



FOREWORD:

WHY OUR WORK IS IMPORTANT

The last year for me has been challenging, and I struggled a lot more with my mental health due to lockdown. I'm a care experienced university student and that means that I live on campus in halls, and don't have anywhere else to stay. During lockdown, campus and the halls were like a ghost town. I felt very isolated.

One positive is the amount of support I received during the lockdown. I received support from a lot of people and different organisations. Leicestershire Cares helped me tell my story of lockdown, and through podcasts, vlogs and other online content, I started to hear from people who wanted to help and offer support, and I am now close to some of those people.

Leicestershire cares provided a mix of face-to-face support and online sessions. The online sessions allowed the group of care experienced young people I mix with at Chill and Chat (a weekly care experienced social get together), to stay in touch with each other and feel less isolated. We had cooking sessions, quizzes and movie nights. We also had meetings outdoors in parks and community allotments which was good too.

Together with another care experienced young person and Leicestershire Cares, we set up a podcast where we spoke about the issues affecting care experienced young people. This was great as it gave me a reason to keep in contact with one of the girls I had made friends with through Chill and Chat.

The support I've received over lockdown helped me stay focused on my studies. I've just finished my Medical Science degree and will start my Graduate Medicine course soon. I hope to do some of this overseas.



I also volunteer at Childline, and I am switching roles there from being a phone counsellor to helping with interviewing new counsellors. I will also be stepping up and taking on a police role as a Special Constable.

Thanks Leicestershire Cares and your business members for all your support over the last year.

Diana Omokore
Care experienced young person

INTRODUCTION: TURNING DESPAIR INTO HOPE

The last year has been like no other. The impact of the Covid19 pandemic and lockdown brought out the best in people whilst highlighting many pressing issues that need addressing across our city and county. So, I was very proud of the creative and agile way our staff, business volunteers, community and local government partners worked to together to tackle the challenges faced by our communities.

This creativity and agility, combined with rooted local knowledge, has been the “backbone” of our work over the last year. As you read this report, you will see we have consistently been developing new approaches and seeking to reflect, learn and improve. We have also taken proactive steps to better understand and respond to the needs of African, Afro Caribbean, Asian and East European groups.

It has been very pleasing to see so many local business partners stepping up to share skills, knowledge and resources with young people and community partners. In many ways the work we have been developing is a blueprint for a successful “Build Back Better” and “Levelling Up” approach to economic and community development.

As always, we have put a strong focus on the lived experience and voices of the young people and communities we work with shaping and driving our work. We have also proactively sought to support and encourage them to be active participants in a variety of local, regional and national reviews and policy discussions.

Whilst it has been good to be nominated for and win awards for our work, our real reward has been seeing our #TogetherWeCan approach turn “despair into hope” and show what can be achieved when community, business and local government work in partnership to ensure nobody is left behind.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and as always, we welcome your thoughts and feedback.

#TogetherWeCan

Kieran Breen
CEO



OUR AWARDS

We were delighted to win and be finalists for a range of prestigious awards this year, including:

- Children and Young People Now Awards 2020: Leaving Care Award, **Finalist**
- East Midlands Chamber Business Awards 2020: Commitment to People Development Award, **Winner**
- Leicestershire Community Champions Awards 2020: Use of Social Media, **Highly Commended**
- Global Business Insight Awards: Most Outstanding Community Support & Engagement Organisation 2021 – Leicestershire, **Winner**





1,750 people directly supported



50 different community groups engaged



1,710 bags of hope distributed



£14,754 raised through Collect for Christmas



10 #BuildBackBetter webinars with 1,000+ participants



110 families supported by community programmes

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In the Community Development Team, we broker partnerships between businesses, our partner agencies and community groups so they can share their knowledge to deliver lasting positive change and impact for disadvantaged groups and individuals. We are working with more diverse ethnic minority groups to tackle systemic issues, build new relationships and build back better.

We have been working hard to continue supporting community groups, individuals, staff members and business members throughout this extraordinary year in a global pandemic. This has included delivering festive challenges, team challenges, Collect for Christmas, volunteering, diversity and inclusion webinars, online training, Covid-19 myth busting podcasts in different languages, as well as our highly successful #BuildBackBetter webinars. In total, we have supported 1,750 individuals through 50 different community groups, despite the challenges of working remotely.

We would like to extend our gratitude and thanks to our business members, partner agencies and community stakeholders who played a vital role in enabling us to support marginalised and disadvantaged groups within Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland. We would also like to thank the Rank Foundation and National Lottery for their support for our community development work.

BAGS OF HOPE

Our Collect 4 Christmas campaign collected £14,754 for local communities hit by the pandemic. Our business members also collected an amazing 707 “bags of hope” which provided treats and gifts for disadvantaged and marginalized community members and took part in eight brilliant festive challenges.

Our Easter and Eid bags of hope campaigns went even further and reached 37 different and diverse communities across Leicester and Leicestershire, delivering 1,003 gifts in total. Throughout 2021, our businesses have collected and delivered bags of hope for the many diverse celebrations that take place in Leicester, including Eid, Holi and Vaisakhi, to bring joy and hope to communities hit by the pandemic.

SKILLS SHARING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

As part of our Together Project, we have been working with grassroots community groups and our businesses to develop and deliver skills sharing events. So far, our businesses have delivered tailored webinars and online training on topics including bid writing, social media and rights in the workplace, and we have many more planned for the coming weeks.

“It was a wonderful session. Really enjoyed getting an understanding of the different platforms and the best way to balance time and getting our message out.”

Our CD team has also organised diversity and inclusion webinars for Leicestershire Cares staff members through our work with the Rank Foundation. So far, we have had sessions with volunteers from the Somali and Polish communities in Leicester and we have delivered a session on modern slavery in partnership with Hope for Justice.

#BUILDBACKBETTER WEBINARS

In partnership with De Montfort University, we ran a series of 10 webinars exploring how we can #BuildBackBetter after the pandemic. The webinars explored issues such as county lines, the care system, the digital divide, youth unemployment and international perspectives. In total, over 1,000 professionals from across business, community and local authorities participated, generating creative and inspiring ideas about how we can support our communities to overcome the lasting impact of the pandemic.

OVERCOMING VACCINE HESITANCY

We have worked in partnership with grassroots organisations to help overcome challenges of vaccine hesitancy amongst communities in Leicester and Leicestershire. So far, three podcasts have been created in Somali, Polish and Romanian on the importance on having the vaccine. These podcasts have been shared far and wide not only in the UK but in other countries too.





SUPPORTING FAMILIES

As part of our project with the Rank Foundation, we identified three areas of Leicester which had been hardest hit by the pandemic, and therefore would benefit most from our support. In New Parks, St Matthews and Highfields/Spinney Hill, we have:

- established food banks including a ‘baby food bank’ in New Parks and a joint food bank for the Hindu and Somali communities in the St Matthews area.
- set up mini libraries, with business members donating children’s books to promote the importance of reading, especially to the younger generation.
- supported 25 young people who are not in education, employment and training to develop skills and experience for work.
- funded a six-week programme for families to train in a Boxing Academy with the Paralympian Dan Powell and Libby Clegg who won Silver for Britain.
- supported Wesley Hall’s very well-received Zoom sessions so that 30-40 families can take part in weekly Nutrition and Fitness, Yoga and Happiness and Mindfulness classes.
- organised mental health workshops and a weekly Q&A with a Mental Health Nurse.
- delivered sports equipment to the adventure playgrounds for disadvantaged children.
- worked with business members and community groups to establish and deliver a holiday hunger scheme throughout the summer holidays in each area.



“Leicestershire Cares connect us to a network of partners, businesses, stakeholders, and funding opportunities. They provide real help and support, and the value of their work gets immediately felt and observed.”



CASE STUDY: SOCOPA

The Somali Community Parents Association (SOCOPA) was set up in 2005 with the aim of helping Somali refugees and migrants in Leicester understand and access key services. We started working in partnership with SOCOPA in January 2021. In our initial discussions, SOCOPA expressed a need for support in capacity building, upskilling, sourcing of funding, food banks and volunteers to support their programs.

In recent months, we have supported SOCOPA with sourcing funding for their holiday activities and healthy eating as well as hiring youth workers for the project in conjunction with the De Montfort University youth work and community development team. We also brokered the relationship between the Hindu community and SOCOPA to establish a food bank for the St Matthews area and set up a mini library within their centre. SOCOPA's staff have also attended our business members' training in bid writing and social media and marketing to build their organisational capacity.

Our work with SOCOPA has had a positive impact on both their staff and the people who use their services. They have more knowledge on how to showcase their delivery on social media to attract volunteers and donors, as well as increased awareness of and partnerships with other organisations that they can signpost their participants to if needed. SOCOPA also has two new short-term workers to deliver their summer scheme and who will hopefully stay on to support them in delivering sports activities for young people.

“Leicestershire Cares are a pleasure to work with. We have appreciated their thoughtfulness and willingness to listen to SOCOPA and our community needs and often suggesting the exact thing we need. Whenever we interact with them, we know that something positive will happen. Whether it is thoughtful gift bags and books for children or vital training for our limited staff, Leicestershire Cares do truly give us the feeling that they care. Many more should follow in their footsteps.”

The community development team are delighted to be working with SOCOPA and we look forward to our continued partnership working to build back better.



392 business
volunteers

EDUCATION

Our education projects facilitate business volunteers to support children and young people to gain valuable literacy, numeracy and employability skills. Over the last year, we have worked closely with our schools and business volunteers to transform our education projects into a remote offer for all students to access, whether learning at school or at home.



4,621 students

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

Our education team has worked tirelessly over the last year to develop and deliver a virtual interview technique offer. This has been hugely successful, with 311 business volunteers taking part in 28 virtual events at schools across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. In total, 2330 students received a remote mock interview and valuable feedback from business volunteers across diverse sectors with varied job roles.



48 remote events

The feedback on the events was overwhelmingly positive. 97% of students found their interview useful and 88% said they now have more confidence going into their next interview. In addition, 93% of schools reported an increase in students' confidence regarding their interview technique, and every school we delivered with said the event was excellent (93%) or good (7%), and that the organisation, management, and support from Leicestershire Cares was excellent (100%).



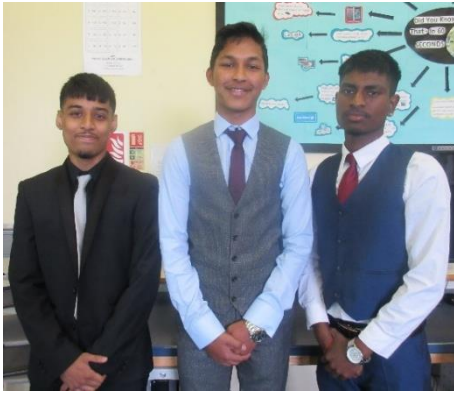
34 schools

Volunteers regularly emphasised that the students were a joy to speak to and they were glad they were able to help many of them in areas that they needed more support. Many volunteers commented on how they were very impressed that students remained focused on their career goals despite interruptions to their learning during the academic year. Volunteers also improved skills of their own, including coaching and mentoring, communication, motivating others and providing constructive feedback.



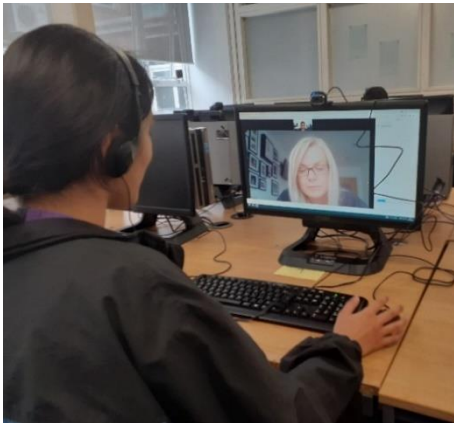
1000+ views on
YouTube

“My interviewer was really nice and not too full on in terms of the questions they asked me. They were also very helpful with the feedback they gave to me which I will work at for my next interview.”



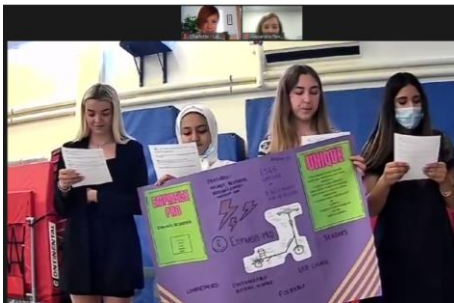
EMPLOYABILITY EVENTS

This year we engaged with 2,201 students through a variety of online events. We hosted and facilitated eight Speedy Speaker careers talks with 25 volunteers from 15 different companies. Included in this was a series of webinars during the school closures targeting different sectors - Law, Construction, IT/Digital and apprenticeships.



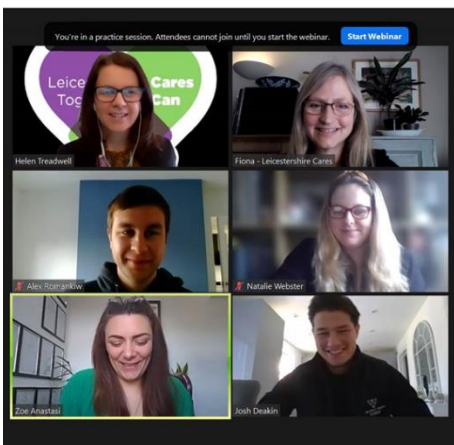
We also ran seven employability events specifically for six different secondary schools, including The City of Leicester College, Beaumont Leys School and Soar Valley College. These included enterprise days, an interview hints and tips session, a virtual tour, a motivational speaker session, Ask the Expert and a CV workshop.

In July 2020, our business members helped us develop a [virtual employability pack](#) to help teachers continue to link students with local businesses. Volunteers recorded themselves giving Speedy Speaker careers talks, interview hints and tips, advice on writing a good CV and how to write a cover letter. These were shared with all secondary schools across the city and county to help students develop their employability skills whilst they were studying at home.



During National Careers Week 2021 we launched a new Careers Competition for secondary school students across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

We received some fantastic entries which were judged by business volunteers from Alltruck plc, Everards and Hinckley and Rugby Building Society. The winning students came from Soar Valley College, Moat Community College and English Martyrs School.



“The presentations were pitched perfectly with insight into the real human skills we need to make our careers work, such as resilience, curiosity and kindness.”



CASE STUDY: LUTTERWORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Lutterworth High helped us to pilot the new remote mock interview events in October 2020 with their year 11 students. Each student had a 1:1 virtual interview with a local business volunteer. Staff at Lutterworth High School rated the event as excellent and reported that their students had improved their confidence and interview skills considerably as a result of the session.

“Our students had an excellent day and you could feel the buzz in the room. Students went in incredibly nervous but came out with huge smiles on their faces and the confidence boost alone will be invaluable.”

Great organisation and feedback from Lutterworth High and the adaptability of our volunteers meant that we were able to build on the success of the first session and deliver many more throughout the year. This included revisiting Lutterworth High, remotely, in June 2021 to deliver a session to their year 10 students.

In total, 39 business volunteers interviewed 298 students at Lutterworth High, with 93% of students saying they enjoyed the remote experience and 88% reporting that it had made them more confident for an interview in the future.

“My interviewer was very reassuring and gave valuable feedback about my overall performance. Next time I will prepare specific examples of when I have shown a certain character strength to support my answers.”



NUMBER PARTNERS AND GO FOR READING

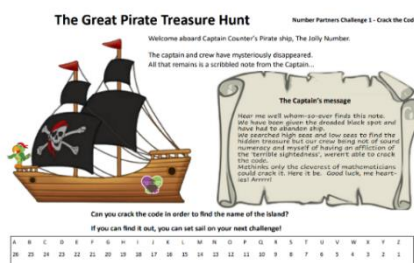
Last November the Education team sent out a set of fun maths challenges - The Great Pirate Treasure Hunt - to the 18 primary schools who take part in Number Partners. Carla and Evan from Hinckley and Rugby Building Society, who usually volunteer at Manorfield Primary school, donned pirate outfits and filmed a series of videos to accompany the challenges. We were delighted to present the winning school, Queensmead Primary Academy, with certificates and a new set of maths games, kindly donated by HRBS.

We also recently held two steering group meetings to help us plan the relaunch of Go For Reading and Number Partners in the new academic year. It was great to see our volunteers and school coordinators to discuss how the projects can support students to overcome the long-term impacts of the school closures.

OTHER SUPPORT

We have regularly shared our learning, best practice and outcomes with the local Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Hub, Careers Hub and the Education-Business Links forum facilitated by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LEEP).

To help families overcome the “digital Divide”, we compiled a handy information sheet aimed at parents/carers to help them support their children with online learning. This was shared across all primary and secondary schools in Leicester and Leicestershire. The Education team also compiled a list of resources and activities for children with a green theme to support the environmental work of our wider organisation.





74 young people supported



38 succeeded in work or training



103 businesses signed up to the Promise to Care



LEAVING CARE

Our leaving care team works with care experienced young people (CEYP) aged 15-25 to help them progress towards their goals and have their voices heard. This year, we have supported participants to reach their full potential and created opportunities for businesses to engage with and learn from our young people, while building young people’s professional capital and networks. We delivered work that had impact, was inspiring and inclusive, and engaged in regular reflection and feedback to adapt our practice and ensure that no one was left behind.

Our leaving care work was nominated for a national award and translated into Welsh. Our Promise to Care leaped up in numbers. We consulted and co-produced a mental wellbeing project with our care experienced young people. We won funding for young people to explore the issue of bullying in schools due to being in care, with the aim of now running training with teachers in local schools. Our work was noticed by national and regional organisations, new funders and the media, and we carried on supporting CEYP into employment, education and training.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S VOICES BEING HEARD

This year our young people’s voices were no longer whispers but loud, proud and projected through their own published book, spots on national and local news, and their own podcasts.

Taking Hold of Our Heritage is a co-authored and co-produced book by care experienced young people investigating the complex nature of identity, heritage, place and community for care experienced people. The book has found itself being read in all corners of the world, from Adelaide via New York to Zimbabwe, and some influential people have read our young people’s words, including the Home Secretary, Head of Campaigns & Advocacy at UNICEF and the Chair of the Independent Care Review for England. Young people have been empowered by the feedback their book has received from foster parents, local councillors, heads of NGOs, safeguarding leads and the wider care experienced community.

As our young people’s profile increased, so did ours: soon our work was gaining national attention, with invites to input at several national and regional events, including the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (APPG) evidence session and a ministerial roundtable.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our co-designed care leaver mentoring programme is producing amazing outcomes already: building new networks, building confidence and building a brighter future. The programme created two steering groups - young people and business volunteers - to develop the model and identify potential challenges. We then brought both groups together to work co-productively to make insure a robust programme for both sides.

We also worked with care experienced young people to connect them with their dream career. We hosted two 'Meet an Employer' events where young people spoke to volunteers from sectors they were considering as a career, opening doors to new networks and knowledge. Young people chose who they wanted to speak to and came up with their own questions, which made the experience more powerful for everyone involved.

“Being part of the care leavers mentoring programme has been such a rewarding experience. The training and support given by the Leicestershire Cares team gave me complete confidence to take part. Not only have I had the opportunity to positively influence a care leaver, but it has also given me a new perspective and developed my communication skills.”

Business mentor from Revolution Kitchen, Samworth Brothers

CO-DEVELOPMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION

With support from Leicester City Council, we worked with our young people to design and deliver Mind Matters. This project developed peer to peer support to overcome poor mental wellbeing and isolation in care experienced young people following the national and local lockdowns.

Our young people reported that lockdown had been hard on their morale and created a disconnect from their care experienced identity. Working with Leicestershire Cares to plan and participate in face-to-face activities gave them a purpose to leave the house and to regain their peer support networks, helping them to reconnect and rediscover their identity as a care experienced young person.



"My confidence has increased and I feel safer talking about my real life as a care experienced person. Leicestershire Cares gave me a safe space to recognise its okay to embrace that part of myself."

Mind Matters participant



#TogetherWeCan
@LeicsCares





CASE STUDY: MEANS TO AN END OR MEANS TO A BETTER FUTURE?

We have worked with J'vorge for a number of years. However, he has found it difficult to hold onto a job for several reasons, from family commitments to lack of confidence. We spent the last six months working intensively with J'vorge to support him into a job that he enjoys, is confident in and where he can grow.

J'vorge is care experienced, has learning disabilities, lives in a low-income household and is a young parent of four. Overcoming these challenges required perseverance. J'vorge knew that he wanted to work with his hands and to be outdoors, ideally in construction. He attended CV and employability workshops, job search sessions, and enrolled on a 10-day CSCS card course which he needed to work on construction sites.

We loaned J'Vorge a laptop for the duration of the course and set up 1:1 sessions to go over work he needed help with. J'vorge attended all the sessions and kept us updated on his progress. He failed his first exam, but after a revision session with our leaving care staff, successfully passed and gained his CSCS card.

During the course, J'vorge was offered a job working in a factory. While this was positive, we spoke about whether it was the right opportunity for him and to think about the long term/bigger picture. After two weeks of working in the factory, J'Vorge decided not to go back as he did not like the work.

J'Vorge went back to the start and instead of applying for any and every job he found, we encouraged him to stop considering a job as a means to an end, and instead as a means for the future. J'vorge took this on board and eventually found a job that suited him. He is now enjoying working as a Steel Fabricator.

“It’s hard out here, no one wants to give chances to people and will only employ people with experience. I’m thankful to Leicestershire cares for helping me getting my CSCS card and helping me with the work I didn’t understand.”

YOUNG OFFENDERS



76 young people supported



33 participants gained employment



26 participants started training



95% refrained from reoffending



95% improved employability skills

The Unlocking Potential (UP) Project supports young people aged 16-25 who are ex-offenders, current offenders or at risk of offending. It offers holistic support to address social, practical, economical, and emotional issues which prevent young people from accessing education, employment, or training. It is supported by the local Violence Reduction Network (VRN) and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

KEY SUCCESSES

This year has seen lots of successes for our participants securing education, employment and training outcomes. A total of 33 participants have gained employment in industries such as administration, construction and warehouse work. A further 26 participants have gained training outcomes including CSCS cards, health and safety and Functional Skills English and maths qualifications.

We continue to have an extremely low reoffending rate on the UP Project. Unemployment is a key risk factor linked to reoffending and we have focused our work on securing these opportunities for participants, alongside holistic support with housing and mental health. Group online employability sessions have been successful this year with 95% of participants reporting improved employability skills.

We have also had a lot of success with our job search sessions which we delivered through Zoom and over the phone during lockdown. A highlight of this was one young person who completed a job search with us after successfully gaining his CSCS card. He was offered full-time employment as a labourer and was on site within 15 minutes of applying for the position.

We have recently restarted face-to-face initial assessments and 1-1s. This has ensured we can offer more support to some of the participants who were struggling to access online sessions. We supported participants to overcome the digital divide by loaning out laptops and distributing data SIM cards which we paid for using our project budget.

Disclosure workshops continue to be a success. This year, UP and New Dawn New Day have worked in partnership and the UP Project has delivered one disclosure workshop per month to all NDND participants.

Our partnership working continues to develop and some new services have begun referring into UP. We also worked with organisations such as Buttle Trust, Glassdoor, Help the Homeless and Charity Link to secure vouchers, grants and food parcels for participants throughout the pandemic.



A VISIT FROM THE HOME SECRETARY

A highlight of this year was a visit from the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, to discuss plans to prevent and tackle youth crime and violence in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. She was joined by Rupert Matthews who was successfully elected as the new Police & Crime Commissioner this year. We discussed local issues relating to youth crime, our approach at Leicestershire Cares and our plans for the future.

TACKLING KNIFE CRIME TOGETHER

Over the last year, we have worked with a group of participants to develop a video on knife crime based on their lived experience. Participants led the story-boarding, script writing and did the voice overs for the video, which was created by a local videographer.

“Lives Not Knives” will be launched in September 2021 with the support of the VRN and BBC Radio Leicester. We are in the early stages of creating a workshop to deliver knife crime interventions to target groups such as pupil referral units, schools and community groups. The workshop will include the video and participants will be trained as peer facilitators to support its delivery across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

“I am so thankful for the opportunity to support such a great cause; I have lived experience of knife crime and have paid the consequences. The UP-Project gave me the confidence and knowledge to make some positive of my experience. I am really excited to deliver this alongside the UP-Project and support the youths to understand the real-life impact carrying a knife has on victims, perpetrators, communities and families.”



“The UP team have worked exceptionally hard with a number of young people involved with the Youth Justice Service. They supported one young person, who had been out of education for a number of years, to gain his CSCS card and into temporary employment on a building site. He has now been in full time employment for over 5 months. They have made a significant difference to his and many other young people’s life chances and have been excellent to work alongside.”

Child Criminal Exploitation Team, Youth Justice Service



CASE STUDY: PM

PM joined the UP Project in March 2021. Her main goal was to be back in employment full-time and she also required support with housing and disclosure. PM took part in an employability workshop and a disclosure workshop, after which she produced an outstanding disclosure letter to give to potential employers.



Soon after this, PM attended an interview for which she was very prepared and motivated. As a result, she was offered the full-time position of ‘Project Coordinator’. With the support of UP, PM has also frequently been viewing properties to secure more affordable housing.

“My time at the UP project helped me a lot. When I was first referred, I was worried as I was struggling to find employment, struggling with debts and not happy with the environment I was in. Since then, I have found employment, I have nearly paid off my debts and am currently in the process of finding a better place to live. I feel much better in myself both mentally and physically. The UP project gave me the push I needed to get back on my feet. My life has changed for the better and I know I am now on the right path.”





56 participants supported



22 participants started work placements



19 participants achieved training outcomes



12 participants gained employment



6 participants started volunteering

EX-OFFENDERS

The WIRE project offered holistic employability support to adults who find that their previous involvement with the criminal justice system acts as a barrier to finding employment. It worked with ex-offenders aged 18 and over to develop the skills, confidence and experience needed for the world of work. WIRE was supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Lloyds Bank Foundation, and came to an end in March 2021.

KEY SUCCESSES

Despite the ongoing lockdown restrictions, the WIRE Project continued to support ex-offenders to gain valuable work experience, give back to the community, improve their employability skills and put themselves forward for further training.

This year we achieved some great employment and training outcomes for our participants. Of 56 who engaged, 22 took part in work placements, 12 gained full-time employment and 19 gained training outcomes, including CSCS cards, forklift licences and brush-cutter qualifications. Six participants also took part in community-based volunteering placements, and gained great satisfaction from giving back to the community.

While the WIRE Project was due to end in December 2020, we were successful in securing a European Social Fund Community Grant to extend its work to March 2021. This enabled us to run a successful programme of employability activities and work placements for participants who were struggling to find employment due to their offending history.

We worked with our business members to support our participants through mock interviews, career talks and CV workshops to help them prepare for the world of work. Delivering the programme online also meant that many participants improved their digital skills and could use these to stay in touch with family and friends during the extended lockdown.

“Thank you for all of your help to find work, I’ve been with Pollard Boxes for 5 months now and I’m loving it.”

CASE STUDY: FK

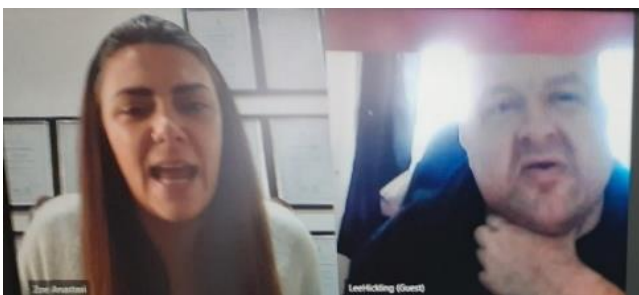
FK was referred to the WIRE Project whilst living in a bail hostel in Leicester after being released from prison. He was keen to receive support to help him find employment, specifically within construction as a brick layer, but the pandemic and his previous conviction meant his options were very limited. As FK was living in a bail hostel at the time of his referral, he also needed to make plans for long-term accommodation.

We accepted FK onto our ESF-funded employability programme and loaned FK a laptop so that he could access our online sessions. FK initially struggled with using the laptop as he was not used to taking part in online video calls and meetings, but each week he picked things up and became more confident. FK did not have an up-to-date CV or any recent work experience, so we helped him to find a work placement within construction and supported him to update his CV.

FK was unable to proceed with securing work within construction without a CSCS qualification, which we were able to fund for FK through the project. FK successfully passed his training and received his CSCS card. He also found employment after we supported him to make job applications.

FK plans to rent his own place now he is in work and wants to save some money so he can do his driving test and work towards getting a car.

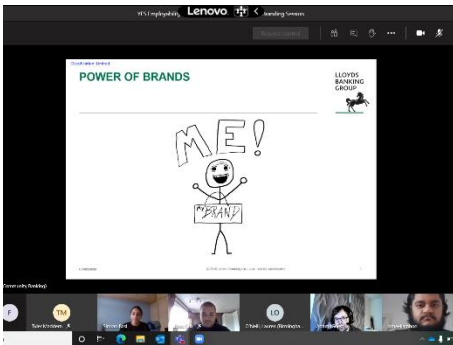
“I’ve learnt so much over a short period of time. I wasn’t used to operating a computer at first, but now I’ve done the programme I am much more comfortable using IT, sending emails and using platforms like Microsoft Teams. Not only that, but my confidence in interview situations have improved. I have passed my CSCS test, completed a work placement and now I am employed as a labourer. I recommend this programme to anyone who wants support to find work.”





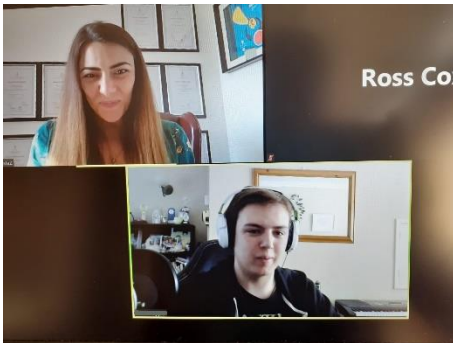
YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NEET

Over the last year, our YES Project team has been creative and agile in supporting local young people. The pandemic meant that the vast majority of our work was delivered virtually this year, but this has enabled us to involve more business volunteers in the project's day to day delivery.



With high numbers of unemployed young people and a lack of opportunities, it has been difficult to find positive outcomes for some participants, but there have been some great successes for young people who have moved into employment or training. One of our key focusses in the last year has been on other factors affecting young people, particularly confidence building and tackling anxiety.

Moving forward, our strong relationships with partners and businesses will enable us to support young people to gain sustainable and meaningful work and training opportunities, as the country moves out of lockdown.



The pandemic has hit young people hardest in terms of employment and job opportunities, and this means initiatives like the YES Project are needed now more than ever to ensure we can build back better for our young people.

KEY SUCCESSES

Over the last year, the YES team has built strong relationships with different businesses and involved many more employee volunteers in our work. A real success has been the YES Business Steering Group which has helped us to develop new ways in which businesses can support our young people to achieve positive outcomes.



The introduction of the Functional Skills English and maths offer with Babington Training has been a real success, with participants making excellent progress towards achieving the qualifications they need.

The six-week online employability programmes proved highly successful, leading to new relationships with businesses and lots of young people receiving employability support in the height of lockdown. Our learning and resources from these programmes will be utilised in the coming year as the YES team delivers more of these programmes face-to-face in the community.



“I’ve really enjoyed the ten week street soccer course they found me because it’s given me the opportunity to meet new people. I’m looking forward to finding the right pathway for the job I want to go into in the long term and getting the results I want for my GCSE Maths and English.”
YES Project Participant

CASE STUDY: CR

CR joined the YES Project as he wanted help starting a career in either the creative or gaming industry. Throughout his time on YES, CR became a regular at Get Stuff Done, at one session even shadowing a DMU film crew to learn more about media techniques. During lockdown, CR attended several virtual employability workshops and had his CV reviewed by the HR Manager at Everards Brewery. CR also completed a virtual mock interview with a business volunteer, increasing his confidence in interviews.

Alongside these workshops, CR attended a virtual tour of Loughborough University and a virtual world of work tour at LCFC, where he was particularly interested in learning more about their media roles. Following this, CR attended the YES Media Programme and The Prince’s Trust Get Into Film and Music where he, along with other young people, made a short film. These activities helped CR gain useful media skills and as well teamwork and communication skills.

To help pass the time in lockdown, CR attended a number of online social sessions and fun activities. He also attended a young people consultation with Leicester City Council, Public Health Leicester and the Behavioural Insights team from the Cabinet Office to share his experience of the pandemic.

The YES team supported CR to apply for a traineeship as a gaming assistant, the industry he was most keen on building his career in. He was delighted to be successful and is so far enjoying the course, where he will gain qualifications including Functional skills English, maths and IT and gain work experience. CR will be interviewing for a kickstart placement after the traineeship.

FINALLY...

We would like to say a huge thank you to all our members, partners, funders and participants for helping us to make the last year such a success.

A big thank you also has to go to our brilliant team, who have shown that with creativity, agility, kindness and empathy, our young people and communities can thrive.

We are excited to continue working with you all in the coming year to create an inclusive and safe Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where nobody is left behind, and all children and young people are supported to reach their full potential.

#TogetherWeCan



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Leicestershire Cares is an award winning, creative, results orientated charity. We broker partnerships and create opportunities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland that enable the business sector to understand community needs, contribute to the growth of inclusive, safe communities and to support and inspire children and young people in their transition to the workplace.

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