

Developments & Challenges

2020 has been a challenging year for us all, but Bar 'n' Bus has continued to support young people when and where they need us.

Social Distancing brings in new challenges for young people

The start of 2020 saw us developing programmes to support young people within both their communities and schools. Due to the current situation, we have needed to change our approach dramatically in order to continue providing support to young people.

As schools closed in the run up to the Easter holidays and restrictions on movements came into effect, we explored a number of options about how we, as a youth work charity, would respond. For many youth work teams around the country, the response was simply to stop delivering, for others financial constraints required workers to be furloughed and a large amount took programmes online.

For Bar 'n' Bus, we needed to think very carefully about the work we undertook. As street-based, detached youth work is the heart of our youth work provision, we didn't have a 'youth group' to invite to an online activity and we knew that for some of the young people we work with the requirement to stay at home is not an option due to the complexities of the home situation. We felt that we needed to maintain a presence within our communities to continue supporting young people if they choose to be out and about in public.

Once we had decided to continue our work, we needed to think very carefully about how we were going to do this in order to be safe, responsible and have maximum benefit for young people.

Thankfully, we are not alone and the national network of youth workers through the National Youth Agency and Federation of Detached Youth Workers came together to explore how this could be done. Taking on board their guidance, and speaking with our local police and authorities we developed our plan of action.

Our purpose for detached youth work during lockdown, was as follows:

- To provide a visible, reassuring, and supportive presence for young people
- To provide advice regarding personal safety and responsibilities during this crisis
- To provide a positive influence and engagement for young people, reducing risky behaviours
- Being a responsible pair of eyes in our community, seeking the safety of young people

Our session timetable would not be publicised and we would not run structured activities (like the football cage) since we were not intending to encourage young people to gather, but simply engaging those who chose to out in public – including those who were taking exercise or those shopping for family members.

Our timetable included a daily detached youth work session, with a mixture of afternoon and evening work across Canvey Island, Rayleigh and Rochford.

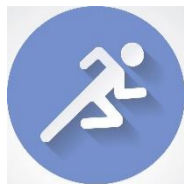
During the lockdown period, we have been really encouraged to see how responsible young people were being and how seriously they were approaching the situation. Numbers were very low, but a few key and significant conversations were had.

One young person we spoke with was able to share about the challenges at home, being 'bounced' between mum and dad's houses due to different arguments and the need to come out to skate as a break.

Other young people shared about boredom and the need to see friends. We carried information packs (carefully sanitised!) with a range of advice, guidance and connection links in them to give young people a variety of options to stay connected with their peers and to the support that they needed.

As restrictions slightly changed with the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10th May, we have started to see a steady increase in young people meeting together in parks and have been able to engage and educate about social distancing as well as listen to concerns and feelings.

For many young people this has been a time of anxiety, fear and worry (especially those who are transitioning to college or work) and whilst services may have stopped, the opportunity of being drawn into risky behaviours hasn't. Being able to let young people know that they are valued, heard, and have ways to connect with support has been really important and we are looking forward to seeing this grow over the coming weeks.



CEO CHALLENGE With the restrictions on gatherings our plans for some upcoming fundraising events had to be completely changed. However, Jamie, our CEO, used his 1hr of daily activity to undertake a fundraising challenge during April. Every day, Jamie completed a 5k run, completing 150 kilometers in 30 days. During this time, he burnt 17,610 calories and raised £2473 for our work with young people. There is still a chance to support this fundraiser, just visit www.totalgiving.co.uk/mypage/jamiesawtell2020 for all the stats and donation link!

The Future ...

Whilst schools are closed, we have needed to place our mentoring programme on hold. However, before lockdown we had the privilege of starting training with 8 amazing volunteers. As soon as restrictions allow, we

people to have someone listen to them and walk alongside them. Our mentoring programme will place trained members of the community with young people to offer that support. In addition, Melissa, our School

government guidance around social distancing, so as opportunities develop, so will our activities. We want to ensure that as young people restart meeting together in public that these times are as positive as they can be with exciting activities, space to celebrate and reflect, opportunities to share and a chance to look forward.

In addition, we have run online volunteer training and are in the process of developing new opportunities for team training and seeking to support those who might be interested in starting out on their youth work career journey. More news on this coming very soon.

“More than ever there will be a need for young people to have someone listen to them and walk alongside them.”

will be starting this training again to provide ongoing support to young people within our local schools.

Counsellor, will also continue working with young people locally.

Our positive activities programmes are being prepared to respond to each change in

More than ever, there will be a need for young



Get Involved



Volunteer

Do you want to get stuck in and make a difference in the lives of young people?

We would love to get you involved in our new training as the programme re-opens!

Email us at hello@barnbus.org.uk for all the latest information.



Pray

Particular items for prayer:

- For young people during this challenging time, particularly around safety, anxiety and bereavement.
- For safety for our teams as they continue to engage and support young people
- For the growth of our work as we explore new areas and connections for widening support for young people in South Essex



Donate

Every donation makes a difference and we rely on the generosity of our supporters to continue the work that we do. Now, more than ever, we feel the challenge of raising the necessary funds for this work.

Please consider supporting our work with a regular donation. You can do this online at <https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/donate/barn-bus-trust> or contact us through the details below.



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