

Community Leadership Programme



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Celebrating our first year

WDH's Community Leadership Programme has just celebrated its first anniversary. More than one hundred young people from the district have been through the year long programme, aimed at creating leaders of tomorrow.



It all started back in November 2006 when nearly 200 pupils were packed off to Thornes Park in Wakefield on their first mini-adventure. In a scene reminiscent of vintage gameshow, 'It's a Knockout', the youngsters were put through their paces on a range of mental and physical challenges. 'Holy Tube', 'Corporate Maze' and 'Bridge The Gap' were just a few of the weird and wonderful games designed to engage young people whilst encouraging teamwork, communication and leadership.

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On the second outing in December 2006, we got a little braver with an expedition that would build on the skills learnt at Thornes Park. This time, the intrepid explorers headed to Castleton in Derbyshire for two days of rock climbing, abseiling and weaselling (low level climbing or scrambling).

“One of the best things was being pushed to do something that I didn’t think I would be able to achieve on my own.”

Two final trips in March and April 2007 saw the Community Leadership Programme’s first birthday out with a bang. 100 children, selected from the event in December, travelled to the beautiful setting of Ullswater in the Lake District. During the five day residentials, 14 and 15 year old pupils were plunged in at the deep end, canoeing across Ullswater, mastering difficult mountain terrain and camping out overnight in sometimes toe numbing temperatures. Each young person ended the event with a personal presentation reflecting on their experiences.



Community Leadership plays a key part in WDH’s vision to create confident communities through developing social enterprise. This will be achieved by:

- Developing community leaders and role models of the future, from the district’s young people of today.
- Enhancing sustainable living and respect for local communities.
- Developing pathways into employment and training.

What A Difference A Day Makes...

Feedback from all the events has been overwhelmingly positive. Students expressed a real sense of accomplishment as well as enjoyment, and teachers noted a significant change in behaviour and attitude. At the beginning, many of the pupils couldn't see the relevance of such a trip to their lives. By the end of the experience, this is what one pupil thought :

“This is what my generation need for their communities. This increases self-esteem like nothing I've ever been on in my life and it really makes you more aware of your surroundings, your companions and yourself.”



For many of the young people, the trip was their first time leaving home comforts behind; their first time sleeping outdoors; building a raft and erecting a tent; canoeing; climbing and standing up to speak in front of a group. For most, the experience proved to be a unique eye-opener into what they can achieve in life.

“I think that I don't have to settle for what I have in my future. I'm a stronger person and realise I have responsibilities outside my own life.”

Our Top Story...

The valiant efforts of our young crusaders didn't go unnoticed by the local press. Each trip has attracted coverage in the district papers, finally grabbing the county's attention within the pages of the Yorkshire Evening Post (circulation – over 58,000). The newspaper awarded a page spread, complete with action photograph, applauding the scheme and the students.

“I learnt how to trust people that I don't know and use teamwork to help other people.”



Onwards and Outward Bound...what next for the Community Leadership Programme?

The future looks bright for the region's potential leaders with lots in store for year two of the programme.

Mini-Managers... Three young people, who've been on the foundation Community Leadership Programme with us will be talking about their experiences at WDH's Annual Meeting on 27 April 2007. Before the summer holidays, one of our young speakers – along with 30 of his peers – will join us for a block of work experience across a range of roles.

“The experience has shown me that if you work hard and push yourself to your limits, you will get the rewards.”



New starters... We're pleased to announce that four new schools have applied to join the Community Leadership Programme. The process of introducing those schools to the project has begun, and brings the total number of high schools participating in the scheme to 16. The four new schools are:

Crofton High School, Wakefield.

Featherstone Technology College.

St. Thomas a Becket Catholic School, Wakefield.

Horbury School, Wakefield.

Pilot mentoring scheme... 12 WDH employees have volunteered and been trained as mentors for young people in their most crucial year at school. The mentoring service, which is still in its fledgling stages, hopes to provide young people with more access to adults who can provide support and wisdom in the run-up to their GCSE exams.

Induction... Recruitment of the new intake of Year 10 students to experience the great outdoors begins at the start of the autumn term. The new batch will be inducted, and prepared to embark on their first venture, in the second year of the Community Leadership Programme.

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