcard competition, to connect people with their community, and produce images that represented safety in their communities. The feedback from the programme, which also included a one-off creative youth workshop, showed that there were a number of safety concerns that young people (aged 9-16) could feedback on. This included mentioning areas that they thought were safer because they could hide from gangs, and highlighting the services and spaces that they felt were most important. In leading this community engagement with innovative creative practices, young people were not only able to build skills, but also be given a platform to share concerns with key partners (who formed part of the community panels for the project in each area).

*See Appendix 3.1 for the evaluation report: Greetings From... which outlines the Outcomes from the Community Watch Programme.*

#### **The aims and objectives:**

As Covid Restrictions ease, and young people face new barriers to engagement, including social isolation, we want to provide a platform for young people to discuss and action the things that are most important to them. Support Northamptonshire would work alongside Made With Many to develop a Youth Forum, with a specific focus and subgroups supporting young people aged 14-18 from Black and Asian backgrounds; and those from the Hemmingwell and Queensway estates of the town.

The aims of the forum would be to reach 25-30 young people:

- To enable young people to develop and take ownership of the Youth Forum, by designing the branding and actions of the group.
- To give opportunities for young people to be consulted on issues that affect them within their communities, giving a 'voice' to young people in Wellingborough.
- To offer opportunities for skills development by allowing young people to decide on key social action and creative skills programmes for other young people in Wellingborough.
- To build confidence, give the young people a chance to express themselves and promote youth social action through creative means.

To achieve this we have been running fortnightly Youth Forum sessions, including creative activities, skills development sessions and further planning for social action within the community.

Alongside this work we developed a Steering Group of partners involved with young people in Wellingborough to support shared learning about what we all do and provide feedback/ advice on the project and how it could explore bringing out the 'voice' of young people.

**Progress against targets:**

Target	Progress	Target Number (Mar 23)	Target Number (Dec 23)	% Progress (against Mar 23)
Young People Engaged	181	30	30	603%
Young Leaders (Regularly Attending Sessions)	15	10	15	100%

Through the youth forum, social action projects, and workshops we have engaged 181 young people across Wellingborough.

Nine of these young people have regularly attended the fortnightly youth forum and/or actively engaged in social action projects. These young people are currently identified as 'Young Leaders'.

Four young people were actively involved in co-producing and supporting the Social Action projects including the Fresh Fest and project Film.

Forum Sessions	35	15	33	106%
Skill Development Workshops	10	6	10	100%
Creative Events/Workshops	19	9	15	127%

Thirty-five fortnightly sessions have been held since September 2022. These sessions we held at St Marks Church in Queensway, schools in Wellingborough, Kingsway and other locations in Wellingborough. The 5 social action projects had reach with young people with more diverse backgrounds and other areas of Wellingborough.

We have incorporated the creative workshops and skills development sessions within the forum sessions. We have been led by the young people to provide sessions that they want. A summary of the sessions that we have carried out is highlighted later in this report.

*See Appendix 1.1 for detailed evaluations of each of the sessions held.*

Social Action Projects	5	3	5	100%
Social Action Days	20	12	20	100%
Youth Volunteering Hours	873	600	1000	87%

The 5 social action projects we have held so far are the Eastfield Park Mural, an Art Exhibition at the Swansgate Centre, an inspirational trip to other Youth led spaces in the Northamptonshire, the Fresh Fest and the Young Social Entrepreneurs Programme.

The days of social action and Youth Volunteering hours are internal targets we have set to assess and record young people contribution towards this project.

Project Film	1	0	1	100%
--------------	---	---	---	------

As part of the evaluation, a film has been produced to highlight the progression of the project. Pictures and videos have already been captured at various stages which have contributed to this final project film along with young people interviews and interviews with artists involved with the project.

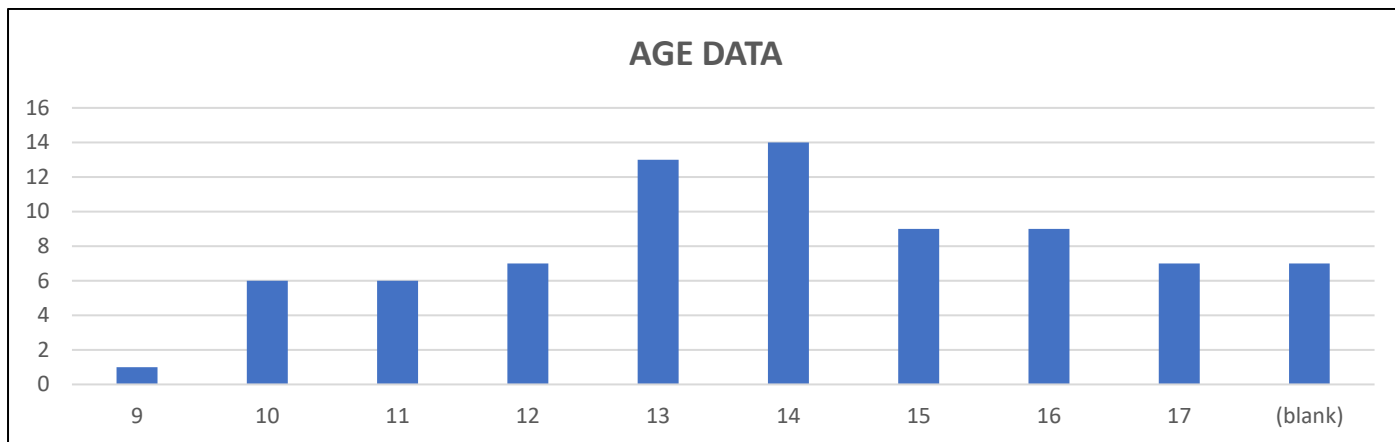
*See below for a link to the video.*

Steering Group Sessions Held	15
------------------------------	----

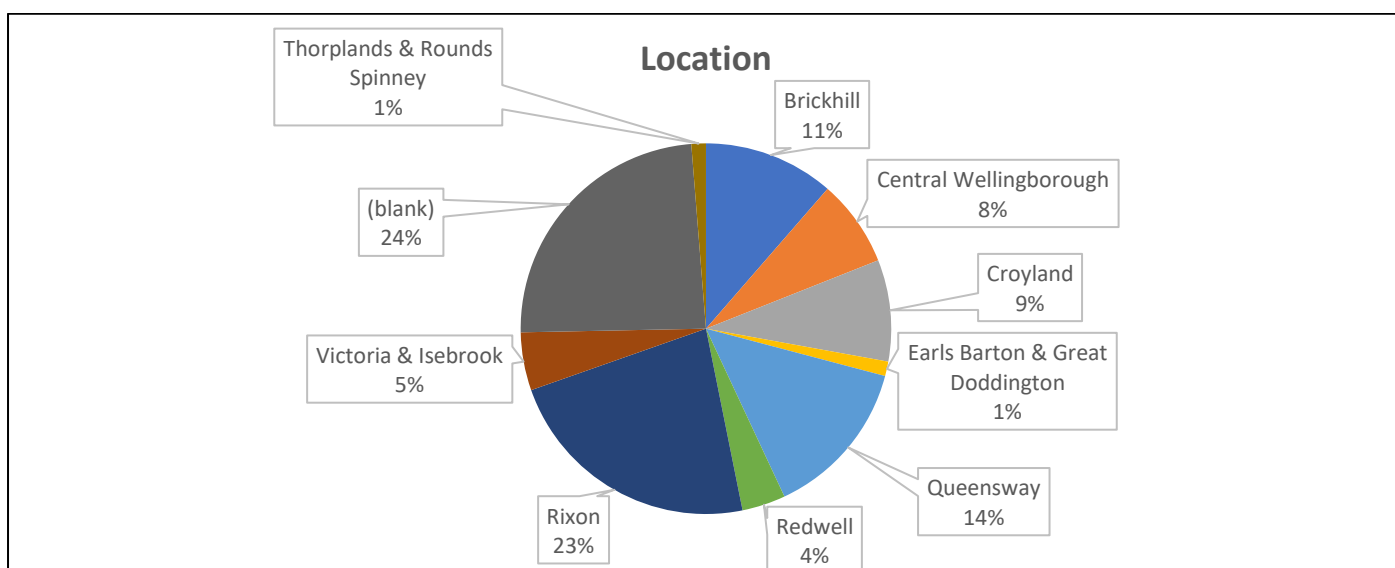
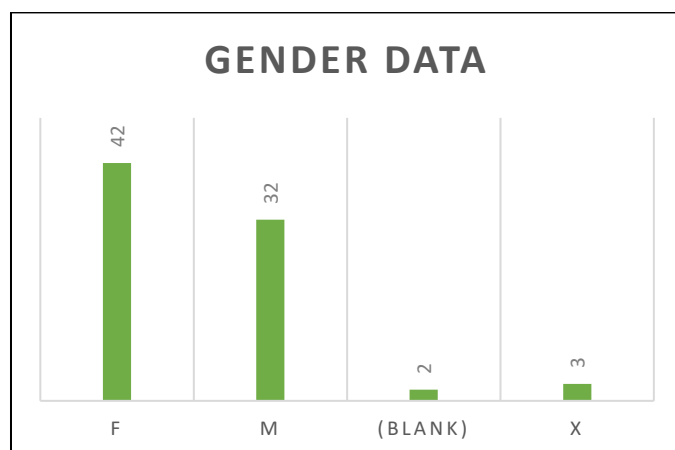
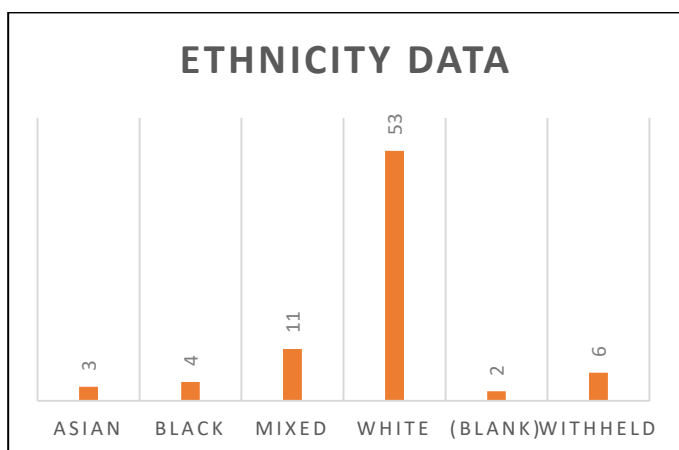
Seven steering group sessions have been held from August 2022 to December 2023. The steering group has brought together VCSE organisations, statutory services and artists involved with youth provisions in Wellingborough.

*See Appendix 2.1 & 2.2 for minutes of these Steering Meetings and a list of partners involved.*

**Equality Profile of Young People Engaged**



<b>AVERAGE AGE</b>	<b>14</b>
--------------------	-----------



### Summary of Findings from the Activities held:

What has been striking about the work we've done so far is a total lack of local pride in the Wellingborough young people we have met.

While young people are often down on the places they grow up, usually there are things they like about their area, or nice things they can say about the local people, but the lack of enthusiasm or ability to articulate something they like has been startling. It probably has been compounded by the pandemic, but many young people really haven't been able to identify anything they do that feels positive in Wellingborough.

The main findings have been that young people feel:

1. There is a lack of things for them to do in Wellingborough.
  - a. Barriers to access, such as financial barriers, prevent them from participating in activities they like to do.
  - b. They also do not know about young people provisions that may be accessible to them.
  - c. There are barriers to accessing places in Wellingborough that is outside of their area due to concerns to safety or cost.

When asked about provision for young people our forum sessions, three of the participants that took part said "scarce", two said "only school-based stuff" one said "not enough".

2. While some appreciate the natural environment around Wellingborough, many do not take full advantage of it due to not feeling safe for them and hence their parents don't let them out, some do not feel motivated to leave their rooms.

When asked about the vibe in Wellingborough, they said "sad and depressing", "bleak", "bland", "unsafe", "dark/old", "boring", "grim".

When asked what the best parts of Wellingborough was, they answered "nowhere", "my room", "home", "everything is far away and/or expensive" and one said "a pottery studio".

3. They have also reported the lack of clean, functioning, or safe sports facilities.

One young person said "Get better goals and nets at parks. Clean the town make it more fresh so people are willing to enjoy being there. Get smoke sheds for people to be able to smoke and not get cold-wet. Get better artwork/graffiti for young children's eyes. Don't get rid of places where teens chill i.e. market. Things that are good for young people's eyes to bring more attention to people to make it look and feel like a safe place. STOP CRIME."

4. They have also been discouraged from using some spaces, like the Swansgate Centre, where comfy seating has been removed or the market that has recently been closed down where they also might have used as a space to gather.
5. Wellingborough feels unsafe with either no police presence or an overbearing one.

Another young person spoke about how they'd seen people "slashed" i.e. attacked with knives, that they knew people who had brought knives into school and said personally they was desensitised to it.

It has been challenging to enthuse young people about social action in some respects – it is a big change for some young people who go to school and then stay at home. It will take time to build a group of young

people who do not usually attend youth clubs or provisions for young people in Wellingborough to lead social action projects.

We have worked with 181 young people, consulting them on their opinions and assisting them to devise social action projects. For the next section of work we are planning to engage and consult more young people across Wellingborough with more concentrated and exciting social action projects. We will take advantage of the summer and autumn when young people may be less vulnerable to negative pressures and can more easily get to the locations outside of their local area.

Fresh Fest set out to gather information about what young people in Wellingborough want for their town but what it showed is there isn't just one type of thing they think is missing and there isn't just one solution needed to a singular issue. The work carried out this year has made it apparent that it is less about providing services for young people and more about young people finding pride, value and inspiration in their town. The work has also highlighted that young people do not feel valued in Wellingborough.

There is a disconnect between young people and adults. Work needs to be done to break down divisions. Evidence of this is in the outcomes of this project, this was done throughout the activities carried out and we have seen positive effects. There needs to be more work like this in Wellingborough to ensure young people are felt valued.

The Steering Group that we have developed is serving to be a listening board to these views that are being expressed by young people. From this information, we can collaborate and develop new offerings, or take advantage of existing assets, to address these views, reduce barriers to access and develop a Wellingborough that young people can feel safe in and flourish.

### **Case Studies of Impact of the Activities**

1. During one of the forum sessions, a young girl attended and was very shy. Once we carried out the drama games, these brought the young girl out of her shell, with all the young people communicating effectively. She was able to express her views more confidently after this.
2. One young person from this group was speaking with our youth worker who was able to identify that they'd be eligible for support with food and heating items that Groundwork are providing and after speaking with the young person's mum they will now be receiving support.
3. A young person in care with an undiagnosed learning disability, low literacy levels and under-developed social skills has been actively taking part in the sessions. Apparently, they are often reticent to take part in clubs but has been saying they're enjoyed ours and have contributed to our ideas about improving Wellingborough even though they are new to the area. The young person also gets into trouble regularly at school especially around communication issues but has been polite at the sessions, interacting with others and taking part in activities that clearly are quite challenging for them with complicated instructions and some fine motor skills required.
4. One of the young people got a guitar bought for them for Christmas as a result of how much they enjoyed the music sessions they did with Youth Forum.
5. The new young person ran out to their dad's car at the end of the session and said something like 'Dad I did something I'm really proud of today'.
6. One young person who doesn't consider that he generally does anything creative started the session being very uninterested in contributing to the music project but by half an hour in composing beats he

was talking about how we could incorporate different emotions into the piece and what sounds might represent those and was really into trying to communicate the lyrics the others had written in sound form.

7. One young autistic person shared with us existing work they'd created with The Compound describing how they struggle with relationships and communication. They also remarked again how they struggled with communication, but the group were very supportive when hearing the young person's lyrics, and built a genuine connection between the young people and the group felt it too.

## **Conclusion**

We have made significant progress in managing the project both operationally through engagement with young people and leading social action projects. We have also made progress in enabling strategic partners who work with young people across Wellingborough to come together in the Steering Group to map and join up work. Building on this we influenced and have also been part of the Local Area Partnership (LAPs) as part of the ICS which looked at the needs of young people in Wellingborough. This will accelerate the progress of focusing on the needs of young people and building on the collective skills, knowledge, and resources of partners. Our contribution will continue to be to build the voice of young people in these important developments.

As part of the evaluation a video was produced to capture the key highlights of the project and overall thoughts that the young people shared.

A link to that video can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnQgN5B-o8I>

Support Northamptonshire's partnership with Made with Many has been strong and we have worked well to achieve the overall aims and objectives of the program funded by the PFCC. It has already influenced wider developments and the project coordinator has been instrumental in engaging young people. Made with Many have continued this work with young people in starting an Arts Forum involving the young people who were actively participating in this project. We hope to see more of this work carried out and this become a catalyst to drive change in supporting young people in Wellingborough.