



2007-2008
*Increasing Voluntary
and Community Sector
Service Delivery*



Case Study No. 2 – Children’s Fund



INTRODUCTION

The Children’s Fund in Croydon was set up primarily to enhance social inclusion for young people between 5-13 years old, and prevent youth crime. The £877,000 per annum fund is administered by Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA), which is the lead accountable body. CVA has been pivotal in increasing voluntary and community sector (VCS) service delivery and two thirds of the projects supported by the fund have been delivered by the VCS. Croydon is one of only a few authorities to outsource delivery to the VCS. Originally a three year programme, the fund was extended in 2006 for a further two years to allow its work and good practice to migrate into Children’s Trusts.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

How the fund is managed:

The fund, which began in 2003, is managed by a cross-sector partnership board chaired by Croydon Children’s Services and includes elected representatives of the Children and Young People’s Network (CYPN). Croydon Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership oversee the work of the board.

Based on local service mapping and an open bidding process, the Children’s

Fund initially commissioned 18 projects for three years. Approximately two thirds of projects were delivered by the VCS and a third delivered by statutory agencies, including the council and Primary Care Trust. Funding has been secured until 2008, enabling 15 of these projects to be re-commissioned. These include services for parents and carers of children with learning disabilities, support for children with life threatening illnesses and disabilities and support for children and young people affected by crime.

What it has achieved:

CVA's management of the fund has led to a number of positive developments:

- Children, young people and families are actively engaged in influencing how money from the fund is spent through the Children and Young People's Network and Croydon Xpress project (a VCS participation and involvement project which gives children, young people and their families a voice).
- Capacity building and support provided to VCS groups has enhanced the performance of their service delivery.
- Networking for providers gives opportunities to share learning and receive feedback on the delivery and administration of the fund.
- There is reduced bureaucracy and an improved monitoring system is in place, which was designed following feedback from delivery agencies.
- An independent evaluation of the Children's Fund found that management by the VCS has increased VCS engagement, and the capacity of VCS organisations has grown through Children's Fund opportunities. Substantial long term project funding (over nearly five years), has enabled organisations delivering Children's Fund projects to provide excellent services and become more sustainable.

The following are two examples of successful Children's Fund projects:

Together in Waddon

The project, based in Duppas Junior School in Waddon, provides a range of innovative services for the community and works with children and young people in the area who may be at risk of exclusion and / or are from poorer families. The project offers positive and creative ways of addressing social issues like bullying, anti-social behaviour, intergenerational misunderstanding and peer pressure. It provides preventative measures in the community that empower children and young people, and involves parents.

Some comments about the project from children include: "I don't get into as much trouble as I used to"; "I'm much more active and alive"; and "people like me more." "During term time we offer after school clubs four evenings a week and occasionally at weekends," explains Development Worker, Craig Murdoch.

“We do a variety of activities including art, drama, music, singing, dancing and a lot of sports and games. We do a lot of discussion work relating to issues that affect the children, such as bullying, peer pressure and relationships with older people.

“We strive to create a positive environment where the children can feel safe and they can talk to us. During the holidays, we have a full programme of activities. We expand on the work of the club and we take the children out on trips which could be to the countryside, the seaside, or museums in London. Some of these children have never been out of the local area. These activities broaden their horizons and their experiences.”

A piece of musical theatre called *The Blade* is an example of a successful project. Mr Murdoch says: “*The Blade* looked at issues such gang culture, peer pressure and bullying. It was devised between the staff and children over a period of months. It was performed in the local area and taken into several schools. He adds: “The issues we were exploring influenced the kids in a positive way in real life situations connected with gang culture. Going through the actual creative process helped young people with confidence and self-esteem. They also learned to work well in teams. One of my favourite outcomes of this project relates to two girls from families involved in a longstanding feud. They managed to work together on the project, which was a big development.”

Croydon Community Bus

Croydon Community Bus (CCB), a mobile youth unit based on a double-decker bus, provides a forum for young people aged 8-13, to meet within their own community and environment. The bus offers educational and recreational activities and has positive support from both young people and their parents.

In some areas, such as Milne Park, there would be no facilities without the Bus, which reaches high numbers of children. Popular activities include reading, electronic/computer games, quizzes, arts and crafts, karaoke, board games and competitions. CCB extends its existing activities to work in the areas defined by the Croydon Children’s Fund during the school holidays. Many outdoor games and activities are offered at this time, such as football, cricket and hockey. Provision is led by the requirements of the young people.

The children appreciate the opportunity of meeting with their peers. Comments from children include: “Before the bus there was nothing to do”; “I get excited when the bus comes” and “I meet friends from the local area.”

Additional benefits of cross sector working:

A positive and significant feature of the programme is the strong working partnerships developed between statutory bodies and VCS organisations. By working in partnership with Croydon’s Youth Offending Team, CVA has helped develop very successful preventative work through the Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP) and Junior Youth Inclusion Programmes (JYIP). Nine out of 10 referrals from these programmes are to VCS organisations.

The range of services and support delivered by the sector, in part due to the Children's Fund, is enabling the YISP to provide a more holistic service and support to young people, with very positive outcomes. Organisations working with the YISP have reported increased levels of confidence and self-worth in children and parents and a significant impact on students at high risk of exclusion or disengagement, including those who had been misusing drugs.

One parent commented: "Our daughter has been better behaved at school and outside; her attendance is also better. She is much better at home and outside."

FURTHER INFORMATION AND REFERENCES

Croydon Voluntary Action:

Christine Cleveland, Children's Fund Programme Manager,
Waterside Centre, 26 Avenue Road, London SE25 4DX.

Tel: 020 8653 0353

Email: christine.cleveland@cvalive.org.uk

Croydon Community Bus:

Helen Chitty, 8, Mill Lane House, Mill Lane Trading Estate, Mill Lane, Croydon CR0 4AA.

Tel: 020 8686 1414

Email ccb@btconnect.com

Together In Waddon:

Peter Allen / Craig Murdoch, c/o Duppas Junior School, Goodwin Road, Croydon CR0 4EJ.

Tel: 020 8667 0803

Email: togetherinwaddon@btconnect.com

Croydon Youth Offending Team:

Ray Maguire, YOT Manager / Leslie Roberts, YISP Co-ordinator
14 Whitehorse Road, Croydon CR0 2JA.

Tel: 020 8404 5800

Email: ray.maguire@croydon.gov.uk or lesley.roberts@croydon.gov.uk