



The Kent Estuary Youth Project
South Lakeland, Cumbria



2021 Trustees' Report

Living through the pandemic

Young people tell us about the way that their experience of the last two years has affected them. For all it has been disruptive of education and social life. For many it has compounded their difficulties, within their families, in school or as they develop their sense of identity and impacted on their mental health. It would seem that, for many, the effects will last longer than the various Covid restrictions and will be part of their life post-covid.

We know that KEY can make a real contribution by being alongside young people and offering support as they contend with the challenges of growing up in this extraordinary time. The frustration in 2021 has been that we have wanted to engage with more and to offer more but, for much of the year, the Covid restrictions have made it difficult to reach out and to connect.

We can take satisfaction that, notwithstanding the difficulties of consistent compliance to Public Health guidance, our youth workers have sustained activity and relationships with young people. They have been able to offer ongoing programmes throughout the year – whether virtual or physical.

As Trustees, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Youth Workers and to the volunteers who have worked with them. They have had to contend with their own experience of Covid and with needing to work in new and very different ways. They have shown the imagination, resourcefulness and determination that has sustained our delivery.

The Youth Workers would be the first to point out that we also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the young people who have been involved with KEY. It is their energy, enthusiasm and ideas that shape our activity. It is their relationships with the workers that make possible the support and assistance they offer. KEY is committed to being youth led and they, the young people, have been at the heart of sustaining delivery in these challenging times.

KEY's activities

KEY aims to respond to the needs and wants of any young people in our communities, offering activities that are fun and engaging. These activities create a safe space. They also create opportunities for relationships with trusted adults. Our Youth Workers (along with volunteer support) use their skills to support young people's learning and development. We are open to all but what we offer is of particular relevance to young people who feel vulnerable, disadvantaged or challenged by their circumstances.

Across the full range of our activities and settings in 2021, we have engaged with 154 young people from Milnthorpe and the surrounding villages (see the table below).

Young people, and in some instances their parents or teachers, have told us of the benefits they have gained from their involvement in KEY. For some it has simply been about having something to do, or space to hang out with their friends, an opportunity to learn new skills or to have new experiences. For many it is also about having the opportunity to build friendships or to learn to handle some of the difficulties of relationships. For some it is about growing confidence to manage themselves in social settings; for others it is about learning how to handle difficulties in home or school. Many have found value in developing strategies to cope with stress and anxiety, growing their sense of wellbeing. Some are being supported as

they address their sense of identity. Many find support in handling issues around alcohol, drugs, sex and the ever-pervasive social media.

As well as working directly with individual young people, we aim to help our village communities become more cohesive, through intergenerational and community projects and through helping the voice of young people to be heard in village affairs. In the face of Covid restrictions, we have been limited this year in what we have been able actually to achieve. However young people have continued to plan and to prepare and are ready to push forward in 2022.

Growing up has perhaps never been easy, but young people today seem to be confronted by a welter of challenges. In an area where the village communities are more orientated to older people and in which a general level of affluence conceals significant poverty and inequality, KEY is an important resource. As trustees we are conscious of the need to sustain KEY into future years, in order to honour our commitment to the young people who are engaged in our activities and to continue to reach out to others.

Governance

Sustaining KEY is partly about keeping our delivery going. It is however also about ensuring that we work effectively as an organisation and properly discharge our responsibilities as trustees. During the year we have reviewed our governance arrangements and clarified roles and responsibilities.

The Trustees now meet quarterly to review progress towards our objectives, monitor performance and set objectives for the coming period. A subgroup of the trustees, together with the workers, form an Operations Group. It meets monthly to review the delivery programme and to ensure that necessary human, physical or financial resources are in place. A Finance Group also meets monthly to receive the management accounts and oversee the funding application and reporting processes. As a full Board of trustees, we have spent time (with external support) looking at Youth Participation – in terms of both the theory and our internal practice. We are committed to using the lessons from this as we move into 2022.

We are reliant on the generous financial support of our funders and are enormously grateful to those who have made grants to us in this year. At no time does our future look secure and this year there have been times when even the short term has been a cause of huge anxiety. However, we have negotiated the difficulties and approach 2022 with some (cautious) optimism.

We are very conscious that financial uncertainty (and the survival of the organisation) is unsettling for the young people. It is of course a continuing issue for our employees – the Youth Workers. It is their skill and their ability to work with young people upon which KEY depends. We wish that we could provide them with greater security. We are in awe of their dedication and their ability to connect with those that KEY was set up to support.

KEY is a CIO, with a small board of Trustees, all of whom are drawn from the communities we serve and all of whom have a wide range of involvements in those communities. I am enormously grateful to them for the time they give to KEY. I am even more grateful for the knowledge and commitment they bring to their involvement and for their drive to hear the voice of young people and to make a difference with them. Most serve not just as Trustees, but also as volunteers engaging directly in our delivery. The fact that KEY is still here, and that young people can talk of positive outcomes in their lives as a result of KEY, is a tribute to the resilience and dedication of my colleagues

Peter Clarke

Chair of Trustees

2021 Youth Activity	Numbers participating	Regular attendees (5 or more sessions)
Digital R'Space	3	3
Digital Snack & Chat	9	8
Digital Games night	6	6
Digital get crafty	7	7
Digital film making	4	4
Youth club in a bag	20	N/A
Milnthorpe Youth Café	64	40
Milnthorpe Senior Youth Club	13	11
Outreach (all areas)	26	0
Milnthorpe pop up	41	19
October half term youth activities	18	N/A
Milnthorpe Community Events	17	N/A
Social Action Projects	10	8
One to Ones	6	6
Levens consultation group	11	8
Storth consultation group	5	5
Youth Panel Interviews	4	4
Milnthorpe residential	9	9
Transition Work 1-day workshops	42	N/A
Summer HAF(Holiday activities and food programme)	27	27
Winter HAF	27	25
Total attendance	369	
Number of individual young people.	154	62

Trustees

Peter Clarke. Chair and Finance Group; **Linda Baverstock.** Secretary, Finance Group and Supporters communication

Wilf Gill. Treasurer, Finance Group, Health and Safety lead; **Irene McKay.** Operations Group; **Greg Tagney.** Safeguarding, Policies and Procedures; **Mary Salter.** Operations Group. Volunteer co-ordinator; **Janet Battye.** Operations Group

Youth Workers

Emma Banks; Rachel Twist (to June 21); **Jamie Smith** (from July 21)

2021 Funders include:

Holiday activities and food programme



Maurice and
Hilda Laing
Charitable Trust



The
Hadfield
Trust



The **Methodist Church**



FSCT
FRIEDA SCOTT CHARITABLE TRUST

UK YOUTH

Bela Masonic lodge