



# END OF YEAR REPORT 2011

This report gives a summary of the activities of the Xcel Project for 2011. The report will cover the following:

- Why Try? Project
- Sexual Health Event and Promotion
- Summer of Sport 2011
- Xcel Project Activities
- Xcel Youth Cinema
- Just Dance
- National Youth Work Week
- Six years of Xcel
- Aims for 2012

## **Introduction**

The Xcel Project – Why Try? project carried on from the successful Xcel Project – Building On Success and is funded for two years.

The project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2011 and received funding from Leader, Langholm Youth and Community Project, the Hammond Trust, the Stoneypath Trust and the Hollywood Trust.

A new base was found for the project on Langholm High Street. This acts as an office as well as a youth information centre.

This report will show exactly what has been achieved during 2011.

## **Xcel Project – Why Try? is launched**

The Xcel Project – Why Try? was set-up to work with young people who are not reaching their potential. The idea of the project is explained in the article below.

### **£85,000 awarded to new youth project**

Published at 21:52, Wednesday, 26 January 2011

*A PROJECT to challenge young teenagers in Eskdale has received funding of £85,000 to carry out its work over the next two years.*

*The Xcel Project Why Try? initiative will be a pioneer in Scotland, having never been undertaken anywhere else, and will transform the lives of up to 50 youngsters during its operation.*

*The project has received £42,096 from Rural Dumfries & Galloway LEADER and this is being topped up by a number of local trusts, including the Holywood Trust and the Langholm youth and community project.*

*It is being led by Duncan Elliott, who has been running the Xcel Project for five years, including a youth club, summer holiday activities and a drop-in centre in Langholm High Street.*

*It is one of three projects in Eskdale to have received funding from LEADER, the other two being Making the Most of the Moorland, which received £47,850, and the Eskdalemuir Community Hub which received £40,319.*

*Why Try? revolves around 10 themes which help young people having problems in realising their potential. The objective is to recruit 20 youngsters this year and 30 next.*

*Duncan said: “We’re working with the Academy and looking to get 20 young people in S1 to S3 to work with from March to October on the Why Try? training programme.*

*“There are 10 themes, including Tearing Off Your Label so that if a young person has been labelled x, y or z, we look at how they can get away from that stereotype.*

*“Peer pressure is another theme, which will look at how they are being dragged down and how they can climb out. The Reality Ride shows them what it’s like taking the hard road rather than the easy road.*

*“I found out about the programme, which is originally from America, at a training course I did last year. It is new here and the first time anyone has tried to implement it into a project and work on it over a prolonged period.*

*“I’m keen on reaching youngsters with potential but, for whatever reason, they’re not quite reaching it. It might be the ones in class who know the answer to a question but are too scared to put up their hands. You can see they have something about them but they’re not using it in the right way. They may have issues at home, in school or their social life.*

*“Some I may have worked with already and think they will benefit from it. It is all voluntary but all those we identify, we’ll be keen for them to take part. It’s new and exciting and there are lots of things attached to it such as taking part in different activities in school and outside.*

*“We can set up an activity and guess the ones who’ll come along. I want to reach the ones we don’t see very often because they’re happy sitting at home.*

*“The carrot we’ll be dangling is that if they complete all the objectives and the training, they will be rewarded with a free residential during the October holidays.”*

*The first year will be monitored and lessons learned to take it through to a second year, with the option of introducing the themes at the youth club as well.*

In total, 10 young people completed the Why Try? Project in 2011.

The young people attended 24 two-hour sessions within Langholm Academy, working through the themes of Why Try? as well as completing a number of other activities and tasks.

The project culminated in a two-day residential that was held at Wiston Lodge on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> and Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September. The residential included team building activities, campfire activities, paintballing, raft building and it was finished off with a sit down meal.

Overall, the project was a huge success and will continue in 2012. There will be a review document available in early 2012.

## **Sexual Health Event and Promotion**

It is always important to run one-off events about issues that affect young people. This was one of those events and was organised by the Ladies of Langholm group.

### **Sexual advice is well received**

Published at 21:50, Wednesday, 09 February 2011

*LANGHOLM'S Xcel Project, supported by the Ladies Of Langholm group, had a great turn-out for their young men's sexual health week.*

*Ten young men aged 15 to 20 attended and got information, advice and freebies from Jane Phelps of Sexual Health Dumfries and Galloway.*

*They were also given the opportunity to get access to the free postal chlamydia kits, which can diagnose the infection without attending a GP.*

*Two of the participants have asked to do the training to become C'Card advisers, which will enable them to give sexual health advice and free condoms to people who sign up for the C'Card in the area.*

*Volunteer Emma Forsyth and youth worker Colina Morin, who are the current C'Card distributors in the Xcel Project, were delighted by the response and hope that if there are male C'Card distributors, more young men will engage with the service.*

*The main point of the event was to encourage young men to look after their sexual health and well-being. One of the points made was that just because there's a low or no risk of pregnancy if, for example, a girl is using some form of contraception, does not mean they don't need a condom. It is important to keep partners (male or female) protected from sexually transmitted infections.*

*Liz Forsyth of the Safe Healthy Action Partnership, who helped the group organise the event, said: "I was delighted the guys turned up, particularly the 17 to 20-year-olds.*

*"It is reassuring that they are taking their sexual health seriously. Hopefully, it will encourage the younger lads to do the same."*

*If any young men or women would like more information about sexual health, they can pop into the Xcel office from 4pm to 6.30pm on Wednesdays for a confidential chat with a trained adviser or go to the website [c4urself.org.uk](http://c4urself.org.uk)*

## **Summer of Sport 2011**

The Summer of Sport has been running since 2006. The idea behind it is simple. To provide affordable activities and opportunities for young people during the Summer Holidays.

In 2011, there were 374 young people aged 5-17 that took part in the Summer of Sport. The number of young people taking part in the activities was 297 while 77 young people attended the various trips. All of the young people that attended were based in the DG13/14 postcode region.

For the first time this year we had activities taking place in Eskdalemuir.

*(A copy of the programme is attached.)*

## **Xcel Project Activities**

There are now three main activities that have helped form the Xcel Project and keep it popular and relevant amongst young people. These are:

### **Youth Club**

*Takes place on a Monday night from 6.30 – 8.00pm and is held in Langholm Community Centre. The Youth Club caters for young people in P4 – P7. The cost for the club is kept at £1 to try and remove the barrier of cost. The club averages 30 – 40 young people every week and the young people have plenty of activities to keep them amused.*

### **Community Centre Drop-In**

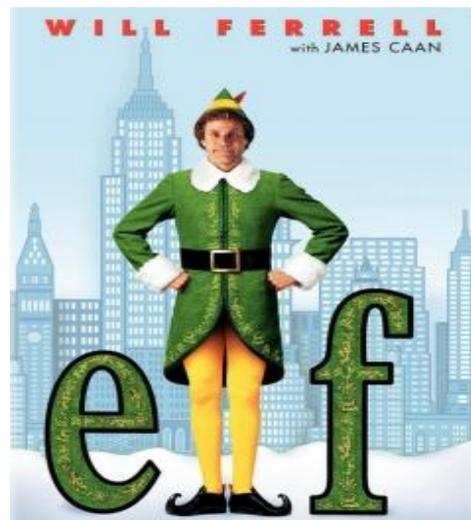
*Takes place on a Wednesday night and runs from 7.30 – 9.30pm. The Drop-In is open to young people in S3 and above. Up to 20 young people attended each week and are taken on an outing at the end of each session*

### **The Hoodies**

*The Hoodies came about as a result of the Buck Hang Out Night. The Hoodies compete in the local pool and darts league. Pool takes place on a Sunday night from September to April and darts on a Thursday night during the summer months. This is a great way for the young people to work together and also helps with the perceptions of alcohol amongst the young people.*

## Xcel Youth Cinema

The Xcel Youth Cinema was launched in October 2011 with the showing of *The Hangover II* at the Buccleuch Centre in Langholm.



So far, the above three films have been shown with varying degrees of success. A total of 111 young people have attended the three films.

The plan is to carry the venture on and hopefully create some more interest through the Xcel Facebook page.

## **Just Dance**

The Just Dance group was set-up in 2009 with the help of the Xcel Project.

### **Girls turn out in force for Just Dance**

Published at 21:35, Wednesday, 06 July 2011

*JUST Dance held their second annual performance in the Buccleuch Centre in Langholm when 19 secondary school girls took part.*



*Just Dance perform for an appreciative crowd at the Buccleuch Centre*

*Not to be outdone, some of the dance leaders couldn't resist joining in with some of the performances.*

*There were 14 performances involving many different styles of dance including disco, R & B, Bollywood, contemporary, Irish and rock highland.*

*The leaders welcome input from the children on what music they want to dance to and the show included Cheryl Cole, Dynamite, Usher, Chris Brown and Swedish House Mafia.*

*The leaders are Stacy, Catriona, Jennifer, Donna, Nicole and Avril, all of whom love dancing and music and have been involved in dance in some form or another for many years. Any money raised goes to the club for costumes, equipment and hall hire.*

*The girls practise for two hours a week on Thursday nights in the community centre if anyone is interested in joining them.*

*They are now taking a well-earned summer break and start again in late summer.*

*Stacy said: "We're very proud of the girls who put on a great performance. The club has been running for only two years but we hope everyone who attended our performance agrees it's going from strength to strength.*

*"Hopefully, some of the teenagers in the audience will consider joining us now they have seen what we offer. They say variety is the spice of life so we try to offer a number of different styles which went down well with the audience.*

*"Our thinking caps are now on as to how we can make next year's performance even more diverse.."*

## **National Youth Work Week**

National Youth Work week ran from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> – Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and to celebrate this we asked local groups and organisations to contribute to an article that celebrated what is available for young people in Eskdale.

### **Clubbing together to help the whole town**

Published at 21:33, Wednesday, 02 November 2011

*TO MARK National Youth Club week, groups for young people in Langholm, including those associated with the Xcel project, have been speaking about how being a member of these clubs has enriched their lives as well as being fun to do.*

*Just Dance is run by a dedicated team of volunteers for secondary schoolchildren who have an interest in dance. The club puts on a performance each year, giving the teenagers a chance to “pull together and show off their talents”. The latest performance included dance styles such as disco, R&B, Bollywood, contemporary, Irish and Rock Highland.*

*One of the members said: “I’ve always loved dancing and loved music and it’s great to try all different styles. The annual performance gives us all something to focus on and work towards. We get a great sense of achievement when we pull it off and it’s a great success.”*

*New members are always welcome at the club from 7pm to 9pm in the community centre on Thursdays.*

*Langholm pipe band is a good organisation for young people. Not only does it teach them to play the pipes or drums but also teaches them a discipline and how to conduct themselves.*

*The band plays at various functions and Langholm Common Riding. There is no joining fee; they can just go along and have a go. It’s good to get young people involved with music and heritage and it can be very rewarding.*

*The band has had great success over the years, winning the Braemar Highland Gathering in 2009 and being presented with a shield by the Queen.*

*Practices are every Sunday in the town hall from 6.30pm.*

*Langholm junior cricket club gives young people the chance to get involved in the game. The club is open to youngsters aged four to 18 and runs from March until September. The refurbished pavilion now offers a great family environment where cricket can be enjoyed by everyone.*

*Chris Stewart said: “I played my first junior game in 2003 aged 13 and progressed to playing for the 2nd XI and D&G U15s. I was part of the league cup winning team and I now work for Cricket Scotland coaching young people. This is all thanks to LJCC.”*

*The youth club (Xcel Project) currently works with young people in P4 to P7 on Mondays in the community centre from 6.30pm to 8pm. New members are always welcome.*

*The drop-in (Xcel Project) is based in the centre and runs from 7.30pm to 9.30pm on Wednesdays and is open to young people aged 14+.*

*Langholm young riders’ club started in 2004 and has members aged five to 16. The sole purpose of forming the club was to introduce the skills of riding horses and ponies to young people and at the same time strengthen the numbers supporting the Common Riding and ride-outs.*

*The committee set out to raise money to fund riding lessons at various equestrian establishments and through the tremendous financial support from everyone who was approached or gave voluntarily, it is able to take youngsters for several lessons every year. All transport is provided by the parents.*

*It has its own pony and this has really helped with lessons over the last few years, increasing the young people's confidence by being able to ride outside, which is a lot different from riding inside.*

*The club has made great progress and several members have taken up places at the British School of Racing in Newmarket.*

*Dale Irving said: "The club taught me to ride and encouraged me all the way through horses and ponies to my current job at James Ewart Racing."*

*Nicola Kay said: "It has given me loads of confidence being able to ride and the resident pony has been great for me. I hope to be able to do all the ride-outs soon. I wouldn't have been able to do that without the club's support. It's a great organisation."*

*Canonbie Guides meet on Wednesdays and is open to girls aged 10 to 14 from Canonbie, Langholm and surrounding area.*

*Canonbie Rangers meet at Langholm Academy at various times and is for girls aged 14 to 18.*

*They promote a 'girl only' space and take part in various activities such as badges, life skills, camping, sleepovers, parties and fundraising for charities and Girlguiding.*

*Some of the girls said: "I love the camping and lighting fires; we cook our own tea and have hot chocolate and marshmallows."*

*"The badges are fun, lots of different things to do. You can sew them on a camp blanket for everybody to see."*

*"Sleepovers are great; we try to whisper all night and get shouted at to be quiet. I don't like being woken by the saucepan lid being banged with a spoon, though."*

*Canonbie Brownie Emily Hislop said: "I love going to Brownies because we make lots of different things; we get to work for badges, we play games and explore the world – and we get to do all that with our friends. It's fab."*

*Langholm Town Band offers young people the opportunity to be part of a group and learn a new skill. Currently, they are looking to recruit percussion and brass players. The instrument and tuition are free and practice is in the library buildings every Tuesday.*

*The junior band always has a full programme of events all year and has been successful at competitions.*

*"Why not come along? You will never have a better chance to learn and play music," said Simon Railton.*

*The Scouts are a well-supported dynamic group which meets in the community centre on Fridays. They cater for boys and girls aged six to 18.*

*They take part in many activities ranging from outdoor activities such as camping, canoeing and hiking to environmental and community projects.*

*They are involved in international scouting, with Explorers travelling to Sweden and Kenya this summer.*

*The younger sections enjoy a variety of craft and design projects from making Christmas decorations to designing a working periscope.*

*More details are on [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) and local information is available from Sandra Ritchie on [sandra.richie1@btinternet.com](mailto:sandra.richie1@btinternet.com)*

*The group welcomes new youngsters and adult helpers to help from as little as two hours a year at a fundraiser to people who can help each week as a leader.*

## **Six years of Xcel**

In October 2011 we celebrated six years of the Xcel Project.

### **Project has Xcel-ed at helping youngsters**

Published at 21:36, Wednesday, 26 October 2011

*A PROJECT to give young people a voice and earn them respect in the community has been going strong for six years and has more than achieved its targets.*

*The Xcel Project started in October 2005 and has successfully received funding on three separate occasions. The current funding runs until February 2013.*

*Xcel is a youth project which works with young people aged eight to 18 in Eskdale. It was set up to give young people greater opportunities in terms of their social development and enable them to gain a voice and respect in their community.*

*Duncan Elliott has been with the project since the start and has taken it from something that existed only on paper to a well-recognised and successful project.*

*The first step was to create an identity and this was achieved by running a competition in Langholm Academy to design a logo, which was won by Pemma Ellis and the logo really helped to create that initial identity.*

*The next step was to undertake a youth survey. In total, 357 young people aged 10 to 17 gave their views. The results helped put in place the objectives for the first three years of the project.*

*A home was needed and for the first couple of years it was based in the community centre, but this wasn't ideal because the young people could access it only on certain nights.*

*The project secured premises in the High Street next to the post office and it was soon transformed into a youth information centre.*

*The centre provides free internet access for teenagers aged 13 to 18 and information on a variety of subjects and has a small games room which is used regularly during the school holidays.*

*It has proved to be a very popular venue where youngsters feel comfortable and able to spend time hanging out with their friends. The location is ideal, with it being so close to the bus stop. Its size is the only thing that lets it down.*

*Once the project found a home, this helped people find out more about it which produced an increase in volunteers.*

*Duncan said: "If it wasn't for the volunteers, the project wouldn't be where it is now. Langholm is very fortunate when it comes to people giving up their own time and Xcel is no exception. It is great that we have so many young volunteers with most of them aged 18 to 30."*

*There have been a number of highlights over the last six years. These include the Buck hang-out night and the formation of the Buck Hoodies, an idea that tackled the issue of under-age drinking as well as helping young people to see that pubs were just normal places. The Finland exchange trip was a huge success and the young people got so much out of it. They have now taken those experiences and the lessons they learned into their adult lives.*

*The Just Dance group runs under the project's banner and is going from strength to strength. They have performed twice in the Buccleuch Centre and regularly have more than 20 youngsters attending weekly sessions.*

*Duncan said "This is a great example of what can be achieved when you have a group of people with an idea and the enthusiasm and passion to follow it through. All credit must go to the leaders."*

*The Xcel website was set up to let people know about the project and is at [www.xcelproject.co.uk](http://www.xcelproject.co.uk)*

*Currently, the project is working with Langholm Academy and Realize Your Potential to deliver a programme, Why Try?.*

*Duncan said "This is the first time anything like this has been tried in Eskdale and so far the feedback from everyone involved has been very positive."*

*There are plans in place for a youth group in Eskdalemuir and the youth cinema is up and running, with the next film being shown on Sunday, November 6.*

*Duncan said: "As a project, Xcel can be considered a success and it will, hopefully, be around for a long time to come."*

*National Youth Work Week runs from next Monday until Sunday, November 6.*

*Anyone can drop into the office from Monday to Friday 2pm to 4pm to discuss anything relating to youth work or activity in Eskdale.*

***Xcel Project highlights:***

*March 2006 - Xcel youth survey*

*August 2006 - Summer of Sport holiday programme*

*November 2006 - Buck hang-out night / Buck Hoodies*

*February 2007 - Finland exchange trip*

*October 2007 - Creation of Xcel volunteer database*

*March 2008 - Youth club competitions*

*September 2008 - Building On Success project started*

*February 2009 - Youth Information Centre*

*September 2009 - On Yer Bike event / formation of Just Dance Group*

*March 2010 - Music Workshop / Bluelight Music Night*

*August 2010 - Xcel Project website*

*March 2011 - Why Try? starts*

*October 2011 - Xcel Youth Cinema*

## **Aims for 2012**

The Xcel Project – Why Try? is currently funded until the end of January 2012.

We are halfway through the project and there is still a lot of work to be done. The Why Try? aspect has really taken off and we need to build on that. This is something that can hopefully be taken on by other schools all over Dumfries & Galloway.

The main aims for 2012 are:

- The further development of the Xcel Project website
- To hold a number of sporting tournaments using the Mobigamz Arena
- To expand and improve the Volunteer Database
- Work with the Buccleuch Centre to explore opportunities using the multi-media equipment
- To repeat the success of the Summer of the Sport (with an Olympic theme)
- To hold an event celebrating the youth of Eskdale
- To develop the Why Try? Project (using young people as mentors)
- To review the current Xcel activities and see where we can improve