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Introduction to the SPARK Programme

SPARK is a youth work intervention and public health approach to safety and stability, and participation, that targets young people gathering in areas of heightened tension and contentious spaces such as bonfire sites and who are involved in behaviours that place them at risk. A number of factors should be reviewed to ascertain if a site is contentious including:

- Intra Community tension
- Anti-community behaviours
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Political influence
- Paramilitary influence
- Bonfire locations (interface areas, unsafe sites)

Why is Participation important in an approach to contentious bonfires?

Participation is the process whereby children and young people can influence decisions about their lives and directly contribute to decisions that affect them. Participation enhances children and young people's personal, social and political development, provides practical experiences and teaches them how to behave responsibly.¹

Participation can stimulate an awareness of wider societal issues that can negatively affect their local communities. As well as giving children and young people a voice, active participation ensures that they are valued within their own communities and are part of the decision-making process that can bring about solutions to the challenges they face.

Participation comes in many forms: attending school or a youth centre; involvement in social activities and clubs; playing sport, music or cultural activities; youth leadership, volunteering and peer mentoring. Meaningful participation can enhance a young person's sense of belonging, connectedness and feeling of being valued, which can contribute to positive mental health.²

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a young person's participation?

Research indicates that there are substantial barriers to participation for certain groups of children and young people, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable.³ The reasons are many and varied. In some cases, there may be a lack of Youth Services or other adequate local alternatives in a community. Children and young people may be disaffected from schools and fail to engage in education and will therefore lack the necessary skills to engage in wider society.

¹ <https://www.niccy.org/media/1330/niccy-advice-benefits-of-engagement-with-children-and-young-people-dec-14.pdf>

² <http://mypeer.org.au/design-implementation/youth-participation-2/benefits-of-youth-participation/>

³ Holdsworth, R. Stokes, H. Blanchard, M. & Mohamed, M. 2006, Civic Engagement and Young people in the city of Melbourne, Australian Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

In some instances, children and young people may disengage due to social, economic, cultural or language barriers and challenges, for example, living in a low-income household or in a deprived community, growing up in a rural area, being a newcomer, a child or young person Looked After or having a disability or Special Educational Need.

Participative activities may be inaccessible due to their location, lack of transport, cost implications or limited digital connectivity. Many children and young people living in rural areas face these challenges. Opportunities to participate may conflict with school or other commitments or be inaccessible due to a disability. It is also possible that children and young people may feel they are not well enough supported or lack motivation and confidence to participate.

Why is safety and stability important in approach to bonfires?

Children and young people experience their formative years through the relationships they form with their parents or guardians and other adult role models who support them. If these relationships provide safe, stable and nurturing environments then children and young people are more likely to develop both physically and emotionally. However, if these relationships are unstable or abusive then this can have a negative impact on a young person's physical and emotional health and development.

A young person's early life experiences shape who they are and can potentially inform their life-long learning and health. A recent study noted that children thrive in stable and nurturing homes and environments where they know what to expect and feel that their relationships, health and safety are secure.⁴ To develop to their full potential, children and young people require safe and secure housing, a balanced diet, access to medical care, secure relationships with parents and guardians, including nurturing and responsive parenting and high-quality learning opportunities at home and in school.⁵

What are the factors that can negatively impact a young person's safety and stability?

Adverse childhood experiences can have a detrimental effect on a child or young person's personal and social development. As well as having negative consequences for the individual, it can also impact on other young people in local communities. A recent study noted that a negative home environment can lead to a series of problems, including among others, poor language development, deficit in school readiness, later behavioural problems and mental health issues.⁶

There are a number of risk factors such as socio-economic, demographic, environmental and cultural influences which can directly impact on a young person.

⁴ <https://ifstudies.org/blog/how-instability-affects-kids>

⁵ Sanderson, H., & Huerta, S. (2013), The Negative Effects of Instability on Child Development: A Research Synthesis, The Urban Initiative, Washington.

⁶ http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/sites/all/files/databooks/TUCI_Data_Book_VII_2012.05_family.pdf

These range from instability in terms of parenting, their home environment, lack of a male role model, education and employment and can include negative transitions which they may experience, such as family relationships, including divorce or remarriage, moving home and school, neglect and witnessing or being the victims of domestic abuse.

These negative influences on children or young people can have serious consequences for their future life chances. Vulnerable children and young people are more inclined to have behavioural problems, poor educational attainment and limited career prospects and poorer general and mental health. They are also likely to have limited personal resilience and engage in risk taking activity including alcohol and drug misuse, anti-social behaviour, inappropriate use of social media leading to child sexual exploitation, crime, gang involvement and are more susceptible to be influenced or threatened by paramilitaries. Other consequences include, isolation, being bullied, homelessness, stigmatisation and social exclusion.

Children and young people from Section 75 groups are those at most risk of not living safely and securely. There are large numbers of these children and young people throughout Northern Ireland.

Programme Information

Programme Outline

The SPARK Programme is a long-term youth work approach to a seasonal issue with specific key dates. Engagement with young people should be a year-round process and should not begin when issues arise. This is a programme to ensure an ongoing process and a prepared intervention rather than a solely reactionary approach.

The Spark programme consists of:

- Employability programme
- Social action
- Personal and Social Development
- Diversionary activity
- Residential experiences

Outcomes for Young People

- Enhanced Personal Capabilities
 - Increased confidence and self esteem
- Improved Health and Well-being
 - Increased satisfaction with life
- Development of thinking skills, life skills and work skills
 - Decision-making
 - Planning and problem solving
 - Leadership and communication
 - Creativity

Eligibility to Apply

Applications are invited from Voluntary Youth Organisations who meet the following criteria;

- Registered as a Local Voluntary Youth Organisation with the Education Authority

Target Age Range

The programme must specifically target young people in the age range 10–25, and those young people involved in civil disorder, anti-social behaviour or risk-taking behaviours.

Evidence shows it is mainly young men aged 14-18 who this programme should be targeting, applicants must provide a rationale for working with a different age group or gender.

Target Groups of Young People

This programme actively seeks to engage young people from the above areas who fall under the following categories:

- Young people who are on the fringe of becoming involved in or exploited by paramilitaries or organised criminal gangs.
- Young people who are engaged in behaviours that place them or the community at risk.
- Young people who bear witness to, violence, substance abuse or who have suffered from direct adversity.

Targeted Delivery Locations & Programme Type

There are a number of sites throughout Northern Ireland that have been identified as contentious by local stakeholders, statutory services, voluntary sector and PSNI.

This intervention will focus on the following sites based local consultation and previous experience. The Education Authority invites applications to delivery a SPARK programme per site list below (i.e. only one programme is available per site)

Targeted Delivery Locations and Sites Identified Summer 2022

| Council Area | Site |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Belfast | Distillery Street |
| | New Lodge |
| Derry & Strabane | Creggan |
| | Tullyalley |
| | Bogside |
| | Glen |
| | Top of the Hill |
| Armagh Banbridge Craigavon | Corcrair |
| Mid & East Antrim | Larne |
| Ards North Down | Kilcooley, Bangor |

Programme Targets & Available Funding

Youth Employment Element

The Programme will provide support to directly target and recruitment young people between the ages of 16 – 25 years to assist in the delivery of the programme. This is provided on the basis of up to a maximum of 10 young people at JNC Assistant Youth Support Rate [£10.32/per hour] for up to a maximum of 8 hours per week over a 9 week period. Funding will also include an AccessNI Fee (£33) per participant.

Programme Leadership Element

The programme will provide support for the recruitment of 1 Youth Support Worker in Charge to lead on the delivery of the programme. This will be provided on the basis of a maximum of 1 staff member paid at the JNC Youth Support Worker in Charge Rate [£13.52/Per Hour] for up to 9 hours per week for up to 14 weeks. Funding will also include an AccessNI Fee (£33) for this identified staff member.

Social Action Element

The programme will provide support funding support for up to **£1,000 per project to support the delivery of a Social Action Project** this value applies to both the core and extended programmes.

Programme Element

The programme will provide **up to £3,000 funding support** for;

- Personal and Social Development
- Diversionary activity
- Residential experiences

Management Costs

Based on the total award applied for on your application, the Education Authority will apply an additional 10% management cost.

Reporting on Outcomes

At the end of the project each successful organisation will be required to complete an end of project report providing the evidence outlined in this section.

Statistical Data

This section provides an overview of statistical data that will be requested as part of the end of project report;

- Numbers of Young People Engaged in Youth Employment Scheme by age, gender community background
- Number of Young People Engaged in the core or extended programme by age, gender, and community background
- Number of face-to-face hours delivered by month for the core or extended programme
- Summary of collated baseline and end of project evaluation data (appendix i)

Qualitative Data

Successful organisations will be required to provide a narrative summary and feedback under the following headings;

- How the SPARK Programme has impacted your community
- How the SPARK programme has impacted the young people employed
- What challenges you faced during the delivery of the SPARK programme and how you overcame them
- Recommendations to improve the SPARK programme

Case Study

Successful organisations will be required to provide short case study as part of end of project report this can be;

- About a key challenge that was overcome on the project
- About the development of a key individual or group of young people as a result of the project

Reporting Deadline

A link to complete the report online will be forwarded to all successful applicants with the report due by the 31st October 4pm.

Appendix i - Baseline

A participant baseline has been developed in partnership with QUB. It is expected that all young people complete the online survey at the start of the programme and then again before they finish.

The purpose of this is to understand the needs of the young people, and also the distance travelled. We know that your work makes a valuable contribution to the lives of young people and the communities they live in. This will provide increased evidence to support this.

The baseline takes around 6 minutes to complete. It can be done by the young people alone or as part of an induction and baseline session and is completely anonymous.

The baseline link will be forwarded to successful applicants.

Appendix ii – Max Costs Examples

Outline below is example of maximum award costs per programme type.

| Element | Breakdown | Unit cost | Total Cost |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Youth Employment Element | (up to 10 Young People x up to 8 hours per week) x up to 9 Weeks = 720 Hours | £10.32/Hour | £7,430.40 |
| Programme Staff | (1 Staff Member x 9 Hours per week) x 14 Weeks = 126 | £13.52/Hour | £1,703.52 |
| Access NI Costs | Total of Up to 11 Staff | £33 | £363 |
| Programme Costs | £3,000 | - | £3,000 |
| Social Action Costs | £1,000 | - | £1,000 |
| | | Total | £13496.92 |
| | | 10% Management Costs | £1,349.69 |
| | | Max Available Award | £14,846.61 |



Youth Service