



## ***Youth Opportunities Fund / Youth Capital Fund***

### ***Case Study: Cornwall***

#### **Summary**

Cornwall is a large, rural County where isolation is a major barrier to young people's involvement in activities. The Youth Opportunity Fund / Youth Capital Fund (locally named 'Our money, your dream') has had to find flexible ways of ensuring that money is distributed across the County, and is already providing 'things to do and places to go' for young people in locations with few previous facilities.

#### **What young people have been engaged?**

The fund is administered through six panels which mirror District Council boundaries. Young people were drawn from existing forums, youth clubs, voluntary sector groups and new contacts to make up panels of up to 16 young people in each district. Each panel has a good gender balance and representation from different areas within the district. Because of the geographical spread even within districts, this has proved a challenge and has been achieved by rotating panel meeting venues and ensuring that each young person has transport (including arranging lifts if necessary).

#### **Role and involvement of young people**

The young people's panels receive applications and make group decisions. They value the fact that

“young people get to decide where the money goes... not just the same people”

and are clear about the benefits of a young person's perspective;

“I don't think an adult would look at it the same way... as young people we can see the potential”

Young people attended training days and each panel has an adult facilitator (from the Youth Service, Connexions or a voluntary organisation) who provides support. Young people clearly make their own decisions; at one end of the scale they have doubled grants to groups that had under-budgeted a good idea. At the other end they have rejected projects that they felt were not good value for money, or added stipulations, such as involving more young people.

#### **Changes to public service delivery and lessons learnt**

Whilst it is early days for measuring wider influence, workers are clear that there has been an impact on inter-agency relations by the

“enthusiasm generated by the scheme itself – we want to work together rather than having to – from the ground up”.

One learning point for agencies has been the disproportionate impact of a small grant. The Youth Service acknowledges that the fund has “reached parts of the County where we don’t have the opportunity to reach young people”. For example; young people in a small village, previously viewed negatively for ‘hanging out’ on the village green, applied for funding for benches and football equipment, promising to maintain the equipment and cut the grass. Having provided facilities for the local community, they are now supported and valued by the local community.

## Benefits and outcomes

A diverse range of projects have been supported, including a high jumpers club, music groups, a youth shelter and rowing equipment. The fund has proved that small grants, directed by young people, can have a large impact. For example, young people in Camelford applied for funding for a plasma screen TV for their youth centre (something youth workers would not have prioritised). As a result of this investment, young people now want to repaint and equip their centre and plan an extension. Young people now have a focus and numbers attending have doubled.



