



Youth Opportunities Fund / Youth Capital Fund

Case Study: Somerset

Summary

Somerset is a predominantly rural county where young people are subject to geographical isolation because of poor local transport links. The County Youth Service co-ordinates the operation of the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund, through a County Panel of young people

What young people have been engaged?

Young people have been recruited to the Panel from youth groups across the county to ensure geographical representation. Local authority and voluntary sector youth groups have been encouraged to participate as have organisations that work with specific groups of young people at risk of exclusion. The Panel includes young people who are involved in UK Youth Parliament, Young Farmers, YMCA, church youth groups, an IT café and those who have been involved with Connexions, Youth Offending Team, Race Equality Council, Looked After Children Team and CAMHS.

Role and involvement of young people

Young People were identified via the Youth Service and their links with other organisations. A training residential was held for Panel members, using Youth Bank toolkit. This is accredited by OCN at Level 1; Introduction of grants to grant makers, so young people can gain credits on the NQF for participation.

Young People identified the criteria for YOF including no political and religious beliefs to be promoted, no funding of in-school activities. They created their own form, based on an analysis of other grant application forms, taking the best bits from each. Young People also designed publicity for the funds.

The Panel did a mapping exercise of existing youth provision in the county, eg youth centres, clubs, mobile provision which helped them identify priorities for YOF

6 Panel meetings have been planned for 2006/7, and each of these is followed by invitations to applicants to present their projects and be interviewed by Panel members.

When applications come in the lead youth worker does an initial assessment and then stands back and lets young people lead. She copies the application to the relevant locality youth team for their feedback and relays this to the Youth Panel.

At the Panel meeting applications are assessed by pairs of young people, followed by group discussion and decision. Applicants are contacted by phone for more info if needed, and some applicants are invited to interview – mainly if there are concerns, particularly if the project appears not to be young people led, or the aims of the project are not clear, or if the project sounds interesting!

The process is led by young people, who feel very much involved from beginning to end. There is a good sense of team work within group.

Changes to public service delivery and lessons learnt

Decision making on this fund is very much in hands of young people. An example was seen of an application for a multi use games area sent in by County Councillor. The panel deferred the application as they felt it wasn't led by young people. This could herald a change in wider decision making on youth projects.

The Mapping exercise by young people identified their priorities for fund. They want to spread benefits across Somerset

Benefits and outcomes

The Youth Bank toolkit seems to have been useful in helping young people identify criteria and devise application form, and the residential seems to have helped generate good sense of team building in the group. Young people feel positive about the fund, that they are in control and making the decisions.



