

POLSCOT EXCHANGE PROJECT

POLAND MARCH 2004



Activities Implemented

Context:

Cafe K is a voluntary youth organisation based within the Jack Kane Community Centre in the Greater Craigmillar area. Café K works with socially excluded young people between the ages of 13-18. Interventions are based upon social, recreational, leisure and informal educational opportunities and we aim to create new and challenging experiences for these young people. Café K provides a drop in sessions, one-to-one work and focussed group work sessions on issues that affect these young people.

A) Description of Activities

The youth exchange between a group of young people from Zamosc in Poland and young people from the Greater Craigmillar area in Edinburgh originally began in January 2004. In January the initial idea for the exchange became a reality and the young people from both countries began to plan and organise the exchange and build communication links with one another. As a result of this, and strong links built up with the partner group, an exchange project took place 17th-25th June 2005 in Zamosc, Poland. The theme of this exchange was based around personal safety, community well being, femininity and information sharing between both groups of young people.

A follow up exchange took place in Edinburgh, 11th-21st September 2005 around the above themes. However the initial planning stages and preparation with the group began on the 6th July 2005. During the exchange the programme was implemented and both groups of young people participated in various leisure, recreational and educational activities which created the opportunity for both groups to analyse and discuss the main themes of the exchange, the access and development of information services for young people in order for them to fulfil their potential. As well as young people's identified issues around community well being, personal safety and femininity, comparing these experiences whilst taking into account cultural differences in regards to their wider community. For example the groups visited a range of specialised educational youth projects/services situated in Greater Craigmillar. These visits created the space for both groups of young people to share and explore their experiences of being a young person and encouraged

them to discuss and explore issues that were important to them. Additionally young people were encouraged to compare and contrast their thoughts in relation to a European context and this was aided by youth workers through the use of educational workshops. Thus encouraging the young people to discuss and analyse the access and development of information services for young people. In result of this both groups of young people contributed and developed through intercultural learning in this environment.

The full exchange programme is attached as Appendix 1.

B) Preparation

Preparation with the host group:

The group of young people who were the Host group for the exchange met on a weekly basis. Throughout the initial stages of the exchange the group devised their hopes, dreams and fears regarding the exchange as well as implemented a realistic timescale for the project. Through this subsequent group work the young people took into account the preparation of activities, the exchange itself and identifying ways in which the wider community could be included. The group also gathered information through the use of the internet regarding Zamosc and identified and implemented methods such as e-mails to communicate with the Partner group. The group also identified and implemented methods to combat any communication barriers that there may be for example devising a Polish/Scottish phrase book. Also the group used evaluation techniques and findings from their own experiences of the exchange which took place in Poland and implement changes as well as similar activities for the programme in order to ensure that the theme of the exchange could be explored fully.

Preparation with the partner group

Throughout the exchange project there was consistent contact with Magdalene Kozłowska through e-mail and telephone conversations. Also both groups of young people communicated through the use of e-mail and the host group devised short profiles of their community to send to the partner group.

To ensure that young people were actively involved in the decision making processes regarding the exchange and to develop effective communication links, Café K in partnership with the Jack Kane Community

Centre, other local agencies and ten young people from the host group went on a pre planning visit to the OHP centre in Zamosc Poland between 6th March 2004 until the 11th March 2004. During this time both groups of young people formed strong friendships with one another and with staff from both groups. This also created an ideal opportunity for both groups to plan the exchange programme together as the host group presented relevant information regarding the Greater Craigmillar area, Edinburgh and Scotland. This was presented through implementing a 'Scottish Night' where the host group presented all their information and both groups of young people, with the aid of photographs and phrase books, identifying activities for the exchange.

A separate report regarding this visit is attached as Appendix 2.

Preparation with other organisations

From April 2004 weekly meetings between Café K, Jack Kane Community Centre, The Capacity Building Project and the Craigmillar European Project commenced. These meetings focused around the exchange and in particular the organisation of the activity programme. These meetings were also open to young people from the host group and when they were unable to attend Café K staff fed back information to the group at group work sessions or on some occasions the meetings were held during this time so that all the young people could be involved.

These meetings were beneficial to finalise organisational matters for the exchange as well as creating an effective way to involve the wider community for example providing articles for the local newspaper the Craigmillar Chronicle as well as on a more national level i.e. The Evening News and Scotsman.

C) The Practical Organisation

Through the involvement of other local organisations various support was provided throughout the project. The Jack Kane Community Centre and the Capacity Building Project provided transport throughout the exchange, this was made easier as the partner group also had their own transport as they travelled to Edinburgh by bus. Also the Jack Kane Community Centre provided the link for accommodation for the exchange where we were able to have the use of a Miners Rehabilitation Centre located in Gullane for the duration of the exchange. Through the support of these local agencies additional supports from local politicians was also gathered.

Letters of support for the exchange are attached as Appendix 3

Throughout the exchange the main language used was English. This was mainly due to the fact that no one in the host group could speak Polish however some of the staff and young people from the partner group could speak English. However at times the young people from the host group would attempt to speak Polish through the aid of phrase books and some of the Polish young people and staff would encourage them to speak the language and would often act as a translator for the group.

Involvement of young people

Group Selection:

The young people were involved in all aspects of the exchange project. Originally the exchange group started off with 5 young people who were eager to be involved in an educational and focused piece of group work with Café K and the Jack Kane Centre. From this the idea of being a host group for an exchange visit from young people in Poland was presented to the group and they were all very enthusiastic about the project and eager to take it forward. The young people's next step was to recruit a larger group who wanted to be involved in the project. In doing so the young people felt that it was important to recruit young people who were dedicated and committed to the project from start to finish. Therefore they put together a poster highlighting what they felt made a good group member and invited young people who wanted to be involved in a focused and educational piece of group work along to a meeting for an informal chat, at this point there was no mention of the exchange. From this the young people asked those who showed an interest a few questions around working within groups and at the end of this they let everyone who had showed an interest know about the exchange. Through this process a group of young people were established to take the project forward.

Preparation:

After the group was established the group arranged to meet every Tuesday evening until the end of the project. During this time the group concentrated on the organisation and preparation of the exchange whilst exploring the cultural differences. In doing so they built up

communication links with the partner group via e-mail and also through the preparation and participation in the pre planning visit to OHP in Zamosc that was attended by ten members of the group. This was an essential part of the preparation as this created the opportunity for both groups of young people to jointly prepare for the exchange whilst taking into account everyone's needs. This was also an opportunity for the young people to develop relationships with one another and to involve themselves in intercultural learning experiences.

Realisation

Throughout the whole exchange process, (planning, implementation and evaluation), staff from both the host and partner group supported the young people as required i.e. organisational matters and language difficulties. However, the young people were actively involved in all aspects of the exchange and support when needed was on hand for matters such as budgets for activities etc.

Follow up/Evaluation

The follow up for the exchange will take place by both the host and the partner group. The young people, from the host group, decided in what way they wanted to share with the wider community their experiences and issues that have arisen through their involvement in this exchange. To date the group have had a range of articles in both the local newspaper and newsletters around this. Also throughout the exchange the staff team supported the young people to identify innovative methods to evaluate each activity and the exchange as a whole both with themselves and with the partner group. Half way through the exchange an evaluation was carried out to see how the project was going and if both groups felt that any changes should be implemented to the project and in particular the exchange programme. After the exchange visit a dedicated evening of evaluation was implemented with the host group to evaluate the full exchange process. In order to be effective a variety of methods were used for evaluation these included photographs from the exchange, arts materials (the young people could draw a picture etc to highlight their experience) and a variety of topic headings such as staff, group work sessions etc where the young people could anonymously put down any comments that they had. This created a safe environment for young people to share their thoughts and experiences regarding the exchange project and to discuss the future of the group.

Adaptation of Programme:

The young people were actively involved in the organisation and preparation of the exchange programme. Therefore activities that met the young people's expectations were included into the programme and at suitable times so that they could all participate. However through outside commitments such as work and school not all the young people could participate in every activity though this was taken into account whilst devising the programme. Through preparation work with the group, young people's skills and expertise became more apparent to the wider group. This resulted in one of the young people co-ordinating a sports tournament for the exchange with the aid of other young people from the host group.

Young people's comments regarding their involvement in the project included:

- 'Feel included – get to know how much money we've got and get to say how it should be spent'
- 'Good doing the sports tournament – was a bit stressful at times but got to do something I really enjoy'
- 'Would never have got the chance to meet people from another country and be involved in something like this if it wasn't for Café K and the Jack Kane'.
- 'Leant loads – especially that you shouldn't be afraid to try new things'
- 'Feel respected – people ask my opinion and listen to my ideas'.

The Achievements

Objectives:

The following details the objectives for the exchange project as well as highlighting how these objectives were reached:

- To enable a group of young people from a socially deprived area to reflect and play an active role within their own community and culture.
- *Through the young people's own personal experiences they were able to compare and reflect upon their own community and culture as individuals, as a group and within their wider community. This was particularly encouraged through the youth participation*

workshop implemented during the exchange programme. This created the environment for young people to raise their awareness of living in an European context as well as creating a personal and social educational process for them that contributed towards their personal development.

- To promote the friendship and understanding between the young people of Poland and Scotland through personal contact and cultural exchange.
- *Through a variety of educational and outdoor activities the young people developed effective communication and team building skills. This was achieved through active participation in activities for example the sports tournament where teams consisted of both Scottish and polish young people. This enabled the young people to develop and sustain friendships with one another and enhance their personal contact and understanding of each other and their cultures.*
- To promote and develop public knowledge and information in regards to social exclusion around these two countries.
- *Through educational opportunities and informal learning settings the young people discussed and compared their experiences of social exclusion both at a micro and macro level. The young people from the host group during the evaluation process identified ways to use this information and present it to the wider community for example articles in the local newspaper.*

Overall the whole exchange project contributed immensely to the young people who actively participated personal development. Through their involvement the young people benefited from a range of new and educational experiences. This in turn developed the young people's skills particularly in relation to the preparation of the exchange where a vast amount of organisation, communication and compromising skills were developed by the group.

The impact at local level

Involvement of the local community:

Through the participation of the young people in this exchange project the local community was involved in a direct way as the young people are all an important part of the community. Therefore all the experiences

that the young people gained from their role as a host group in this exchange project were directly fed back. Also the wider community was informed of the project as the young people wrote articles about the project for the local community newspaper. Other young people who attend Café K were also involved as during the activity programme the group visited Café K and the Jack Kane. Here they participated in various leisure and recreational activities and were able to meet other young people who use the centre. Also members of the Older People's Forum in the Greater Craigmillar area were also involved. This was through presenting awards at the sports tournament and joining the group on some of the exchange activities i.e. visit to Lord Provost and the end of visit reception.

Who will benefit from this exchange:

Although not all the young people who use Café K and the Jack Kane Centre were directly involved in all aspects of the exchange project they all benefited in a direct way. All the experiences of the host group have been welcomed into Café K and the Jack Kane Centre with the sharing of information and young people contributing their experiences into the project. Also through the personal development of the young people who participated, they now have a developed and informed understanding and awareness of intercultural learning. This has become apparent in the young people's attitudes and behaviour which in turn has had an effect on other young people that they are in contact with within their environment.

G) Intercultural dimension

Participants from the exchange programme became aware of the 'European Reality' and the process of European Integration at the start of the exchange. This was mainly due to the fact that Poland was waiting to join the E.U. This therefore created the opportunity for workers from both groups to explore and discuss with all the young people what this meant for Poland, Scotland and the wider world. This was again followed up during the youth participation workshop on a more local level directed at young people and young people's dreams, issues and aspirations for themselves, and their local and European community.

In general, throughout the exchange, varying degrees of the intercultural dimensions of the project became apparent. In regards to the young people many of them felt that they were very similar in regards to their hopes, dreams and issues as young people whilst comparing and

contrasting the differences between living in a European and pre-European union society. This was made more apparent through the pre planning visit to Zamosc and thus created the background for both groups of young people to analyse and discuss the social and economic factors in both countries in relation to youth issues i.e. un/employment, education, poverty and so on. For workers of the exchange project

H) Follow-up and evaluation

Evaluation during the exchange

Many different methods of evaluation will be used before, during and after the exchange, these include:

- Daily and weekly (in regards to group work sessions) evaluations in the form of evaluation sheets which will be completed by all the young people. Through this the young people will be able to clearly express their thoughts and their experiences and will be particularly useful for joint activities.
- Two meetings for joint evaluations between both groups, one whilst in Edinburgh and the other whilst visiting places within Scotland. Here the young people will be able to share their experiences and discuss any issues that may have arisen. This will also be an opportunity for both groups of accompanying youth workers to discuss the programme also and any issues that may have arisen.
- Paper based diaries will be given to all those involved in this exchange. Thus providing everyone with the opportunity to record their feelings, thoughts etc regarding their experience at any time either individually or shared with the group(s).
- The host group will also use a video camera throughout the exchange as a way of recording all the activities as well as all the groups' experiences for both themselves and the partner group.

Evaluation after the project is finished

One week after the exchange has finished there will be a whole evening dedicated to evaluating the exchange for the young people involved in the host group. During this evening there will be time to review the entire experience from the preparation to the actual exchange and to complete a final recording of all experiences through summarising the evaluations throughout the exchange and to give each other feedback.

How to follow up this youth exchange

The direct follow-up for the host group will be their continuous involvement in the Café K project as well as the development of any individual or group work that has arisen from the young people through their involvement in the exchange. The follow-up in terms of the partner group needs further discussion however it is anticipated that there will be continuous contact between both groups and possibly a follow up exchange next year with the young people from Edinburgh visiting Poland.