



Photo:
Swan
Youth
Project

Supporting Positive Activities and Community Engagement (SPACE)

Impact and Learning 2023-2026



Safety

The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner wanted to understand if there is a link between increasing engagement with children and young people who do not readily engage with positive youth activities, and a reduction in low-level antisocial behaviour (ASB) in localised areas. Norfolk residents report that the biggest ASB issues for them were environmental (e.g. fly tipping, littering), drug dealing, and street drinking in urban areas (Norfolk Community Safety Partnership & Serious Violence survey 2024).

Access to youth provisions, support services like mental health support, and community cohesion are some of the protective factors that can help to counteract risk factors (e.g., poverty, mental health issues, family environment) for young people who are most at risk of perpetrating. Youth services occupy young people with positive activities and provide them with valuable life skills.

Youth groups in Norfolk were already consulting young people about what they wanted locally, what the gaps were, and how they could expand their offers to reach those young people who were especially at risk. They needed funding and support to achieve this goal.



When you feel comfortable, equal, secure, consensual, in control, valued, confident, free, and protected in everyday existence. Safety is trusting the people around you, the community, the place you live, your wider surroundings and this should be felt by everyone. A place you can be your true self, with absence of fear”

- 72 young people defined safety at a 2023 Norfolk Community Safety Partnership youth workshop

Our response

Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) is a charity and grant funder dedicated to building stronger communities and improving the lives of people across Norfolk.

We are connected with more than 2,000 voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across the county. Unlike national funders, we understand Norfolk - its people, places and challenges - and have the reach to engage smaller, grassroots organisations doing vital work on the ground, who might otherwise be overlooked.

Strength through collaboration

To shape an effective response, NCF came together with the **OPCC**, **Norfolk County Council**, and the Norfolk Youth Advisory Boards (**YABS**) to combine funding and knowledge to design a fund to combat antisocial behaviour with positive youth activities.

Grants of up to £30,000 over two years were available to members of the **Healthy Young Minds Coalition** to reach out to young people who do not readily engage with regular youth groups and activities. The Fund encouraged open-access youth group models, outreach work, and detached youth work in local communities, to increase participation from the **13-15** age group. Funding was extended in 2026 for a further three months, following an additional donation from the Home Office' Serious Violence Duty.

“ it helped me feel that if I needed help, there would be someone I could talk to or even hang out with if I was having a bad day.” - MAP participant

“ Many expressed that they felt supported rather than judged, and appreciated having adults ‘on their side.’ Feedback also highlighted that relationships felt genuine, with young people describing staff as ‘actually cool’ and approachable, which helped them feel more comfortable engaging.” - EP Youth

“ I don't learn well at school, but here (Not About the Bike) its different. Like, I can do stuff practical, not writing. Graham is good at teaching me stuff, he's really patient with me.” - Henderson Trust participant

“ The Watton space project has helped me by being able to look forward to having something to do on monday evenings after school knowing I'd leave with a clear mind and a smile.” - The Benjamin Foundation participant

“ All the people here are very positive and friendly. Other services I have talked to are miserable and didn't help me with anxiety or improve the way I was feeling.” - The Matthew Project participant

Taking action

There were 19 applications received to the fund and only six received funding. Young decisionmakers from the YABs targeted funding towards those applications that demonstrated they had a plan to reach young people furthest from support.

Grants supported a range of place-based youth engagement for young people, including bike repair workshops, inspiring trips and holiday activities, games, crafting, and a range of other positive activities. In 2025, the SPACE partnership programme was one of three shortlisted nominees for a Flourish Award in the Safe and Secure category.

This report shares the impact of the programme and learning that has emerged, including key themes.



The Benjamin Foundation

Location: Watton

A **£32,616** grant enabled detached work in Watton and surrounding areas during evenings and weekends, including a 'Day Tripper' programme, and funded Watton Youth Club.



EP Youth

Location: Fakenham

A **£35,000** grant funded youth workers to deliver detached sessions in different locations in the rural hinterland around Fakenham, where antisocial behaviour was identified.



Henderson Trust

Location: West Ealham, Larkman, Marlpit

A **£32,659** grant helped to increase youth worker hours to expand Not About the Bike and Cadge Road Community Centre youth sessions and offer free holiday activity sessions.



Mancroft Advice Project (MAP)

Location: Mile Cross

A **£33,500** grant funded the delivery of a high-quality, open-access youth group at 185 Drayton Road (The Common Lot) in Mile Cross (previously the Phoenix Centre).



The Matthew Project

Location: Norwich

A **£28,766** grant enabled the employment of a qualified youth worker to organise and deliver positive activities to groups of young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.



SWAN Youth Project

Location: Downham Market

A **£35,000** grant enabled the employment of an additional youth worker to support young people through open access sessions and the Bike Kitchen project.



Photo:
Henderson
Trust

Impact at a Glance

Over three years you supported

6 projects funded
engaging young
people most at risk of
antisocial behaviour

awarding
funding of
£197,541

59%
male attendees

16 hours
average of
contact time in
groups

812
children and young people
reached over the project lifetime

3 hours
average of
contact time in
1:1s

77 young people not in
mainstream education

105 young people with a
disability or long term
limiting health condition



THE BENJAMIN FOUNDATION

A £32,616 grant enabled detached work in Watton and surrounding areas during evenings and weekends, including a 'Day Tripper' programme, and funded Watton Youth Club.

The Benjamin Foundation supported a total of 130 young people aged 8-17 with a median age of 14 and an equal gender split between female and male attendees. They reached 39% of young people via contacts at local schools. The remaining young people were reached by word of mouth, local advertising, detached work and referrals from Benjamin Foundation Boom! Young Carers or Carers Matter Norfolk. They liaised with and supported the families of 10 young people.

They estimate at least 13 young people have reduced their antisocial behaviour after having open conversations about these behaviours with youth workers. Many have also reduced their drinking and drug use. More than 75% reported that their relationships with important people in their life, including parents and family members, have improved. Over 95% have told us that their attendance at school, college or work has improved since engaging in our service.

7 trips taken

33.6
average number
of hours contact
time in group
sessions

130

young people
engaged over
two years,
including 76
on a regular
basis



Photos: The Benjamin Foundation



EP YOUTH

A £35,000 grant funded youth workers to deliver detached sessions in different locations in the rural hinterland around Fakenham, where antisocial behaviour was identified.

EP Youth supported a total of 219 young people, including 72 who have regularly engaged. Attendees were aged 10-18 with a median age of 14. 61% of attendees were male, 38% female, and 1% non-binary. Most contacts were White British, but three were Black, 10 had mixed ethnicity, and eight were disabled or had a long term limiting health condition, including ADHD and autism. Additionally, five were not in mainstream education. 72% of young people were reached through detached work, with the remaining being referred by schools, EP Youth members, and family members. A small number came from social work and early help teams.

EP Youth actively engaged young people in conversations about challenging and risky behaviour. In Fakenham, they delivered drug awareness sessions, tackled illegal bike use, and supported young people with careers and school transitions. They worked with the police to rebuild trust, challenge negative perceptions, and address anti-social behaviour, including intimidation and drug-related activity. They also offered 1:1 support and made sure young people had a voice – especially those who felt there was “nothing to do” locally. Alongside this, EP Youth continued to offer a space where young people build confidence and form positive relationships.

219 young people engaged over two years,
including 72 who have engaged regularly

2 hrs average number of hours contact time in
group sessions

8 young people supported who are disabled or
had a long term limiting health condition



HENDERSON TRUST

A £32,659 grant helped to increase youth worker hours to expand Not About the Bike and Cadge Road Community Centre youth sessions and offer free holiday activity sessions to young people in the NR5 8 postcode.

Henderson Trust supported a total of 155 young people aged 11-16 with a median age of 14 and 68% male attendees, including 101 who regularly engaged. Most young people (62%) heard about them through word of mouth or via a drop-in session, and the remaining referrals were from Big Norfolk Holiday Fun, social work, and local police. They supported 20 young people with internal qualifications, liaised with the families of five young people, and supported three to access volunteering or further education.

They estimate that 50 young people who they engaged were involved in or at risk of being involved in antisocial behaviour, based on the referrals they received. Out of these, 20 have been engaged regularly and have built up strong relationships. The project has not only prevented these 20 young people from further antisocial behaviour but has helped in their re-engagement with education and developed other skills, such as communication and teamwork.

20 hrs
contact time in
group settings

13 hrs contact
time in 1:1s

155
young people
reached over
two years,
including 101
regularly

20
internal
qualifications



“I’ve definitely seen a reduction on antisocial behaviour on the park. It comes and goes, but there was a real problem with it a couple of years ago. Recently it hasn’t been too bad. I don’t know if the projects have helped, but I know Kevin* used to cause problems round the park, and he hasn’t been doing it since he started going to the workshop” – Dean Oakley, Park Manager at Henderson Community Park

Henderson Trust, *name changed

MANCROFT ADVICE PROJECT (MAP)

A £33,500 grant funded the delivery of a high-quality, open-access youth group at 185 Drayton Road (The Common Lot) in Mile Cross (previously the Phoenix Centre).

MAP have supported a total of 47 young people aged 11-17, including 32 who have regularly engaged. Their attendees were 46% female, 38% male, 8% non-binary, and 2% transgender. This includes 18 young people who were disabled or had a long term limiting health condition, including ADHD and autism. Four attendees were not in mainstream education. 34% of young people they reached came via word of mouth, 26% via social media, and the remaining referrals were from school, community partners, and from attending activities at the same venue.

A high number of young people with additional support needs (SEND) were attending MAP's youth group. As a result of feedback from young people the group moved sessions to a quieter and more familiar venue to avoid overstimulation. Sessions were also focused on calmer activities exploring creative skills without distraction, such as calligraphy, cyanotype printing, and air-dry clay projects. More young people engaged with the project as a result. MAP estimates around 10-15 young people attending SPACE were at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour. By providing a safe, welcoming environment with positive activities, creative workshops, and social opportunities, SPACE offered an alternative to spending time in areas where anti-social behaviour is known to occur, such as Pointers Field.

13.6

average number of hours contact time in group sessions

1.7 average number of contact hours in 1:1s

“Engagement with Norfolk Constabulary has been particularly valuable, giving young people the chance to meet their Community Engagement Officer, ask questions, and build trust. This has supported positive relationships between young people and the police and contributed to a safer community.”



18

young people with a disability or long term limiting health condition

“Many highlighted the social and creative aspects of the group, saying they enjoy “football, activities, socialising, fun, friends, and meeting new people.”

THE MATTHEW PROJECT

A £28,766 grant enabled the employment of a qualified youth worker to organise and deliver positive activities to groups of young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.

The Matthew Project engaged a total of 54 young people, including 25 who have regularly engaged. Their attendees were aged 13-18, with 48% male, 43% female, 2% non-binary and 2% transgender. 39 young people were not in mainstream education and 3 were at risk of becoming NEET. This also includes 46 young people who were disabled or had a long term limiting health condition. Attendees came from far and wide, with 50% attendees from Norwich, 24% from Great Yarmouth, and 10% from King's Lynn.

To engage young people experiencing high social anxiety, The Matthew Project offered early access sessions so new participants could meet staff and familiarise themselves with the space before joining the group.

20

average number of contact hours in groups

23

young people are now accessing volunteering, training, education, and employment.

64%

of young people are staying out of trouble, making good choices, and staying safe with alcohol, drugs, and sex.

1.31

average number of contact hours in 1:1s

“ I was working with a very depressed and completely isolated young person who had no friends and little family support. Since attending SafeSPACE she has gone from wanting to end her life, to having hope.”
- MAP Counsellor



Photos: The Matthew Project



It's helped me make friends again and meet new people and experience new things that I would not have been able to do. We get to voice our opinions freely about different activities we do ... In one word I would describe TMP as 'Inclusive'. You get to meet a lots of different people from different backgrounds.

-The Matthew Project attendee



SWAN YOUTH PROJECT

A £35,000 grant enabled the employment of an additional youth worker to support young people through open access sessions and the Bike Kitchen project.

Swan Youth Project engaged a total of 207 young people, including 80 who have regularly engaged. Their attendees were aged 10-17 with a median age 13 and 62% of them were male. Of these, most attendees were White British, but two were Black, two were Asian, and four had mixed ethnicity. Additionally, 30 attendees were disabled or had a long term limiting health condition, and 30 were not in mainstream education. Swan liaised with and supported the families of 66 young people, liaised with school and services for 45, and signposted 68 to other services.

Of the young people supported, 17 were engaging in antisocial behaviour known to the police, and 26 were at risk of antisocial behaviour. A further 31 were vulnerable or at risk of criminal exploitation. Swan emphasised the role of food in the project's success, with young people receiving a home-cooked meal that they often help to prepare and clean up, giving the group a 'home' atmosphere.

49

average number of contact hours in groups

98%

of young people report feeling safe at Swan

96%

of young people say coming to Swan helps their mental health

10.5

average number of contact hours in 1:1s



Photos: Swan Youth Project

Conclusion

The **SPACE Programme** has demonstrated the power of coming together to enable targeted, preventative community interventions to support those young people who are most at risk. This was a project that is truly led by what young people thought and wanted, including the Norfolk YABS having the power to make decisions about which projects received funding at the very start.

By taking a partnership approach to safety in the community, the SPACE programme engaged young people who are falling through the cracks. The impact of the programme shows what is possible with a different approach; supporting young people instead of punishing them for antisocial behaviour. This not only keeps young people safe but creates a ripple effect in the community where others who might be victims of crime are safeguarded too.

Legacy of the programme

- The Benjamin Foundation's now-established Watton youth group will continue to provide a safe space for young people, filling a gap locally.
- EP Youth has trained and upskilled six staff members in detached youth work experience. They have also established relationships across schools, police, retailers, and residents and are now part of the community safety strategy in the area.
- Henderson Trust will continue to accept referrals for young people who are harder to engage and will work with partners to support those young people needing more intensive 1:1 support.
- MAP are seeking funding to continue running the Mile Cross youth group, creating a safe space for young people after school.
- The Matthew Project is already fundraising for projects to link into SAFESpace, including 1:1 coaching and employability skills.
- Swan have learned about the value of more targeted groups, and that the life skills part of the project is really needed and enjoyed.



Photo: The Benjamin Foundation

Thank you

for partnering with us to support those young people who are most likely to slip through the cracks.



Together, Norfolk shines brighter

Find out more or get in touch

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