

Xcel Project – Why Try? Final Report

The idea for the project was developed as a follow on from the Xcel Project – Building on Success.

The idea was to continue to build on all the good aspects of the Xcel Project as well as bringing something new to the project. We feel we did this with the introduction of the Why Try? Project in conjunction with Langholm Academy and Realize Your Potential.

There were a number of individuals and organisations involved in the project. In a rural community such as Eskdale it is vital that partnership working takes place. The Xcel Project has a number of partners that it works with to deliver high quality youth work and youth activities. The project would not be a success if it wasn't for the partners listed below:

- Langholm Primary, Langholm Academy and Canonbie Primary
- D&G Council Community Learning and Development
- D&G Active Schools
- Eskdale Sports and Leisure Centre
- Police
- Community Council
- Langholm Initiative
- Moorland Project
- Langholm Playcare
- Centre Stage Theatre
- Just Dance
- The Buccleuch Centre
- Ladies of Langholm Group

As well as a number of organisations, the Xcel Project – Why Try? used a lot of volunteers to run the various activities. The Xcel Volunteer Database has steadily built up since it was set-up in 2009. It holds information on all of the volunteers that work with the Xcel Project.

The information is not just about who they are but also what they are interested in helping with.

The volunteer database currently includes around 20 volunteers. The volunteers vary from ones that help out each week to ones that are available for one off events. All of the volunteers are disclosure checked, we are now going through the process of including all of the volunteers in the new PVG scheme.

The volunteers are all offered training and support and we are now looking at helping them get accreditation for their volunteering through initiatives like the Saltire Awards:

Saltire Awards Overview

Saltire Awards are the new Scottish awards designed to formally recognise the commitment and contribution of youth volunteering to voluntary organisations.

Supported by the Scottish Government the Saltire Awards enable young volunteers to record the skills, experience and learning gained through successful volunteering placements provided by local and national voluntary agencies.

The Awards are split in to four sections - The Challenge, The Approach, The Ascent and The Summit and achievement is recognised in the form of Saltire Award certificates and Young Scot reward points.

Saltire Awards are designed to encourage, enable and reward youth volunteering and to make it easy for organisations to support young people to take part.

With so many young volunteers it is very important we find ways of supporting them. As the project grows we hope that more opportunities will become available and in the long term it is hoped that other groups and clubs in the area will be able to make use of the database on a more regular basis.

The aims and objectives of the project were:

- to provide more opportunities for achievement amongst young people in the rurally isolated area of Eskdale, through the implementation of several initiatives, identified and achieved in conjunction with local young people and the wider community.
- to realise the social development of young people and enable them to gain a voice and place in society.
- to encourage young people to become active citizens, their increased involvement within the community shall improve the quality of life for those living in the area.
- to facilitate the development of young people through initiatives that allows them to identify and meet their own needs.
- to create informal educational opportunities for young people in Eskdale.
- to improve young people's access to information and services.
- to involve the community with the introduction of an Xcel Volunteer Database. This would result in all clubs and organisations working with young people in Eskdale having access to volunteers.

The total project cost was £84,192.84. The total amount of money provided by LEADER was £42,096.42; this was 50% of the total project cost.

The rest of the funding was made up with contributions from the following:

- Langholm Youth and Community Project (applicant organisation)
- John Hammond Trust
- Stoneypath Trust
- Holywood Trust

The project took place from February 2011 through until January 2013.

£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.

The Why Try? Project brought something new to the area and to the young people.

In 2011, ten young people completed the Why Try? Project. They 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 8th and Friday 9th September. The residential included team building activities, campfire activities, paintballing, raft building and it was finished off with a sit down meal.

In 2012, a lot had been learned from the previous year. Nine of the young people involved in 2011 took part again but this time they were involved as mentors, passing on their experiences to the new participants.

ON COURSE

Published at 21:36, Wednesday, 18 April 2012

SIX young Langholm people completed the PX2 course last Thursday and another three are set to complete it within the next week.

The course, which ran for eight weeks, was organised by the Xcel Project and run by Janette Waddell. A special mention must go to Liz Forsyth of Sonas NHS who donated the resource packs for the course.

Duncan Elliott of Xcel said: "The course challenged the young people and taught them the art and science of goal-setting, combined with a thorough understanding of just how we think.

"The challenge is to build strength of character and strong self-belief so they can stand up against negative influences and maintain confidence in their own decisions."

After the young people completed the course, six of them were chosen as mentors. However, that number was reduced to four after two of the young people broke the mentoring contract that had been agreed.

Overall, the mentoring worked quite well but with it being the first year of trying it there are certainly areas to improve upon.

We worked with the 12 young people that were involved in the project for the first time from April – October with the two-day residential taking place at the end of September. This was once again held at Wiston Lodge, near Biggar. It is a great way to finish off the project because they get to put into practice what they have learned and it is great to see them all working together and generally having a good time.

The young people all received a portfolio of their work throughout the project, a certificate and a DVD of photographs from the residential.

Langholm Academy are very happy with the first two years of the Why Try? Project and are very keen to see it continue. They have reported noticeable changes in the majority of young people involved.

Another important part of the project is the Holiday Programmes. These were run in the Summer holidays during 2011 and 2012 as well as the Easter holidays in 2012 as we looked to increase our provision.

In 2011 we ran the Summer of Sport. The idea behind it is simple. To provide affordable activities and opportunities for young people during the Summer Holidays.

In total, 374 young people aged 5-17 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.

In 2012, we ran a Easter Holiday Programme and a Summer Holiday Programme. We worked with our partner organisations to provide as many activities and trips as possible.

For the first time we used the Buccleuch Centre for the Xcel Youth Cinema and the Xcel Gaming Events. It was something new and different and the response to these events was very good.

The Easter Programme ran from Tuesday 10th April through until Sunday 15th April. We had 97 young people aged 5-18 involved over the five days with 40 young people attending the Youth Cinema.

The Summer Programme was very successful this year with a total of 549 young people aged 5-18 involved, an average of over 20 young people attended each day. The various trips were very popular with 98 young people taking part and enjoying activities like Edinburgh Zoo, Wet & Wild and M&Ds Theme Park.

A few of the young people gave their comments after the trip to M&Ds Theme Park:

"It was fun and I liked all the rides, Tsunami was the best!" Lucy Ash, aged 10

"The best thing about it was the Big Apple and the White Water" Amy Forsyth and Millie Ritchie, aged 10 and 9

"It was shocking in a good way!" Freyja Rutherford, aged 11

There was also a good mix of boys and girls this year which hasn't always been the case in previous years.

Another huge plus for the Programme is that it involves so many organisations. We have very good relationships with all of the local schools which allows us to advertise and distribute the Programmes to the young people and their parents.

All of the young people that attended were based in the DG13/14 postcode region.

The project was delivered through the Youth Information Centre based on Langholm High Street, this provides young people in Eskdale with the ability to:

- access the internet free of charge, chill out, play video games, listen to music.
- pick up information on a variety of topics including alcohol and drugs, sex education and careers.
- hang out with their friends in a comfortable and convenient place that they can call their own as well as discussing their ideas and problems with youth workers.

It was important that we marketed the project properly and were flexible in our approach to contacting the young people and advertising our activities. We worked with the local schools to hand out flyers and booklets with information on our holiday programmes.

We promoted our activities and events through the Xcel Project website. This can be found at www.xcelproject.co.uk. We also set-up a facebook page during the course of the project and this provided us with a great to get in touch with parents and let them know what is happening. We are hoping to develop the website and take advantage of all the social media opportunities.

The website currently provides a place where young people can give us feedback, find out what is going on as well as suggesting new ideas and activities. One of the most important pages of the website is the 'Clubs & Groups' page. It contains all the information on clubs and groups that offer something for young people in the area of Eskdale.



There are 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 for 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. We currently have over 60 young people as members.

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 Buck 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. They also benefit from interacting with adults in a social situation.

The Xcel Project – Why Try? mainly worked with young people aged 13-18, as a result they were the main beneficiaries of the project. Over 600 people male and female under the age of 25 benefited from the project over the two years.

The final budget worked out very well with a few changes being made along the way. The final spend for the project was £83,102.85. The anticipated spend had been £84,192.84.

There were a few reasons for the difference. It is always very hard to know how many casual youth workers we will need during the holiday programmes. Also, things happen during the course of a two year period. A broken piece of equipment, a different deal on internet or electricity etc.

There have been a number of lessons learned throughout the project. We need to have a look at our provision and make sure we are catering for everyone. Some of the project activities can be seen to be a bit male dominated but we have tried to counter that with the introduction of the Just Dance and Ladies of Langholm groups. However, while the Ladies of Langholm group proved popular for a while it folded due to lack of interest. We are aware that we need more youth involvement in the decision making and ideas process and one of our main priorities is the formation of a youth committee.

Partnership working is vital in a rural area, it is important to build up strong working relationships. This is even more important when you are working in isolation.

The project is now run by the Xcel Youth Trust, they are a new Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation set-up in November 2012 and the sole aim of the organisation is to run the Xcel Project and all of its activities. The Xcel Youth Trust has already sourced new funding and will continue to do so to keep the project running.