

# REPORT FROM THE SCOTTISH YOUTH PROJECT

Y SORT-IT YOUTH CENTRE, CLYDEBANK

JANUARY - JUNE 2019



West  
Dunbartonshire  
COUNCIL



# PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Youth Project (SYP) was created by EPIC Assist as a project aimed at assisting boys and girls who experience financial hardship or other disadvantage in making informed choices about physically, mentally and socially healthy habits. The Project built on the Edinburgh Girls Project and the Lothians Boys Project, which have been developed by EPIC Assist Charity Scotland in 2017. This was EPIC's fifth domestic youth project in Scotland, following similar successful projects in Edinburgh, Tranent and Livingston.

During the Project, new topic areas related to healthy living, communication skills and self-development were addressed each week, with the groups exploring the topics through interactive activities and discussions. The following topics were addressed in the different sessions: Physical Activity, Relaxation and Stress Relief, Relationships and Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Self-esteem, Gender Stereotypes and Healthy Eating.

SYP was split into one girls' group and one boys' group. The age of the participants ranged from 10-16 and they came from socio-economically disadvantaged and ethnic minority backgrounds.



# LOCAL PARTNERS

EPIC Assist partnered with the local youth organisation Y Sort-It. The organisation is a trusting and well-established charity that has worked with young people in Clydebank for more than 20 years and therefore provided EPIC Assist with a clear link to, and legitimacy within, the local community. Thus, they enabled EPIC Assist to reach the target group that would benefit directly from being involved in the SYP. Y Sort-It kindly let EPIC Assist use their facilities for project delivery and also assisted with the project delivery for the girls' group of the SYP. As well as this, they used their established link to the community and young people to recruit participants.

As Clydebank currently has a large number of recently resettled refugees in need of integration activities, Y Sort-It also suggested to target the young people from this group to participate in the Project. As a result, West Dunbartonshire Council's Refugee Resettlement Team was brought on board, which provided the Project with a direct link to local young refugees. The Refugee Resettlement Team recruited participants from this group and a representative from West Dunbartonshire Council assisted with the project delivery for the boys' group of the SYP,



# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The SYP has a flexible, person-focused design which means that the topics and activities covered can be adjusted and tailored to fit the needs and interests of the group. The Project was held in two 7-week courses; one for girls from January to March and one for boys from May to June. For both groups, one session was held each week. Despite being coherent courses in their own right, the sessions were independent of each other. As a result, the young people were freely able to choose which sessions they wanted to participate in. By choosing how many and which sessions to attend, the boys and girls were also able to engage with the topics they were most interested in.

The flexibility of the SYP meant that attendance numbers varied from week to week in both groups. For the girls' course, the majority of the 12 registered girls participated on a regular basis. For the boys, the attendance rate was slightly lower, with eight participants being involved in total. Out of these, four boys participated regularly. Despite being a small group, this allowed for a relaxed environment, where the boys felt comfortable with sharing their opinions and actively contributing to discussions.



# METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DATA MONITORING

The participants were given an initial survey at the end of the first session of each group. This comprised questions related to whether the sessions were being enjoyed so far and what issues the participants identified as most important to their health and well-being. The participants were also asked about what kind of group activities they enjoyed doing the most and the least and if there was anything specific they wanted to do or learn about over the course the Project.

Another survey was given to the participants of the two groups at the end of their respective last sessions. This survey asked the participants about whether they had enjoyed the sessions, what skills they felt they had learned through the Project, whether their attitudes had changed and what they enjoyed the most and the least with the SYP. The parents of the participants were given questionnaires two weeks before the end of the respective groups to allow time for completion. Y Sort-It and West Dunbartonshire Council were also involved in the evaluation through giving their feedback on the impact of the SYP.



# THE FINDINGS

100% of the participants who completed the questionnaires in the last session of each respective group stated that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the SYP. Everyone also said they would recommend the Project to a friend and all but two participants said they had met new friends during the course.

When asked about what areas they felt they had learned the most about, 100% of the boys said that they had learned more about relaxation skills and gender stereotypes, which were two of the main focus areas for the boys' part of the Project. 75% also said they had learned more about living a healthy lifestyle. Attitudinal changes were also identified as one of the boys reported that he found it easier to deal with his aggression following the SYP.

For the girls, communication skills was the area the participants felt they had learned the most about. This was reported by 77% of the girls, followed by 55% who stated they had improved their relaxation skills.

The fact that the girls' group mixed recently resettled refugees with ethnic Scottish girls meant that the SYP also had the pleasing effect of facilitating integration within the local community. Before the Project commenced, the partners reported that the girls with a refugee background who participated in the Project were quite isolated from the rest of the community and did not engage in after-school activities. However, the peer-to-peer learning nature of the SYP provided these girls with a safe platform to create new connections and break down barriers, and two of the girls specifically mentioned in the feedback that the Project had changed their views on stereotypes of people. As a result of this success, the girls' group decided to continue meeting for social activities once a week after the completion of the Project. This group is still active today, demonstrating the sustained difference the SYP has made in these girls' lives.

Feedback from parents was extremely limited.

**100%**  
**would**  
**recommend**  
**SYP to a friend**



# FEEDBACK FROM PARTNERS

*The girls' group was a welcoming, inclusive and most importantly fun club! It was great to see a real mixed group, in terms of ethnicity and age, gel together to discuss and learn more about important issues relating to them. The topics were current, and the activities for each week allowed the girls to engage well in the sessions.*

*This group provided a safe space for the young people to openly discuss not only the topic of the day, but also anything else that may be on their mind. Issues brought up on top of the programme included exam stress, home life and pressure of school and sexuality. I found the environment to be a relaxing one where everyone felt confident to speak out and not be judged - a place for girls to be their true selves.*

***Rachel McKechnie, Y Sort-It***



## BUDGET BREAKDOWN

The SYP was awarded £2,490 by the Alexander Cross Cameron Bequest. This was used in the following ways:

- £293 for materials and snacks used in the project sessions
- £110 for planning meeting expenses
- £384 for the production, printing and binding of reports
- £618 for the design, production and printing of workbooks to accompany project sessions
- £12 for the production and printing of certificates
- £575 for travel costs for EPIC staff travelling from Edinburgh
- £498 for salary for EPIC staff coordinating and delivering the project

## ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The SYP has proved to be an efficient way of encouraging young people to adopt some good behaviours and habits which are important in order to live as a healthy young person. However, most importantly, these behaviours and habits are likely to continue later in life. As well as this, many of the social bonds created – such as the continuation of the girls' group – can also be sustained. The Project therefore has the capacity to make an impact on participants' lives for a long time after the completion of the Project. This is also one of EPIC Assist's goals with the SYP; to create sustainable and active communities.

Due to the immediate success of the SYP in Clydebank, the partners have already expressed a keen interest in running another level of the Project, which is something EPIC Assist Charity Scotland would like to pursue. Other versions of the Project have also been run successfully in other social and religious environments across Central Scotland, where calls for a level 2 version of the Project have been replicated. The positive experiences of these youth projects have additionally motivated EPIC Assist to run the projects at new locations in Scotland. We strongly hope we will be able to realise all these plans in the future.