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House Project at the Eden Centre: Final report for 2020/21

1. Background

Edenbridge Town Council has contributed towards the costs of the HOUSE Project at the Eden Centre since it opened in 2013. Since April 2017 a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been in place between Edenbridge Town Council and West Kent Extra. This final report (for the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021) gives an update on progress against the following agreed annual objectives and activities for 2020/21:

- To deliver the HOUSE Project at the Eden Centre in accordance with the funding proposal.
- To manage and support staff to deliver a professional service.
- To evaluate health outcomes in accordance with the funding proposal
- To secure all match funding required to run the project.
- To work in partnership with West Kent Extra staff delivering Kent County Council's Youth Services contract.

We also report on actual performance against the following objectives:

- Deliver 144 HOUSE sessions at the Eden Centre.
- Support young people to deliver a monthly youth forum and set up new projects to address unmet needs.

2. Objectives/activities

This section reports on progress against each of the objectives and planned activities.

To deliver the HOUSE Project at the Eden Centre in accordance with the funding proposal

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and lockdown, we stopped delivering face-to-face HOUSE sessions in March 2020. Following consultation with young people, we started to deliver online sessions from 31 March for all the young people that attend our youth sessions. We used Facebook, e-mail, and telephone to stay in touch with the young people, even if they didn't join in with the sessions.

Consultation with young people showed that they wanted a wider range of sessions for HOUSE participants during the lockdown. We decided to offer a flexible service by merging various youth services and allowing all young people to attend the sessions that interested them.

Since April we have offered the following online sessions:

- Catch up chat sessions, aiming to stay up to date on the lives of the young people and how they are doing.
- Fitness sessions, helping the young people stay active while they've been restricted to their households.

- Learning sessions, teaching the young people new skills, such as sign language.
- Fun sessions, ensuring the young people still have a fun outlet, where they can play games with their friends.
- Cooking sessions, teaching the young people to cook healthy food for the entire family. We ran a programme for young people where we delivered the ingredients to families and then they cooked a meal with a professional chef.
- Study/homework help, aiming to support young people who were struggling with their school work (because of radically reduced contact with their teachers).
- We also started to run a mental health session with West Kent Mind.
- Online guitar lessons.

An example of a typical weekly online programme (for week commencing 18 May 2020) is attached (Appendix 1).

For children and young people who were struggling or feeling overwhelmed as a result of Covid-19, we also provided a one-to-one chat service.

From July onwards, as restrictions started to reduce, we began to implement detached sessions in Edenbridge, introducing a socially distanced face to face approach. We engaged with HOUSE participants who hadn't attended our online sessions, ensuring they were staying safe and well.

We started delivering indoor sessions again in September (until the second lockdown). In September we delivered HOUSE sessions twice a week from Templar Court Community Room (on the Spitals Cross Estate). We also moved delivery of Boxercise sessions from Stangrove Park to Rickards Hall (with kind support from Edenbridge Town Council).

To manage and support staff to deliver a professional service

The project has been be overseen by Richard Dowling (Youth Services Manager) and Amy Nichols (Lead Youth Worker). Richard and Amy joined our team in early 2020 and have a wealth of experience in youth services. A local team of youth workers (including Cheryl Banks, Youth Worker in Charge) help them to deliver the HOUSE project sessions. Amy left West Kent at the End of September. Following a recruitment exercise, we employed Ben Reynolds as the new Lead youth Worker.

Staff keep up to date with essential training on safeguarding, first aid, health and safety, equality and diversity, sexual health, smoking cessation and mental health. All staff attend monthly supervision meetings with their manager.

To evaluate health outcomes in accordance with the funding proposal

Our evaluation shows that the HOUSE project continues to support participants to:

- Have increased understanding of the risks of drugs, alcohol and smoking, leading to reductions in use.
- Have increased understanding of sexual health issues/relationships, leading to reductions in sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies.
- Have increased resilience and self-confidence and be able to make more informed choices leading to healthier lifestyles.
- Be more engaged in targeted positive activities, resulting in healthier lifestyles.

There have been 2,007 engagements from young people engaging with our online service, with 989 living in Edenbridge and 665 engagements through detached work.

Analysis of a large survey of HOUSE participants (in November 2019) showed that, after attending HOUSE regularly, 91% of young people felt more positive about their future, 82% knew more about drugs/alcohol and 73% felt they had made better health choices.

We have included some case studies below to show how your funding has helped our staff to intervene early to support young people to address issues they are facing and provide the support they need.

Case study 1

Sam is 13 years old and has been a HOUSE member since he was 11. He has had a troubled childhood because of his family circumstances. His mum has a long history of drug abuse and criminal behaviour. Following intervention from social services, Sam moved to live with his dad. He found it hard to engage with other children at school and often got very angry. The Staff at the HOUSE project started to work with Sam as soon as he joined the project, giving him one to one support, as well as extra help during group sessions.

When he joined the project, Sam had low self-esteem, couldn't make eye contact with staff and found it difficult to engage with other young people. As a result of our support, he developed his confidence.

We supported Sam to build his relationship with his mum. (She was also supported by substance misuse services to stop using Class A drugs and to turn her life around.) Sam moved back in with his mum and now visits his dad at weekends. He now enjoys school, has made many friends at HOUSE and has joined a local sports club. He still has one-to-one support at HOUSE when he feels he need it. Sam has nothing but praise for staff at the HOUSE project: "I don't know what would have happened to me if the HOUSE staff had not been here to help me. House is my safe space and my second home."

Case Study 2

Emily is 14 years old and started to come to HOUSE when she was 11 years old. Her parents moved to Edenbridge from a high-crime area so that they could have a better life here for their daughter and themselves. Emily found it hard to make new friends. When she started to come to house, we had a buddy system

in place, which helps young people to make new friends. Her buddy at the club introduced Emily to a network of local young people, which helped to tackle the social isolation she experienced when she first came to Edenbridge.

Emily likes to use the recording studio at HOUSE and writes her own lyrics. Through her lyric writing Emily developed the confidence to talk about being bullied at school. Our staff supported her to address the bullying issue. We also put some counselling in place to address mental health issues.

Over the last three years, Emily has grown in confidence. She loves coming to HOUSE to meet her friends and now plays an active role in the project. Emily said: "HOUSE is a big part of my life. If you need advice and support as a young person in Edenbridge, it's a great place to go."

During the Covid-19 pandemic both Sam and Emily have benefited from social media, online sessions and regular communication with our youth team.

NB: Both case study names have been changed.

To secure all match funding required to run the project

We have secured match funding from West Kent Housing Association, Whitehead Monckton Charitable Foundation, Gatwick Airport Community Foundation, Sevenoaks District Council, Green Family Fund, Kent County Council and the Great Stone Bridge Trust to deliver the project for 2020/21.

To work in partnership with West Kent Extra staff delivering Kent County Council's Youth Services contract

Youth workers at HOUSE continue to work in partnership with their West Kent colleagues delivering the Sevenoaks-wide KCC youth service.

Our Edenbridge HOUSE staff worked alongside other youth workers to produce a pocket guide for young people in the Sevenoaks District.

We have sent regular email updates to partners on developments within HOUSE and other youth projects during the Covid-19 pandemic.

To deliver 144 HOUSE sessions at the Eden Centre

We delivered 640 sessions between 1 April and 31st March, significantly exceeding our target of 144 sessions.

Activity	Number of sessions
Online Zoom activities	536
HOUSE Face-to-Face sessions	24
Boxercise at Stangrove Park and Rickards Hall	21
Detached Edenbridge sessions	59
Total sessions	640

These sessions were delivered jointly with youth workers from other West Kent services.

Support young people to deliver a monthly youth forum and set up new projects to address unmet needs

Following a recruitment campaign, eight members of a new youth forum met on 2 March 2020. They identified needs for an anti-bullying campaign linked to schools and a trip to a theme park for young people from families on low incomes. We plan to work with local partners to address these and future needs identified by the youth forum. It has been difficult for the youth forum to meet formally during the Covid-19 pandemic, but we have found other ways of informally consulting young people.

Young people attending the HOUSE project helped to develop the new Zoom service with us. We ran a trial service for two weeks and asked for feedback on each session and suggestions for new activities. The young people came up with some great suggestions for online sessions and our staff have responded flexibly.

We have adapted our approach to participation because of Covid-19. Having temporarily moved most service delivery online, we now ask for reflection/feedback at the end of each online Zoom sessions. We have also spent more time getting individual feedback from young people about the programme and how it needs to be changed. This gives all young people an opportunity to have their say about the programme and make suggestions for new activities through telephone conversations with staff. They have made some great new suggestions for service delivery. As a result, we have added boxing exercise sessions to our online programme.

It may be some time before the youth forum will be able to meet at the Eden Centre, because of social distancing requirements. Meanwhile, we will continue to get regular feedback at the end of sessions.

3. Looking forward to 2021/22

This has been a very challenging period for the HOUSE Project. We are very grateful for the support of officers and members at Edenbridge Town Council. We thank you for your contribution of £7,500 for financial year 2020/21.

We look forward to continuing to deliver this key local service for young people in 2021/22.

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Weekly online programme example

West Kent online **zoom** youth sessions

	Monday 18/05/2020	Tuesday 19/05/2020	Wednesday 20/05/2020	Thursday 21/05/2020	Friday 22/05/2020
10am	Keep fit with Cheryl & Amy 	Drawing with Amy & Ross 	Craft with Richard & Ben 	Game zone with Ross & Tom 	Keep fit with Cheryl & Tom 
2pm	Craft with Ross & Richard 	Cook with Cheryl & Tom 	Keep fit with Cheryl 	Sewing Class with Elaine, Richard & Cheryl 	Sign language with Ben & Richard 
6.30pm	Find it? with Ben & Tom 	Food Quiz with Tom & Ben 	Roblox with Ross & Tom 	Cook with Cheryl & Ben 	West Kent Youth Got Talent 

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