

TOGETHER LEEDS YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

Young People & Covid-19



Initially funded by Forum Central in Leeds and supported by Young Lives Leeds, the Together Leeds Youth Partnership (TLY) initiative was developed in response to national evidence indicating that young people were less likely to adhere to self-isolation and social mixing guidelines, which in turn lead to a rise in infection rates within the population. It was found there was a scarcity of supportive resources and information for trusted sport coaches and youth workers to share with the young people they work with that would really encourage the observance of the guidelines. Furthermore, there were limited opportunities for young people themselves to feed into the design of the campaigns and messaging. StreetGames is a firm believer in the importance of youth voice and youth action and the benefits that involving young people in the entire process brings - the TLY partnership is a great opportunity to showcase exactly that.

The TLY Partnership is a collection of 17 Locally Trusted Organisations (LTOs) from across Leeds who have come together as part of Leeds' Covid-19 Third Sector Outbreak plan to ensure a collaborated approach to supporting young people, predominantly aged 14 - 20, in priority areas across the city. StreetGames has supported the creation and development of the partnership of LTOs involved to ensure the information flow between key health partners and local young people around coronavirus and the many issues which have arisen around the pandemic. Involving LTOs in this process is an essential aspect, as they have close relationships with the very young people local authorities are trying to engage with, and most importantly, the young people trust them.

TLY - LTOs

Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL)
Getaway Girls
Leeds City College
Let's Do More
LS14 Trust
LS-TEN
Reestablish
PingPong4U
Champions Community Sport and Health
New Wortley Community Centre
CATCH
Nowells Community Assoc
The Hunslet Club
St Lukes
The Beck, Gipsil
Leeds Muslim Youth Forum
Fall Into Place

INSIGHT

The insight generated by the TLY Partnership identified that 14-20 year olds needed more wellbeing support. Young people were most concerned about their family's health and not wanting to expose them to infection, and the impact on their education. They were least concerned about the impact of the pandemic (and self-isolation) on their social life, and the impact on their own health.

Qualitative data generated through the TLY partnership was distilled into an insight report that was used to inform the supportive and motivating tone of a new guide, which emphasised the difference young people could make by staying at home and included a range of wellbeing support. The guide was co-produced with young people from #TogetherLeedsYouth and complemented by a campaign featuring 12 videos made by young people, sharing their tips for sticking with self-isolation. The videos achieved a reach of 10, 487 via social media, and 297 clicks on the guide. The guide has been viewed 1,313 times. MP Hilary Benn also highlighted this piece of work as an example of good practice.

YOUTH VOICE

The youth voice element the TLY partnership has provided extremely useful information to local health planners about what young people in the community are saying and how they have felt at each step of the Covid-19 time line. The support guide was well-received as a resource to encourage adherence to the guidelines, but as time has gone by new issues have arisen. More recently with the roll-out of the vaccine, it has started to become apparent that many sections of the community are becoming increasingly hesitant to get vaccinated, often due to misinformation circulated online and a general mistrust of the government.

It is clear now that the re-opening of society and a return to relative normality depends on a successful vaccination roll-out, as such it is important that local health planners react to the concerns within the community and make steps to address their concerns.

The TLY partnership has continued to help in this regard through the collection of live information from the ground. For example, recent consultation about concerns around the vaccine has shown that a key theme is Fertility. This is coming up in a pan-cultural/pan-ethnic way, with Romanian families, West African families, Muslim families, and white British families all cited as expressing concerns. The concerns were expressed by parents (in relation to the impact on their children's fertility), younger parents (who wish to have more children) and young people, especially women (who are worried about fertility issues in the future). There are lots of myths circulating about the supposed impact of the vaccine on fertility on social media channels commonly used by young people, especially Tik Tok, Snapchat and Instagram. Young people are not finding it convincing to hear from male GPs on this issue.

Equipped with this information, local health partners, led by the CCG are starting to address this issue head on by commissioning a targeted piece of work on ensuring communities are given accurate and reliable information about the vaccination in ways that are right for local communities, informed by the locally trusted organisations who know their patches better than anyone.

As a result of feedback from the TLY partnership, health partners are also creating a targeted young people's campaign in the city. Ensuring young people are getting the information they need in a youth friendly manner whilst also shining a light on the positive role young people have played in throughout pandemic.



Another resource which has proven effective in encouraging vaccine take up locally has been the sharing of personal experiences. Staff and volunteers from CATCH in Harehills have made several videos sharing their experiences of getting the vaccine and their reasons for doing so in the bid to encourage others within the community to do so – one video was made specifically for young people in Romanian.

Similarly, at DAZL, who have a dance group specifically for people with learning disabilities – a number of the participants have had the vaccine and have also made videos to share their positive experiences.

In addition, as it emerged in TLY partnership meetings that young people were worried about the lateral flow testing, LS Ten responded at speed to create a video to reassure young people and show the test in process. This was shared widely across the VCS organisations, in council wide bulletins and in headteachers briefings.

Feedback has shown that by seeing people who they trust have the lateral flow test go through the vaccination process has encouraged them to follow their lead and get vaccinated themselves. This has also equipped young people with the accurate information to share with older family members.

With support from Leeds City Council the TLY partnership has now been funded to provide Doorstep Sport provision across the city as a method of not only supporting young people and families to re-engage in physical activity, but also as a way to continue to communicate key Covid-19 messages with communities, from local staff they trust.

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The work of the #TogetherLeedsYouth network has been a key component of the city's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been a number of examples of information being cascaded via the network to strategic groups within Leeds City Council and the NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group, enabling young people's voices to be heard and their concerns to be addressed.

Examples include insight about the barriers to young people adhering to self-isolation requirements, and the wellbeing information needed to addresses this; specific issues regarding young people and vaccine hesitancy; and concerns from young people about plans to roll out Lateral Flow Testing. The involvement of locally-trusted organisations enables this process to occur seamlessly and is critical to building trust around Covid-19 messaging at a local level.

Direct funding for Covid-19-response social action projects has enabled young people to take action to address the issues associated with the pandemic which affect them and their communities, mobilising a network of young volunteers which have become a valuable asset in the city's approach to managing Covid-19.

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SALLY, LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

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During the pandemic we have all needed to work differently, more reactively to meet the needs and challenges of the 3rd sector.

The #TogetherLeedsYouth network have come together with a common cause and commitment to supporting young people and being their voice - but also providing platforms for them to also have their say and engage with the partners.

The Dragons Den has been a great example of providing a platform, developing skills and confidence along with listening and empowering our future leaders that what they say is heard. The projects they gained investment for are now being led by young leaders across the city.

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STACEY, FORUM CENTRAL

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