

No walk in the park

Through the Generation CashBack programme Youth Scotland staff have supported Coo Park's development in several ways:

- Visits to conduct needs analysis and plan around reducing antisocial behaviour and to support with programme development.
- Access to the PVG scheme.
- Leading sessions.
- Support with delivering and processing youth awards, purchasing music equipment and hiring dance tutors.
- Provided digital resources including a youth work games film.

Coo Park United is a community-based youth club in Falkirk which supports the local communities of Langlees and Bainsford. Starting out as a football club for young boys, it has evolved to provide services and activities for the whole community. A Youth Scotland member group, they received support from Generation CashBack to tackle anti-social behaviour and enhance the opportunities they were able to provide young people in the area.

In this case study Charlie, a Community Development Officer, reflects on the club's evolution and how support from Generation CashBack helped them engage young people in positive activities.

“ Our kids benefit from coming here, they become better wee citizens.”



From humble beginnings to a community wide service

Charlie described the club's origins and its responsive process of evolving to meet the needs of local communities.

"In 2015 I was approached by a group of young kids that played football. Basically getting their balls knocked [stolen], their clothes were getting knocked, it was the only place they really could play. We did have a disused astro pitch out the back but it belonged to the council. Me and a couple of guys played football and decided, we'll bring them up to here, we'll go and speak to people at the council and make a deal with them, that we can bring all these young folk up here, bring that back into use. So that's really our origins. We started off in a field with a toilet, but we still delivered a lot of stuff and it was free. Then family groups and girls came along."

Overcoming barriers to engaging with sports and community resources

"A lot of the kids down here can't access the mainstream football stuff, because of cost – a lot of good football players, were no getting in and their family backgrounds, they couldn't go to like Grahamston or even Falkirk because it was £40 a month standing order just for your kid to go along. And plus it's the travelling. They don't have access to go along with a parent. So we decided that we'll offer them exactly the same experience that you get there, but it's free. We won the McDonald's SFA Daily Mail best football project in Scotland. We beat Rangers and Celtic we beat all the big ones."

"We've got a lot of exercise equipment, boxing and multi gym and stuff. I've had the older boys and they want to do boxing. So we've got a coach from Grangemouth, from that Spartans. So where we are really today is we do everything. It's hard even for us to explain, we change with the times with what is needed."

Everyone is welcome

Coo Park often work with young people that other organisations don't engage with, and provide them with activities and opportunities they have no other access to.

"We pick up a lot of kids like [group member], he just moved into the area. He was getting bullied at the school... We tend to get a lot the kids that groups will not touch. They leave the house and get chucked out of youth groups, bombed out because of their behaviour. And with disabilities or maybe autistic."

"Young [group member] – nobody would take him on. Now he comes to us. We gave him the kit, now he's integrated with us. That's the profile of the kids, the kids that nobody wants. We had 2 transgender boys. Nobody is bothered here. It's just that simple. They know it's somewhere they can come. There are a lot of kids that don't go home for anything to eat and they are starving."

Tackling anti-social behaviour and providing positive role models

The Coo Park team became aware of a group of young people that were disrupting activities for adults and older people taking place at a nearby centre. Wanting to engage them in something positive, Charlie explored expanding the reach and impact of their activities with support from Generation CashBack.

"We know them all. Over there you get free Wi Fi [if you are close enough to the building]. So sitting round the back carrying on but annoying the groups that were in with loud music. The whole reason for being there was the free Wifi. I knew that I spoke to [Youth Scotland LDO] who said there was (potential support from) CashBack. I thought 'great idea!'. Hoover that lot up and bring them over here. And we'll call it Dark Skies Bright Stars so it was all about music. That's where we picked up [Group member]."

"They know we're not giving them a row – we are going to offer them something. The music, the guitars, food and the lighting. Rather than just coming in for karaoke on your phone, we got the best stuff and brought them in here and that was ran. And again, legacy from that, some of them performed at our Dandelion Concert."

In the accompanying case study, five of Coo Park's young people tell us about why they attend the Youth Group and what it means to them.

“There’s some real disadvantage in the families. People in recovery, in prison. That’s what the whole Generation CashBack is for, that was the link, some of the kids had parents in jail. It’s trying to break the cycle. The important thing is when it goes to this positive role models.”

Valued holistic support

Charlie spoke about the range of support the Youth Scotland Generation CashBack Local Development Officers have provided. This has included activity to help the development and sustainability of their youth group, and opportunities for their young people to gain accreditation.

“Having [Youth Scotland LDO] helping to make the links was important, and he is always on to us getting digital stuff sent to us and other things. And there is support with the administration stuff the PVGs because it takes the strain off us, and access to training and other opportunities, networking stuff.”

“[Youth Scotland LDO] came down, she was hands on and is supporting Angie with the Hi5s [SCQF Level 2]. The majority of the young people [are going through the Hi5 award]. You need that support person, and that’s what they get when they had [Youth Scotland LDO].”

“Whether it is picking up some leaves, everything is an achievement when you record it. We’ve got everything recorded. I think we’re gonna look at the Youth Achievement stuff, they [Youth Scotland] picked that up with us because our older ones are doing a lot, you know, even sweeping up. They do a lot for us. They work with the young ones that help us to come to the younger group.”

