

Abingdon Integrated Youth-Support Project (AIYSP)

Progress Report (October 2021 to February 2022)

to

Abingdon Town Council

by

**Roxy Elford and James Quartermain
Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project (ADYP)**

&

**Holly Freeland
The Abingdon Bridge (TAB)**

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Activities | 3 |
| 2.1. Street Work sessions | 3 |
| 2.2. Counselling/wellbeing referrals | 4 |
| 2.3. ‘Back on Track to EET’ referrals | 4 |
| 2.4. Signposting and Community Engagement | 4 |
| 2.5. Workshops – changing the street conversations | 4 |
| 2.6. Expanding the partnership | 4 |
| 2.7. Youth Voice – Phase 1 | 5 |
| 3. Summary and Next Steps | 5 |

1. Introduction

Abingdon Town Council (ATC) is funding the Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project (ADYP) and The Abingdon Bridge (TAB) to collaboratively establish the feasibility of delivering an integrated youth provision that delivers better outcomes for Abingdon's young people (age 10 to 19) and ensures that the diverse voices of young people (particularly those most disadvantaged) are heard at all levels of policy making within ATC and other service providers.

This work meets one of ATC's key priorities, namely: *To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.*

This second report sets out the progress in the period October 2021 to February 2022 of the feasibility study. In year 1, the focus is on understanding the dynamics and needs of the different groups of young people that socialise in public open spaces across Abingdon and building trusting relationships with them so that they accept us in their social space and see that we are unconditionally concerned with their interests and concerns and there to support them. This project started just as young people were coming out of lockdown and the impact of that has been evident in some of the group dynamics we witnessed and the needs we are supporting.

We report against the activities set out in section 3 of our original proposal to ATC.

2. Activities

2.1. Street Work sessions

This is the core of all our work and between ADYP and TAB there is now a consistent presence on at least four nights per week of youth workers across Abingdon supporting young people. Increased referrals for 1-2-1 support show that new young people are now beginning to accept and trust our presence in their spaces.

Hot spot areas covered include Precinct, The Charter; the Market Place and the Library area. In the south the areas include Southern Town Park at Lambrick Way, Caldecott Recreation Ground and the Gainsborough Green shops. Although the North has been quieter generally, we have noticed younger people aged 13-14 gathering near the shops.

We have held 33 sessions using the gazebo which comes in to its own in the cold winter months as we are able to serve hot chocolate as well as hold informal workshops.

In street engagement, group sizes vary from 4 to 45 and average around 25 depending on the time/place/day. Sessions at the Family Solutions Centre regularly see 30+ attending and provides an opportunity for quality informal education.

2.2. Counselling/wellbeing referrals

In this period, further 8 young people have been supported through counselling all having around 9-12 sessions each on average. Pre and post questionnaires indicate that all felt some improvements have been made.

2.3. 'Back on Track to EET' referrals

In this period an additional 6 young people were supported to re-engage with Education, Employment or Training (EET) and a further 7 required general wellbeing support.

2.4. Signposting and Community Engagement

We have liaised with CAMHS, Social services, OSARC, for external referrals. Invited One Planet to come and meet young people in workshops focused on Climate Change and our role.

Facilitated a session between the police and young people specifically to discuss homophobic and transphobic incidents in Abingdon and how the police could help.

One Planet Climate Emergency Centre came to attend one of our sessions and meet young people. Talked about the environment and had some good discussions.

Partnership planning - met with Poundland, Library, Police, Mind to discuss ways of the addressing the behaviour of young people in public open spaces.

2.5. Workshops – changing the street conversations

Formal and several ad hoc informal workshops (in gazebo sessions) have been delivered. Topics covered are:

- healthy relationships- with a focus on self-worth & emotional abuse
- substance misuse - with a focus on alcohol and vaping
- conflict management- managing friendships and conflict resolution
- Risk taking/Protective behaviours - with a focus on peer pressure and exploitation
- Identity - with a focus on masculinity, gender & sexuality
- Community cohesion - where we reflected on our idea of community
- Young men's group exploring, masculinity, risky behaviours and vulnerability.
- Girls' gym sessions around mental health and food and mood
- Adapting to change and wellbeing tools workshop

2.6. Expanding the partnership

No progress has been made in the period of this report as we wish to analyse the output from the Youth Voice's survey to set the framework for the wider partnership.

2.7. Youth Voice – Phase 1

Youth Voice continues with its session – it has been a busy time creating the questionnaire together and loading it in to Survey Monkey. The group is currently trying to get as many young people as possible to complete the form.

3. Summary and Next Steps

In summary we are now an established a positive presence across Abingdon and identified core groups and starting to pick up on main behaviour needs and work on strategies to sustainably meet the needs. The Youth Voice is progressing, and we hope that the youth consultation will be beneficial and inform Abingdon Town Council of the next steps in the development of a longer-term youth strategy that refreshes and increases its diversity particularly incorporating the disengaged voice.

We welcome the opportunity to have a discussion with councillors at the end of March on the 2022/23 plans for delivering the Abingdon Integrated Youth-Support Project (AIYSP).