

Park life

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.

Youth Scotland member group Coo Park United provide a range of activities and opportunities for young people in the communities of Langlees and Bainsford in Falkirk. Created as an initiative to give young people opportunities to participate in football, it has evolved into a safe space for all young people in the community that want to get involved in different positive activities. Generation CashBack support from Youth Scotland enabled Coo Park to add a new music-oriented offering to their young people and draw in new members that had been involved in anti-social behaviour.

In this case study, five young people tell us about why they go along to Coo Park youth group, what they get out of it, and why it is an important part of their community.

“ We get to be ourselves here.”



A good reputation

The young people described different reasons for coming along; most stemmed from word-of-mouth endorsements from others that they know and trust.

"My brother was coming to the football so I thought I'd give it a try. But I quit and then I started back and we started doing the dancing and all that so I joined that and I've been here ever since."

"[Friend] had been coming and she told me about it so I started coming. I really enjoy it, it's really good."

"I've always knew about this place, but I joined because I thought, I need to get more social with different people to who I was hanging around with, and that has helped. Some of my pals that came here dinnae come anymore, but I'm different, I just love to come here."

"I don't really come for the football now, it's to make friends, I've got friends who are young, friends that are girls, loads of friends. I see them out of here as well."

Socialising and having fun

Making friends and opportunities to get out the house, socialise and have fun doing different things, keep the young people coming back. The 'Dark Skies, Bright Stars' music initiative developed with Generation CashBack support has also appealed to, and proved an effective way of engaging and involving young people in the community.

"It gives you something to do when you're bored, and it's quite gid cos with the music you've got more songs and other new things."

"It gets me out the house and gives me a break from all the siblings I have."

"I've made friends with people that I wouldn't have known. And there's people I would know but I know much better by being here with them."

"Last night we had a Halloween party and I didn't think I was going to dress up, but I dressed up as Freddy Kruger. It was just everyone, all having fun with the music on."

"You can just come and have a sing on the karaoke. But I don't sing. I do dance though."

"We've got a band and a singing group. We're part of the singing group."

The importance of Coo Park

Without Coo Park the young people explained that there really wouldn't be much for them to do, and for one young person, the group helps them to manage their behavior. They also reflected on how the community would be different.

"I'd probably just stay in the hoose."

"I'd just be hanging around outside."

"[Outside of here] I do stuff I shouldn't do. See when I'm here I'm a nice calm person, but see if you see me outside this place, you wouldnae like to see me like that."

"It helps to keep trouble down round here... it would be worse if this place wasn't open."

"It's here for anyone, anyone can come. Most young people round here come, maybe not all the time, but they'll come here."

Making a difference in a safe space

Having adults that they like and trust was important for the young people, but they also recognized their own role in making Coo Park a valuable community resource.

"I don't just come here for food and friends and all the stuff, but I want to help this place as well. I want to be a volunteer but I've got a few years before I can sign up. I want to help so they can do more stuff, like get PlayStations. Let other young people have entertainment and people to play with."

"Well, let's just say I keep my anger cool in this place. If someone tries to start on me here I keep my anger cool. In front of little kids, I dinnae want to traumatise them, they'll just end up doing the same as me, they'll copy me [and I don't want that]."

"The folk here are really nice even though we're always making noise and running about. We trust them, you can talk about any problems with them, just anything."

"We'll help out making teas and coffees, and there's always stuff needing done."

