



Merseyside Young Transformers

A case study

Report to Community Foundation for Merseyside
and Community Foundation Network

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1 Introduction

Merseyside Young Transformers (MYT) is a partnership between Community Foundation for Merseyside, which is the lead agency, Merseyside Police, and the Liverpool Echo; the partnership also works with the Home Office, Community Foundation Network and the Tutu Foundation UK.

MYT aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and divert young people away from crime by making grants to local groups and community leaders, and supporting them to provide diversionary, engagement and transformational activities and opportunities for young people. The MYT was set up in November 2007, and piloted in Spring 2008.

Background to Merseyside Young Transformers

MYT arose at a time when there was national as well as local recognition that Merseyside communities needed to address a significant problem with youth crime and that traditional approaches to the problem were not working. In September 2007, Merseyside was identified as one of four target areas for the Home Office's Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP).

By this time, Merseyside Police and Community Foundation for Merseyside had already been working together on youth crime initiatives for two years, specifically the Police and Youth Encouragement Scheme (PAYES) Plus Extra and Operation Safe Space. These funds appear to have created an impetus for and confidence in partnership working which has culminated in the establishment of MYT. They also demonstrated the effectiveness of joint working: PAYES Plus Extra fund grew from a budget of £10,000 to £40,000 through match funding from new partners; while Operation Safe Space saw a reduction in reported anti-social behaviour in the areas targeted. At the same time, Community Foundation for Merseyside was feeling the loss of the Local Network Fund which had previously enabled the organisation to support a wide number of local groups and projects (CFM, 2007a).

Autumn 2007 saw a coalescing of the identified need to tackle youth crime, a need for funding and the opportunity presented by TGAP, plus a renewed vigour in the wake of the tragic killing of Rhys Jones and a willingness to try a new approach. As one interviewee put it *'And what happened, over a matter of weeks, everyone had the same interest and I just brought them together.'*

'I thought, we can either keep doing what we've been doing which didn't stop this [killing of Rhys Jones] from happening or we can look for something new.'

The Liverpool Echo, meanwhile, had launched its Liverpool Unites campaign, also following Rhys Jones' death, and was keen to back the Merseyside Young Transformers Initiative to help tackle gun crime and portray positive images of Merseyside's young people.

About the partners

Community Foundation for Merseyside is the lead agency and the link between all the partners. Community Foundation for Merseyside's role in the partnership is led by the Assistant Chief Executive and includes strategic direction of the initiative, its PR and marketing, seeking additional funding, ensuring that grants are targeted to meet identified needs, monitoring and evaluating funded activities and reporting to donors.

Merseyside Police sourced the initial funding (through the Home Office). They are founder members of the Grants Panel which allocates MYT money, and identify the crime 'hotspots' which the MYT will target. Strategic direction is provided by the Assistant Chief Constable.

The *Liverpool Echo* backs the MYT initiative as part of a wider campaign against crime, *Liverpool Unites*, which was launched by the paper following the murder of Rhys Jones. The paper's involvement in the partnership is led by the paper's Deputy Editor with the Education Reporter taking day to day responsibility for teasing out the best news stories from the MYT programme.

The partnership also works with the following:

Tutu Foundation UK provided capacity building support to the seven projects that received funding in the pilot MYT grant allocation in Spring 2008. The support took the form of participative workshops.

Community Foundation Network is interested in and supportive of the MYT as an example of what partnership working can achieve. CFN is interested in exploring with Community Foundation for Merseyside the possibility of rolling out the programme to other members which are active around these issues.

The *Home Office* endorses the initiative through its allocation of Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) and then Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) funding to the MYT via Merseyside Police.

How is the programme funded?

The MYT pilot in Spring 2008 was funded through the Home Office Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) with an allocation of £20,000. Local projects were advised to submit applications in the region of £2,000. The second phase (currently underway) has been funded by another Home Office allocation, the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP).

In the longer term, the idea is to use funding such as the TGAP allocation to attract match funding from other local partners in the public and private sectors. Community Foundation for Merseyside and Merseyside Police are confident that they will succeed. Their confidence is based on their previous experience with PAYES Plus Extra, a precursor of MYT, which started as a pot of £10,000 and attracted match funding to become a total of £40,000. Currently there are two housing associations also interested in the programme.

How does the programme work?

One interviewee described the MYT as a *'simple menu with the best ingredients'*, by which he meant that the process of grant allocation is simple, but that the best available information and expertise is used to ensure that those grants are used as effectively as possible to tackle youth crime.

To date, the process has been as follows:

- Intelligence from the police identifies crime 'hot spots'.
- Using local knowledge, Community Foundation for Merseyside contacts community groups and organisations working in the target areas and invites them to apply for MYT grants.
- The Grants Panel, chaired by Merseyside Police and hosted by Community Foundation for Merseyside, agrees the allocation of MYT grants of about £2,000 per project.
- Conditions are set for each grant allocation. They include taking up capacity building support¹ and making contact with their local police and community support officers.
- The project identifies young people at risk of crime to take part in the project. In some of the projects, local partners including the police and fire service help to identify local young people who would benefit from the project.
- Community Foundation for Merseyside supports the projects and ensures that monitoring data are collected and fed back to donors and partners.

Merseyside Young Transformers pilot, Spring 2008

The pilot was funded through the Home Office Tackling Gangs Action Programme and allocated £20,000 to seven projects in areas of Merseyside where high levels of youth crime and young people at risk of involvement in crime had been identified.

The seven projects are:

- Tenants Forum (Village Housing)
- RIDES Project (Association of Stockbridge Village)
- KICKZ Project (Association of Stockbridge Village)
- Croxteth Counselling and Support Service
- Glaciere Sailing & Diving
- Alternatives to Violence (Norris Green Youth Centre Ltd)
- The Windows Project.

Well over 200 young people participated in the pilot MYT projects. The vast majority (80 per cent) of these young people were deemed to be at risk of becoming involved in crime. All of the projects were required to work with the police as a condition of the funding. Four of the seven projects, however, work extremely closely with Merseyside Police, with officers working alongside other youth engagement personnel to deliver the activities (CFM, 2007b; CFM, 2008a; CFM, 2008b).

¹ In the pilot MYT in Spring 2008, this support was provided by Tutu Foundation UK.

Merseyside Young Transformers Autumn 2008 and beyond

The second funding round agreed towards the end of 2008 draws on the Tackling Knives Action Programme funding stream and is slightly different from the pilot. Grants have been allocated to projects to talk with young people about knife crime; how they do this will vary. Each project will feed back their findings and will then be eligible to bid for further funding to support other youth engagement activities.

In the meantime, senior partners are keen to develop as well as sustain the project in the long term. They want to maintain a focus on building the capacity of local community organisations to work strategically on tackling youth crime. And they want to see clearer progression routes and opportunities for the young people that take part in MYT funded activities. The initiative is already beginning to see this in some of the projects, but want to broaden this out so that all projects are able to sustain the interest and involvement of young people at risk.

About the research

The main aim of the case study was to explore how the partnership model contributes to making the MYT programme effective.

The research was carried out in December 2008 and January 2009, and comprised ten semi-structured interviews with all the partners in the MYT initiative and a desk-top review of key documents about the initiative.

Interviewees included representatives of the Community Foundation for Merseyside (four interviews), Merseyside Police (two interviews), and one each from the Liverpool Echo, Tutu Foundation UK, Community Foundation Network and the Home Office.

2 What has MYT achieved and how has partnership working helped?

The MYT initiative is thought to have improved the way the three main partners tackle youth crime, specifically gun and knife crime as well as gang culture. As a result:

- Funds are being targeted at areas where need is greatest
- Local community organisations are being supported to meet these needs
- Local police are forming new ties with these community organisations
- Local police are adopting prevention strategies to tackle youth crime
- More stories about young people's successes in the news.

The three main partners were in no doubt that they could not have achieved the same outcomes if they had been working alone rather than as part of the MYT: *'We could never achieve this on our own. And that's about a [shared] commitment to making communities in Merseyside better.'* Based on their own assessment and the views of the other partners, they each make a unique contribution.

Merseyside Police can identify the worst affected areas, which enables Community Foundation for Merseyside to target funding more strategically.

Community Foundation for Merseyside has detailed knowledge of and good relationships with grassroots community organisations in these areas and can support them to make applications to the grants scheme. It can then facilitate introductions between local police and local community projects.

The *Liverpool Echo* has the skills needed to spot the newsworthy stories emerging from MYT activity and can bring them to public attention. This helps raise the profile of the initiative with the public and with other organisations that have not yet joined; and tackles wider issues around the way young people and Merseyside are perceived.

Embedding change in local communities

The local focus of Merseyside Young Transformers is a clue to its success. The partners are motivated to produce change for the benefit of the area's young people and wider communities in which they live and work. They are interested in small scale activity, targeted at small geographical areas that have been identified as problematic by the police and then reaching a small number of young people at risk of engagement in criminal activity. The initiative is marketed to organisations, such as housing associations and public authorities, operating locally that stand to gain if crime is reduced.

In essence, the MYT is about *'being specific, targeting small numbers of people in a very local setting'*.

Village Housing Tenants Forum was funded to run workshops and team building activities with young people that gather on Bakers Green. The project was delivered in partnership with local police and youth inclusion workers and aimed to break down barriers between these professionals and local young people. The project is aimed at young people at risk of involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. Roughly 20 young people have taken part.

Bringing police and community closer

Community Foundation for Merseyside has removed barriers to the police working with the community by taking responsibility for monitoring and evaluating all MYT activity and reporting this to the police, and by ensuring that all community organisations funded by MYT are properly constituted and comply with relevant legal requirements. This frees up the police to focus on building positive, supportive relationships with the grassroots community groups and the young people that they work with.

‘The best thing about the MYT is that the police are getting a better reputation with the young people. I was talking to a police officer who has been working on an estate where there is a Section 30 [Dispersal Order] and he said “this is lovely, going and seeing the young people in their own environment, doing what they do”’.

In some cases, a community group will apply to the MYT with the support of their local police officer. But other groups are unaware that the police are involved until they receive a grant. At that point, Community Foundation for Merseyside explains that it is a condition of the grant that they contact their local police officers including community support officers. Other conditions are attached to the grants, but this appears to be the most welcome and the most effective according to several interviewees.

RIDES is a project which teaches young people living on the Stockbridge Village estate about the responsible use of motorcycles. The project integrates practical sessions offering skills such as motorcycle maintenance with discussions about issues such as citizenship. RIDES received a grant of £2,875 and worked with 20 young people. The project report states that *“RIDES has ensured that young people involved are equipped with the skills to understand anti-social behaviour and enables the young people to identify alternatives”*. Feedback from local police officers who run the activities, suggests that young people who took part in RIDES are now more willing to talk to the local police than they used to be.

KICKZ Project was funded to run workshops around gang culture and youth crime with young people who already attend the KICKZ football programme in Stockbridge Village. The project aimed to break down barriers between young people and local police and youth inclusion workers. The young people designed and produced leaflets about the consequences of gang culture to distribute around their neighbourhood. The project aimed to involve 20 young people.

Creating lasting change

The MYT initiative reconciles the need for a major, Merseyside-wide strategy to tackle gun and knife crime and gang culture with the reality that this can only be achieved through very small, very local initiatives; and lots of them. It has achieved this by working with the police to bring about a major shift in thinking, away from enforcement and towards a preventative approach to youth crime in the form of diversionary and, in some cases, transformative youth activities.

Interviewees stated very clearly that this would not have been possible without the partnership. In particular, the police force lacks the time, the local knowledge and the ties with community grassroots (although the latter is changing) to deliver a programme of diversionary and transformative activities.

'Really what the MYT has done is... professionalise our approach to youth engagement.'

Some projects are delivered locally. Other projects deliberately remove a group of young people from their neighbourhood and use the experience to demonstrate to them that there are other places to go, other things to do; that there are alternatives to criminal and anti-social behaviour. For several interviewees, a key attraction of MYT is that it is *'taking them [young people at risk of offending] out of the hood and showing them what else they can do'*.

Alternatives to Violence is aimed at young people thought to be on the verge of joining gangs. The project took ten young people plus staff to a residential centre away from their neighbourhood for a weekend of sessions which covered anger management, how to change their behaviour and showed them that there are alternative ways to deal with things. The Norris Green Youth Centre Ltd received a grant of £2,875 to run the residential weekend.

Creating strong grassroots community organisations

Many organisations are already working in areas which have been identified as worst affected by youth crime. They have the skills, the local knowledge and relationships to provide effective youth crime prevention activities. MYT works with those organisations to ensure that they have the capacity to apply for funding and deliver these activities.

Funding is conditional on the community organisations participating in capacity building workshops. During the pilot phase of MYT, these workshops were provided by Tutu Foundation UK. In addition, considerable support is offered to the local community organisations by Community Foundation for Merseyside staff, who have long term links with many of them.

Glaciere Sailing & Diving is a social enterprise based in Liverpool Docks which introduces children and young people to outdoor water activities. Glaciere received £2,875 from MYT to engage 14 young repeat offenders in a 2 day programme of physical and academic activities. The young people were hand picked by staff in Merseyside Police, the Fire service and the Princes Trust. In their project report, Glaciere suggest that *"... participants have experienced raised aspirations, self-esteem and motivation and built relationships with representatives from the police and fire service who help deliver activities.'* Two of the young people who participated are known to have found full time employment nearby the project..

Generating positive stories about young people in Merseyside

Media staff within the police and Community Foundation for Merseyside, work together to ensure a flow of newsworthy stories to create positive images of young people in particular and to tackle negative views of Merseyside in general. This work sits within the Echo's Liverpool Unites campaign, which was launched following the death of Rhys Jones in August 2007.

3 What makes this a successful partnership?

This is a successful partnership which has been described by its members as positive, open and friendly. Again and again during interviews for this case study, the members of the MYT partnership said that its success was in very large part down to their shared aim. Where problems occurred, partners did not lose sight of their common aim, because the partnership was underpinned by good relationships.

'I have to say that the minute we all sat down and said "What's this about, what do we want to do?" there [haven't] been any significant challenges.'

'Organisations tend to be quite protective. But with MYT people have seen the positive benefits of sharing ideas and resources, speaking with one voice.'

Layers of partnership

A key strength of the MYT is that the partners have been able to 'knit' their organisations and their staff together at every level from those with strategic responsibilities around young people and crime to those working on the frontline.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the links between Merseyside Police and the Community Foundation for Merseyside. Four layers of partnership were identified:

- Between strategic or senior staff, fostered through regular reporting and contact meetings plus participation in the Grants Panel;
- Between operational staff, through regular formal and informal contact, working together and invitations to visit community organisations;
- Between the grassroots community organisations which are members or grant recipients of Community Foundation for Merseyside and their local police, through invitations and introductions arranged by Community Foundation for Merseyside; and finally
- Between the young people that use the community organisations funded by MYT and the local police officers that they meet as a result.

Communication

Communication is said to be very good. There is no MYT Board or other routine meeting of the whole partnership. Instead, an enormous amount of time appears to have been invested in regular, informal and formal contact, much of it face to face or by phone. Interviewees attributed the major shift in police attitudes to youth crime prevention to the amount of time spent talking with police officers and involving them informally in grassroots community projects.

Understanding

There is a good understanding of the aims and obligations of the different partner organisations. For example, that the police need to see a reduction in crime figures and that the Liverpool Echo needs, ultimately, to increase sales.

Acceptance

All partners accepted that each organisation has its own ways of working. For example, staff at the Community Foundation for Merseyside recognised that the police have a stricter hierarchical structure than their own organisation and accepted that they needed to work within this.

Respect

There is respect for the skills and expertise that each organisation brings to the partnership, and this applies equally to junior staff. In addition, each partner suggested that the credibility of their own activities was enhanced by being linked to the rest of the partnership. Having the police involved lends weight and credibility to news stories, while Community Foundation for Merseyside found that other organisations were impressed by the Echo as a partner and acknowledged the value of having them involved.

4 Overcoming the challenges

All the partners involved in MYT are pleased and proud of the partnership they have created and what it has achieved. Nevertheless, the partner organisations have come up against significant challenges and this section looks at what those were and how they were overcome.

Underpinning the initiative and critical in overcoming the challenges described below have been a shared aim and an immense amount of goodwill.

'Whatever challenges we've faced, we've faced them as a partnership. It's a very, very powerful and positive programme.'

Differences in organisational culture and ideas

Traditionally, Merseyside Police has focused its efforts on law enforcement as the key to tackling youth crime. Over time, some money has been allocated to diversionary activities, such as sports clubs. But MYT has required officers to think about youth crime in terms of prevention through diversionary and also transformative activities.

Making this shift in thinking has been tough all round. Law enforcement produces instant results, whereas prevention and transformation take much longer, *'it takes at least 6 to 12 months to show something'*. Interviews identified three things that had helped:

- Building relationships with frontline police officers
- Taking police officers out to projects where they could see for themselves the results of these kinds of prevention projects
- Providing regular monitoring reports of MYT activity to demonstrate progress, especially to senior police officers.

Attracting new partners and donors

The MYT would like to attract new partners to help them to continue to meet their aims and to secure sustainable, long-term funding for the initiative. At the time of this research, MYT was about to confirm two new partners, both housing associations, which need to address issues around anti-social behaviour on their housing schemes. In the future, MYT would like to see the Fire Service, PCT and the five District authorities become partners in the initiative. They are also working to secure endowment funding for MYT.

Local authorities undoubtedly share the aims and concerns of the MYT and would sign up to the approach that the initiative is taking to youth crime. The barrier to joining the partnership is thought to be about having to contribute to a Merseyside wide budget when their priority is to spend money on their own area. One respondent suggested that in the past the Community Safety Partnership might have been able to bring together all the authorities in a cross cutting initiative of this kind but that this

no longer exists and has not been replaced with any other body that could achieve the same results. Work on growing the partnership is ongoing.

Interviewees described a number of strategies for growing the partnership, the main ones being to:

- Identify aims and policies that the potential partner has in common with MYT, for example housing associations need to tackle local anti-social behaviour.
- Explain the benefits of match funding: being part of a wider partnership adds value to the money that they contribute.
- Keep talking, take up opportunities to present the MYT and maintain its profile.

Senior officials working at a regional or national level (for example, the Home Office) may be able to use their influence to encourage new organisations to consider joining the partnership.

Coping with short timescales and short notice

The pilot phase of MYT brought with it some very tight timescales for allocating the funding from the TGAP. This was frustrating for some staff at Community Foundation for Merseyside, but their priority was to ensure that this new funding stream reached the community projects that they work with and so the timescales were met. Again, interviewees emphasised the importance of their shared aim and good relationships for avoiding fall out over this.

By the time TKAP was announced, two things had changed which improved the process and made timescales more manageable:

- The police had more insight into the process of grant making and a healthy respect for the expertise and also the efficiency of the Community Foundation for Merseyside staff involved.
- The partnership had progressed and staff from Merseyside Police and Community Foundation for Merseyside worked together on the TKAP funding application and grant making criteria.

Building the capacity of community groups and organisations

In the pilot phase of MYT it was a condition of the grant that the recipient organisation should attend capacity building workshops. Most interviewees felt that they had learned a lot from the pilot phase of MYT when these workshops took place. Key learning points include:

- Support needs to be '*calibrated*' for the very particular context of grassroots projects in Merseyside.
- Support should be appropriate to and demonstrate knowledge of the locality and its population, including its ethnic and religious composition.
- The support should be proportionate to the scale of the grant, as well as to the capacity of the organisation (some are run entirely by volunteers or have a tiny staff team).

5 Prospects for extending the MYT: a blueprint for success?

There is widespread support for the idea of extending or rolling out the Merseyside Young Transformers model. Interviewees gave their views about the prospect of rolling out the model and picked out some key pointers for success. The headings below are the words of interviewees.

Interviewees suggested that the MYT model could be applied to other themes as well as applied to youth crime prevention in other authorities.

'I like the idea of collaboration, people working to shared objectives. If you've got the same objectives what's the point of doing things separately. And from what I've seen it seems to be working. And if it's working in this area why can't it work in other areas, not just geographical areas but thematic areas as well.'

'Have a vision'

Shared vision and aims were thought by interviewees to have been crucial in overcoming other challenges that the partnership encountered. Examples of this include differences in organisational culture and frustrations over timescales.

In the MYT initiative, this vision translates into a very broad set of criteria for grants, thought to be appropriate given the multitude of diversionary and transformative activities that may all be used to meet the overall aim of the programme. There was general agreement that a broad and simple set of grant criteria works best in this kind of programme.

'Find a partner that does something that you can't do yourself'

Without exception, all the interviewees respected and valued the knowledge, skills and expertise that their partners brought to the MYT initiative. Differences in organisational culture meant that it had taken time for all those involved to fully understand how each partner's contribution was different and important to the overall success of the initiative. One example of this, which was thought to be important in any roll out of the model, was developing an understanding of the differences between enforcement, diversion and transformation in the context of youth crime prevention activities. One interviewee recommended making a more explicit distinction between these in the future.

Several interviewees recommended widening the partnership in order to bring in a greater breadth of expertise and future funding. Having the police and a media partner were thought to be essential to the model, but the Fire Service and local PCTs as well as local authorities would be useful additions. The Glaciere Project which has received funds from MYT already works in partnership with the Fire Service and local authorities.

'Understand the context that you are working in'

Interviewees felt it was vital that anyone adopting the model understood the local context for their own youth crime prevention work. They would need to spend time identifying needs in their locality, working on this in partnership with grassroots community organisations, and then piloting the programme to test the model locally.

Connected to this, interviewees emphasised again that the value of the model lies in its very local focus.

'Get a champion and have people in different layers of each organisation to support the initiative'

Responsibility for partnership is not delegated in the Merseyside Young Transformers initiative. While the scale of joint working between frontline staff has grown, there appears to have been no change in the intensity of contact between senior staff, particularly between the project lead in Community Foundation for Merseyside and the senior officer driving the partnership in Merseyside Police.

Contacts

For further information on **Merseyside Young Transformers**, please contact Cathy Elliott on 0151 966 3594 or email cathy.elliott@cfmerseyside.org.uk.

For further information on replication of the model outside Merseyside please contact Lesley Talbot 0207 713 9326 or email ltalbot@communityfoundations.org.uk.

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