

'Spotlight' Case Study: Kent Football Association Youth Council

Kent Football Association is the not-for-profit, governing body of football in Kent which runs representative teams and County Cup competitions. It grows participation, promotes diversity and regulates the game for everyone to enjoy. The Kent FA Youth Council (YC) help the County FA to challenge and increase youth participation in grassroots football.

Flagship Youth Council

Experiences and resources should be proactively sought and shared within and outside of organisations. This will help to provide a confidence to others, while continually building your own professional development.

In 2012, Kent FA became the first County FA to set up a Youth Council. Since then, several other County FA's have recognised the importance of youth representation, and established their own YC's, based on the Kent FA model.

As the flagship county Youth Council, Kent FA value the importance of shared learning. Kent FA based their initial ideas for the YC on Kent Youth County Council. Heads of the YC attended various borough meetings and implemented their good practice into their own YC model. In turn, this learning was shared with the FA and other county FAs, and is now a model used extensively throughout the sport. When best practice is shared it provides confidence to individuals, initiates action, and promotes collaboration across networks.

‘Spotlight’ Case Study: Kick It Out A.S.P.I.R.E

In 1997, Kick It Out (KIO), an organisation committed to tackling all forms of discrimination in football, was formally constituted. The Football Association, the Premier League, the Professional Footballers’ Association and the English Football League are all core funders and key partners of the organisation. A.S.P.I.R.E - Ambassadors Supporting and Promoting Inclusion, Respect and Equality has been established to provide a platform for the young people’s voice in football- helping to tackle discrimination and promote inclusivity in all aspects of the game.

Collaboration

Collaborating with other organisations that share similar goals to your own can be an effective way to support a successful youth board. Collaboration is two way, so as well as benefiting from resources or experience shared by partners, the youth board should seek opportunities to assist partners or share their learning. Doing so gives the youth board exposure to new experiences and ways of working in other organisations.

When establishing the group, KIO advocated using shared practice from the sector and adapting these from different youth boards and organisations. Initially, the group’s structure was modelled on Spirit of 2012’s Youth Panel, which was then aligned to suit KIO’s strategy. KIO have also collaborated with the wider football sector, including the Football Association (FA) to make use of resources; including a model recruitment form which they adapted to suit their criteria needs.

The group also seek to hold facilitated training sessions with organisations and individuals within and outside the football sector. Reaching out to KIO’s key partners and funders could be one option for providing sector specific knowledge to the group. On the other hand, support from outside the football sector could also offer a fresh perspective to learning. Either way, both approaches to collaboration can be effective to the groups learning.

Collaboration is viewed by KIO as a two-way approach to learning. Members of A.S.P.I.R.E are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with the wider football community (including with FA Chairman, Greg Clarke). The group have a valuable contribution to make, not only to KIO, but to the wider football sector- providing a platform for the group to collaborate and share their insight with key stakeholders can help towards this.

'Spotlight' Case Study: National Leadership Academy Young Ambassador Steering Group

"Delivered in partnership with Sport Wales, the National Leadership Academy (NLA) provides an opportunity for Platinum Young Ambassadors and other exceptional young leaders across Wales to come together and experience tailored leadership training workshops." – Youth Sport Trust. The NLA YA Steering Group for Wales help to shape the future direction of the NLA programme, and sport for young people in Wales.

Leadership and Influence

Young stakeholders play an important role in leading and influencing youth focused activity in an organisation. Providing opportunities such as training can help young members to build on key leadership skills and carry out project work effectively. Undertaking projects which involve direct contact between a youth board and an organisations young stakeholders also provides an opening to transfer leadership skills. Transferring these skills between young stakeholders can help to strengthen the talent pipeline and recruitment pathway within an organisation.

As influencers of the NLA programme and its activity, it is important that the Steering Group act effectively in their leadership role. The YAs are continually provided with opportunities to develop their leadership skills and improve on their personal development. Their development is facilitated through the Leadership Academy who provide ongoing training in leadership and board skills. This training also allows members to become more versatile in their role on the Steering Group e.g. chairing a meeting or planning an event. This has been particularly helpful for members provided with the opportunity to attend meetings with the Sport Wales Board. Attending these meetings provides an opening for constructive challenge between the YA members and the Sport Wales Board.

The group are responsible for carrying out project work on a national scale across Wales, including organising large scale conferences and workshops for YAs. These projects have helped members to transfer valuable leadership skills to YAs on the NLA programme e.g. through facilitating workshops and sharing experiences. These types of projects also encourage the group's members to work on leadership qualities, including effective communication and decision making. This helps members to confidently execute their role whilst also enhancing other aspects of their personal development e.g. employability skills.

'Spotlight' Case Study: Spirit of 2012 Youth Advisory Panel

"Spirit of 2012 (SO2012) is a funded charity, established with a £47m endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. We fund partners across the UK that provide opportunities in sports, physical activity, arts and culture, volunteering and social action. It was founded to continue and recreate the spirit of pride, positivity and social connectedness that people experienced during the London 2012 Games and we invest to create good outcomes for people and their communities" – Spirit of 2012. The Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) has been created to build on the legacy of London 2012 through running a variety of national and community based projects.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Demonstrating impact across project work can help youth boards to demonstrate their contribution and thus raise their profile in the wider organisation; particularly when fulfilling wider strategic objectives.

At Spirit of 2012, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is a functioning component of sustaining the organisation's activity. It is at the core of Spirit's work, and has helped the YAP to create impactful projects with tangible outcomes.

Theory of change

The Theory of Change acts as the basis of Spirit's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (the Framework). There are seven themes in the Theory, used as a benchmark for demonstrating the YAP's impact across funded projects. The themes are:

- Increase personal wellbeing;
- Challenge perceptions of disability;
- Social connectedness;
- Inspiring events;
- Building partnerships;
- Empowering young people;
- Volunteering.

As a charitable organisation, Spirit and the YAP are accountable for their use of public funding. The Framework helps to achieve accountability by deciding the feasibility and sustainability of continuing different project work in the YAP. As an example, the initial YAP cohort received part National Lottery funding to set up their Sport Challenge Fund (a grant opportunity offered to youth focused projects), whilst the second created their own funding for the grant. Using the Theory of Change to evidence the success of the Sport Challenge Fund helped the group to sustain the project.

'Spotlight' Case Study: Welsh Rugby Union Youth Board

The Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) are responsible for running rugby in Wales, overseeing 320-member clubs, the Welsh national team and National Leagues and Cups. The WRU Youth Board (YB) play a key role in guiding the organisation's activity, and representing the 'voice' of the WRU's young stakeholders.

Board Relationship

It's important that youth boards do not become disconnected from the main board of an organisation as they fulfil a strategic purpose and contribute to the main board's accountability to members.

A core objective for the YB is to create a pathway for representatives to sit on the WRU Board and other board sub-committees. Members have expressed the need for their voice to be represented at the top-level, and this desire is reciprocated by the board. To help strengthen their relationship, YB members are invited to attend meetings and presentations with the WRU Board. WRU Chief Executive and board director, Martyn Phillips also Chair's the group at their quarterly meetings; he also acts as a liaison for any projects the group are interested in.

These interactions help YB members to gain a working insight into the boardroom, and encourage honest and open lines of communication. Building trust between the two parties can help to sustain relationships and potentially create a future pathway for young members onto the board.