

A Partnership between Sheffield City Trust and Reach Up Youth.

Background

Reach up Youth was founded in 2013 by local resident Safiya Saeed, who was committed to improving the prospects of young people in Burngreave. By providing positive opportunities for young people growing up in the community, Safiya was determined to reduce the risk of her young children and other young people in the community becoming involved in crime.

“If you have met Safiya, there is no better person, her energy, her passion, her constant being is unrivalled by anyone I have ever met in my entire life. The young people are her family and the respect they have for her is unbelievable.” - Kathryn Mudge, Yorkshire Sport Foundation (YSF).

Burngreave is a hugely diverse community with 25 languages spoken in a small but very densely populated radius. The organisation has received funding from a number of different sources including Sport England, Comic Relief, Yorkshire Sport Foundation and Sheffield City Trust. The partnership with Sheffield City Trust (SCT) began in 2016 and is mutually beneficial to both parties, SCT took a long time to develop trust and networks in the area, to help inform their approach and funding provision going forwards.

Over the last 12 months Reach up Youth has...

- Delivered weekend sessions with approximately 35 young people attending per session (equating to 1,400 attendances across the year)
- Delivered a weekly weekday session with approximately 20 young people attending per session (equating to 800 attendances across the year)
- Delivered Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) sessions for 200 people (1,500 attendances in total). These sessions were part of a Department for Education funded programme.
- Helped 40 young people onto a mentorship / leadership programme
- Helped 12 young people gain employment or take up further training opportunities.

Getting started

SCT initially became involved with Reach up Youth during its early days, when primarily the programme was aimed at young males and known as Big Brother Burngreave. They began by addressing some stereotyping that had been reported by youngsters in their centres, as the project then was mainly about providing safe spaces for young people to have fun. SCT began working in the community to change behaviours towards, and perceptions of, black young men.

“In the past big providers have found successful and genuine local work and tried to build on it in their own way. We would try to impose our structures, processes and consistency on what was happening. This was seen by the community as ‘taking over’ and trying to impose more traditional (but less successful) ways of working. It took away authentic and well developed systems in an attempt to bring communities in line. It became critical that we worked with Reach up Youth and with Safiya to enable and support them because we recognised that is what the community wanted, and RUY were more than capable of doing that work better than we could.” - Rob Womack SCT.

SCT began some targeted work in the community around physical activity, responding to the feedback from Reach Up Youth about how welcoming public leisure centres and facilities appeared to be. SCT worked with the community to try and broaden people’s horizons about what physical activity is and

to ensure change in community sports centres so that they were more welcoming and appealing to the people of Burngreave. It was important that the community knew they also had a place and were welcomed in all venues. SCT have also reviewed the marketing of their facilities as historically the imagery that has been used has portrayed young, white, slim stereotypes (an issue across the whole industry, not just for SCT). Work has been done in SCT venues to ensure the imagery used is more diverse moving forwards but there is still a long way to go, particularly when comparing to other sectors.

“Providing access to venues, changing how SCT engage with communities and raising aspirations of young people within sport and leisure, providing sport and mentoring but also job opportunities for people who have been mentored through Reach Up Youth – this is the biggest achievement of the SCT and Reach up partnership.” - Kathryn Mudge, YSF

As the Big Brother Burngreave programme evolved and became more and more successful, Sheffield City Trust and Yorkshire Sport Foundation worked with Safiya to supported her develop the programme into an organisation and at that point Reach up Youth was launched and registered for charitable status, which also opened up doors to more funding and grant opportunities. RUY have also engaged with communities and proposed a number of ideas that would help engage the community further and help them feel more positive about SCT venues. This is work in progress but may help to further strengthen relationships in the future once action is seen.

Impacts

Instigating Change

SCT and Reach up Youth work together to instigate changes to policy and process and to understand what is needed to think and behave differently.

The partnership with Reach up Youth has led to action from SCT:

“For SCT, it opened their eyes. Individuals within SCT were aware of issues in terms of the inclusivity of their venues and not reaching the people they wanted to reach, but as an organisation they hadn’t yet provoked change. The partnership with Reach up Youth pushed them out of their comfort zones to do something about it, it pushed them into action.” - Kathryn Mudge, YSF.

“We supported RUY by listening and understanding the community, how they work and what their needs were. We had to build empathy with Saf, with RUY and with the community. After this we could help with aspects such as grant applications, supporting young people with training and employment and providing equipment for activities. All of this was built on what the community actually needed, rather than what SCT would like in terms of growth, numbers and PR. I think this is where our success has come from. Not only have we been able to truly support delivering what the community wants and needs, but we’ve been able to take this way of working into other communities in a legitimate way.” - Rob Womack, SCT.

Diverse Workforce

In addition, it is evident that key individuals such as Safiya, who are well connected and respected within the community, help to raise the profile of the SCT / Reach up Youth partnership and push action quicker. SCT have also benefitted from a more diverse workforce and been able to connect to a more diverse audience as well as SCT having a better understanding of the third sector. Despite

improved practice and best efforts of the team, there remains work to be done to instigate policy level changes within SCT.

“The opportunities for employment have been huge, having a positive option for employment for young people is so important as they are competing with the local gangs and drugs scene, which young people can earn so much money from if they get pulled into that environment. The opportunity to educate young people, promote positive employment opportunities and pathways has been so important.” - Kathryn Mudge, YSF.

One young woman who first started attending Reach up Youth with her elder brother describes her experiences and the impact the programme has had on her, including leading to employment opportunities with SCT ...

“When I was in secondary school my brother worked with Safiya and would take me and my younger siblings along to the sessions. I’d play basketball, football and cricket with them and it helped me be open and communicate with others despite our backgrounds. It helped with my confidence and communication skills and to see people for who they are instead of stereotyping. In time I started attending and leading at the Sisterhood sessions and this then led on to some work with the Sports Vans, Rob has now said there will be more work over the winter months.” - Young Leader, Reach up Youth.

Welcoming and accessible facilities

Sheffield City Trust have pushed for access to their venues for Reach up Youth, allowing bookings to be made, offering discounted rates to use facilities, as well as really being part of the journey some of the young people are on. Job opportunities within SCT have also been promoted to young people who have been on the Reach up Journey.

“It is a mutually beneficial arrangement, SCT make us feel visible. We [RUY] are the think tank, SCT value our feedback, we constantly talk and communicate.” - Safiya Sayeed, Founder, Reach up Youth

Organisational support and development

Sheffield City Trust has provided help and support to Reach up Youth with bid writing to support community development, strategic support, longer term funding and capacity building and growing confidence. The HR team has also provided support with recruitment.

Key Successes

The ethos of what Reach up Youth are about and the passion they have is key to the organisation’s success. They want to make a difference and provide opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment for young people in the community. They work in partnership with other organisations to provide added value, offer support where they have experience and share insight on different ways of thinking, and seek support when needed to help their organisation to grow and thrive. Reach Up Youth is led and driven by young people, so it is authentic and dynamic.

“SCT have been a backbone for us over the past three years. They’ve opened doors and built bridges, by providing wrap-around support.” - Safiya Sayeed, Reach up Youth.

“The way that it [Reach up Youth] is youth led, is the biggest element of success, it is difficult to be truly youth led, but Reach up Youth achieve this, young people are involved in decision making, they are involved at all levels and they have their own hierarchy of leadership, there

is always something to aspire to, there is always an avenue for young people to develop their skills.” - Kathryn Mudge, Yorkshire Sport Foundation.

Lessons / Sustainability

In terms of access to venues, Concord is highlighted by Reach up Youth to be the most welcoming to a diverse community. Great strides have been made with other venues such as EISS and Ponds Forge, although there is still some way to go to create equality of access and reach policy level, ensuring everyone feels welcome.

There is also more work to be done around employability – individuals within SCT have been key to the progress made in this area to date, the challenge is to see a more diverse SCT workforce in the future and more people championing this work to ensure sustainability.

Staff, individuals and relationships are key. Safiya Sayeed (RUY) and Rob Womack (SCT) and David Bly (SCT) are key individuals in this partnership. They truly care about the cause they are championing and supporting, working long unsociable hours to ensure the success and future sustainability of Reach Up Youth.

The future

Reach Up Youth has become a successful and popular programme in the Burngreave Community, built up over a number of years to help provide positive opportunities for young people. Over the last year alone the programme has seen over 2,200 attendances and 40 young people moving on into mentoring or leadership programmes and a further 12 into positive employment. These successes are largely down to the founder Safiya and the partnership with SCT.

“Safiya is well connected in the city, she’s authentic and passionate and that combination is dangerous [in a good way!]. She is fantastic at what she does and without her Reach up Youth would not exist; she works hard to champion young people and in time she’s planning for young people to take over the organisation and lead it forward.” - Kathryn Mudge, Yorkshire Sport Foundation.

Flexibility is important for SCT moving forwards. They must speak to, listen to and understand local people and local needs, and what it is they want from public facilities. In addition, being flexible with their systems, so that they can say yes more than they say no!

“This is a chance to get it right, with the possibility of new investment in the coming years. SCT have done some great things, they have learnt from what they have done and taken time to listen and understand people.” - Kathryn Mudge, Yorkshire Sport Foundation.