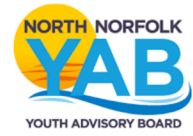




Photo:
Swan
Youth
Project

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

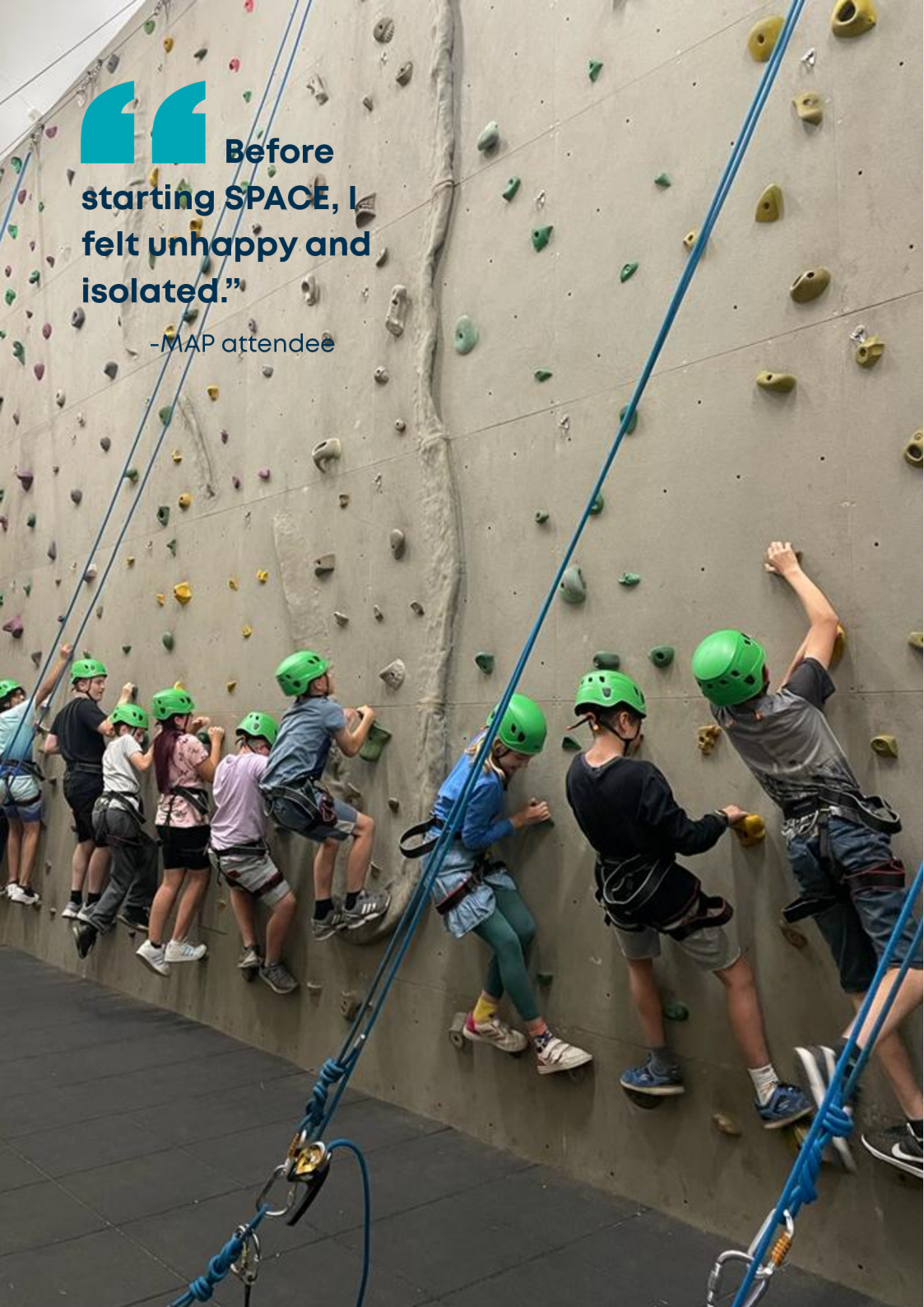
3 hours
average of
contact time in
1:1s

77 young people not in
mainstream education

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







Before starting SPACE, I felt unhappy and isolated.”

-MAP attendee

What did we learn?

Fun activities are the hook to get young people interested.

From bike repair workshops to trips and outings, all youth providers offered positive and fun activities that young people would otherwise not have the opportunity to enjoy, which enabled them to start building relationships and growing trust.

The Matthew Project initially focused on fun activities to engage young people, like pizza making and laser tag, and trips like Horstead Activity Centre. As their confidence grew, staff and volunteers involved them in shaping sessions, balancing enjoyable activities with opportunities to explore deeper topics like healthy relationships, sexual health, and mental health; especially important for young people who missed PHSE lessons. Fun activities and trust-building help young people who are not engaging to have enough confidence to explore options to move forward.

MAP offered a range of fun activities, including crafts and sports. Young people liked the creative activities so much they dedicated the youth session to being a creative space. MAP's cohort was made up of young people who identify as neurodivergent and as part of the LGBTQ+ community. For many of them, the space was an opportunity to feel accepted, safe and able to express themselves without fear of judgement. Sessions provided opportunities for self-expression, social connection and exploration of interests.

Meeting young people where they are can prevent them from falling through the cracks.

Detached youth work and outreach engagement methods enabled community groups to charities go to young people “where they are,” whether that is in the park or on the high street. This targeted approach enabled young people who are furthest from support to be in contact with a youth worker.

SWAN Youth Project delivered outreach sessions to complement More Than a Bike and Open Access sessions. By offering a range of opportunities to suit different people, the group was able to reach young people who were not currently accessing youth sessions - “there will always be some who don’t want to come into our building.”

“ One particular young person was organising fights at a local park on a regular basis. We were able to get to him and gain trust, so we could engage his wider family and also made a referral to CADS. Through our work he gradually stopped engaging in the fighting and risky behaviour and engages with us weekly through Open Access. - Swan Youth Project

EP Youth delivered detached youth work in Fakenham and rural surrounding areas.

Detached work allowed EP Youth to reach those who would not typically access traditional youth provision, offering early support, building trust, and preventing issues from escalating. The project reinforced the importance of consistent, relationship-based youth work, particularly in rural areas where opportunities are limited and young people can feel overlooked. The group's detached work even inspired the creation of a new youth club in one of the rural villages to give the young people a weekly safe space.

Sam's* story

One young person EP Youth worked with had frequent negative interactions with the police and little respect for authority, often engaging in conflict and anti-social behaviour. They were at risk of disengaging from school and had little motivation around their future at times. Over time, youth workers built a trusting relationship with them and supported them to attend exams and stay in school, helping them to think about what they actually wanted and how to get there.

EP Youth also set up some informal interactions with the police, which helped both sides understand each other a bit better. The hostility gradually reduced, and they started to see some officers differently. The group had regular conversations about their future, supporting them with career ideas and next steps. They achieved the grades needed to start an apprenticeship in their chosen field. They have since developed a more positive relationship with their community and know where to access support through EP Youth's provision, even visiting outside of sessions to share updates and seek guidance.

*Name changed

Personalised support enables young people to flourish instead of flounder.

Young people who were otherwise disruptive and disengaged in group settings were offered 1:1 personalised support and supervision. For many young people with additional challenges this enabled them to solve problems and build trust and confidence.

Once **Henderson Trust** began taking referrals for young people needing more intensive 1:1 support before being able to integrate those young people into group sessions. They took a flexible approach and treated every initial contact as a unique case that could require a different level of work to enable young people to progress.

For example, Kevin* was referred by the local police team for being involved in antisocial behaviour and criminal damage locally. Kevin was initially difficult to engage with but wanted to fix an old bike of his. After 1:1 sessions fixing his bike with Graham, he opened up about negative influences and Henderson Trust spoke to his family and offered additional support. Now Kevin is well-integrated in group sessions, helps others in the workshop, and has stopped 'hanging around' with the other young man who he believed was a negative influence.

*name changed



Photo: Henderson Trust

Community engagement promotes feelings of safety

Youth groups targeted ASB hotspots, worked collaboratively with community partners, and employed an understanding of risk factors to target young people most at risk, and reduce antisocial behaviour.

EP Youth engaged 216 young people across their detached and outreach work in Fakenham and the surrounding areas. In Great Ryburgh, a rural village, in particular they supported 24 young people, all of whom were already engaging in anti-social behaviour and known to local police. Across the rest of the areas they estimate around 75% were either already engaging in, or at risk of, anti-social behaviour, or perceived anti-social behaviour. Through early intervention, consistent presence, and relationship-building, particularly around key times such as after school, EP Youth contributed to reduce risk factors, challenged negative perceptions, and diverted young people towards safer, more positive activities and support.

Local police reported a reduction in local anti-social behaviour linked to young people, particularly around the school, alongside fewer concerns from parents about young people feeling unsafe. Fakenham school have also seen a decrease in complaints and improved behaviour. Ryburgh Parish Council shared positive feedback about the project, noting that EP Youth's provision gave young people "something to do."

The Benjamin Foundation held meetups from the local sports centre and worked closely with the centre as they were experiencing a lot of ASB within the building and were considering closing it to teenagers. As a result of The Benjamin Foundation's intervention, the centre has remained open-access and the young people have developed more respect for the centre and the staff. Not only have The Benjamin Foundation supported the young people, but they've also provided support for some of their families, developing a good rapport with many of the parents, who have also reached out when needing support for their child. Many of the young people now feel safer and look out for each other when in Watton.

Jay's* story

Jay had friends in county lines and had got involved at times. He had previously been in trouble with the police and at school. He also witnessed domestic violence and struggled with his mental health. He wanted to make changes and started coming to weekly meetups.

Jay received support from The Benjamin Foundation over two years through SPACE. Since coming to the project, Jay has made better choices and his mental health has improved. He has made new friends that have been a better influence on him. He has now started college and is thriving on a carpentry course and his attendance is 99%. He also looks out for the younger members of the group when he sees them out and about and makes sure that they are safe.

*Name changed

With trust and relationships, come opportunities for growth and ambition.

Once youth workers built trust and relationships, they helped young people open up about their goals for the future. Projects supported young people to build skills and pursue opportunities for education, employment, training, and volunteering.

The Matthew Project introduced skills-based sessions, including cooking, baking, sewing, upcycling, and workplace experiences. Young people visited offices, learned about interview preparation with organisations like Adrian Flux and New-U. They even conducted youth panel interviews to practise real life questioning and decision making. The project became very popular with referrers due to its unique offering, filling a gap in provision for NEET (or at risk of NEET) young people.

“**Their interaction and relationships they have built up are caring, concerned, fun, non judgemental and secure.**”

- Activity Provider, talking about The Matthew Project



Swan Youth Project supported young people to build life skills, including cooking and baking. They began offering Duke of Edinburgh to young people who are not in school to have the opportunity, including volunteering, an expedition, and receiving the award.

Andy & Ben's* story

Andy and Ben were brothers in years 9 and 10 at high school, and they were both at risk of criminal exploitation. They lived with mum and dad and three other siblings. Home was unstable, with dad having a history of drugs and antisocial behaviour. Mum was a care leaver and very suspicious of services/support and could be vocal/aggressive. Both boys were invited to the More than a Bike course, attending weekly where they learned how to look after and repair their bikes. Alongside this, they helped prepare and then ate a healthy meal together with the others in the group. Andy has tried new foods and both can now use a knife and fork.

Both boys benefitted from positive role models, especially spending time with inspiring adult males George and Darren. They learned life skills such as cooking, using kitchen appliances, plus home budgeting and future planning. They both attended Open Access regularly and are completing Duke of Edinburgh award through us. There continues to be significant worries about home life, but Swan Youth Project plan to continue building a framework of positive experiences around these two young men to better equip them to manage and make good choices for their futures.

*Name changed



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



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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