

The Blaze City Project

1st Quater Report 2024

PACE UK (ProActive Community Endeavours) & The Blaze City Project

*Report presented by: Zach Weaver- Youth Engagement & Development Lead
Report No. 5*

Hello all,

I trust you are doing well.

We are sticking to what we said and are still sending out our reports. However, we have taken the decision to make these quarterly reports so that we can get as much information in as possible. So therefore the reports will be slightly longer but indeed less frequent.

Our team have continued to work hard as always, there are loads of exciting things I want to tell you about! It is amazing that we are only in the first half of the year still and we have seen amazing results already.

Schools Work:

We have continued the school provision at Limehurst Academy in Loughborough once a week. We deliver a couple of one-on-one sessions with some students and also a bigger group session. The group session concluded just a few weeks ago. Meaning the students completed our 'Becoming An Overcomer' series. We gave them all certificates, booklets and of course some goodies to say that we are proud of how far they have come. We are launching a second group after the half term and also will continue with the one-on-one sessions. In our second group, we are launching a space for the young people to take part in a 'in-school podcast' where they plan it, set it up, record it and edit it themselves. This was something we launched because we wanted the young people to develop their creativity and be given the chance do something new.

Just last month, (26th February) we delivered an assembly to over 130 Year 9 students on Knife Crime and the laws around it etc. We had the chance to share all about local stats, information and also the opportunity to share what an offensive weapon is. We also gave every student one of our "Lets talk" leaflets on knife crime.



The new podcast session in school with some students.

National Schools Work:

In March 2024, we (The Blaze City Project) were invited to be involved in a schools week up in Hartlepool, the North East. We were part of a team that delivered a “No More Knives Tour”. Over 3 days the team went into 3 different high schools in the area, where we took a band in from Manchester. We saw every year group from Year 7 all the way through to Year 11. Each day we delivered a high energy, multimedia, engaging lesson to each year group. Combining music with powerful stories and teaching, we deliver lessons and assemblies that equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to say no to knives and start to discover their full value and identity. All of this was done in partnership with the local police, local authorities and an organisation called The Message Trust. All of which brought a measure of funding.

Then at the end of that week we took on a local venue and staged a big concert with the bands and again promoted the positive message of change. Over the week we reached over 3,500 young people. With over 250 of those coming to the concert at the end of the week. At the concert, it was amazing hearing over 250 young people singing “Lay your knife down” and actively showing that they wanted to make positive changes.



*Mr Gibbon-Hayes
“This is the best visual presentation I have witnessed in my time of teaching, such a powerful topic delivered in a relevant way to our pupils”. (A quote from a teacher at a school)*

Zach Weaver (me) representing The Blaze City Project on the tour.

The blaze city project was invited to be a major part of this week because of our expertise. It has always been apart of our heart to stage a similar week in Charnwood in the autumn this year. It will cost in the region of 10 - 12 thousand pounds. Of course funding will be a salient issue, but to reach so many young people with such positive messages, in such a contemporary way is completely worth it - especially when you consider that it would be less than £4.00 a head.

Thursday Youth:

Our regular Thursday youth sessions are still growing and indeed are still thriving. We have more and more opportunities to connect with young people all the time, but also to be able to help them grow and develop in their own personal lives is wonderful. Again, we are trying to help them realise that they can make positive changes even at a young age. Our current demographic is extensive, we have young people from the challenged estates in Loughborough, we have young people from the schools work we have done, we have young people attend from Barrow, Shepshed, Anstey and from other surrounding villages of Loughborough.

Every week we are engaging with new young people on our Thursday night sessions. We are now hitting an average attendance of 45 each week. We still feed every young person with a two course hot meal. We also work with them and have asked what things they want to do. Some of the things we have managed to do are, a movie night, just dance, more sports games, more time to create a band and so much more. However its not all just material things that we have provided... We started a suggestions & questions box which is totally anonymous. Off the back of this we are now producing an all new interactive video series that explores some real life hard hitting topics. This is called "Lets Be Real..." We have also worked with some industry professionals when writing the course to help us support the young people in the best way we can. Some of the topics we are covering include; Bullying, FOMO, Emotions, Social media, Influences amongst others.



*Some young people enjoying
Just Dance on a Thursday*



*Our very popular 'night at the
movies' session*

National Equipping & Partnerships:

Over the last quarter, one of the other things that has happened is that our team have been involved with helping to equip other youth groups with resources and support for growing their groups. We form a partnership with a project, team or group and help them with ideas and one of our team will visit them or zoom call them and discuss some helpful steps for their area. Our bank of professional, high quality resources are also made available with all the teaching notes and content needed. This help can be as small as sending our videos, or as big as helping create a development plans for them to reach young people. We also support by helping to supply these groups with some of our high end equipment such as football cages, music equipment etc.

We also are continuing to grow our junior leadership programme, where a select few junior leaders who have a passion for helping young people, get actively involved with our project. We not only strive to help them develop their skills when it comes to youth work, but also we want to help them develop some real life skills such as domestic skills, money management, interview skills, media skills amongst other things. It really is an amazing thing seeing them growing through the tasks that they are set but also seeing them take more and more responsibility across The Blaze City Project.



Some of our junior leaders helping to serve the young people on a Thursday evening.

ENERGIZE:

On the 15th March 2024, we held our second indoor festival style gig for young people aged 11 - 17, which we call ENERGIZE... And what a success it really was! After our first one in November 2023, nearly every week I would receive countless messages from parents, young people, school officials/workers, local authorities and others asking me when our next ENERGIZE event would be. As expected when we released the date for ENERGIZE 2.0 there was a real buzz around it through the various areas of the project. We invited a international rapper called Vonte Grace to come and head line, and the young people loved it!

In attendance on the evening we had over 120 young people, along with a volunteering team of over 40 people. These events are a huge and costly operation and I have to say our team truly did amazingly. These young people all came from the estates, the schools, the youth groups and there was also a lot of young people we had never even met before who wanted to come because they heard how good our first event was. Then on the following day, we ran a youth 'hang out event' with the artist and of course there had to be pizza. We invited all the young people to that and had over 25 in attendance which we were delighted about as it was a Saturday afternoon.

A few quotes from the evening:

"For the past 3 weeks all my kids have talked about is how amazing the ENERGIZE event was, they are so excited for the third one! They also have said that their mates really missed out on an amazing evening. The Blaze City Project team did amazing at hosting the event but also keeping the young people safe. Well done all!" (A Parent of a young person)

"That was so awesome! Vonte was sick!!! I am definitely coming to all the others!!" (A Young person who attended)

"The event was put together amazingly, Zach and the team did great. It was a privilege to be involved with the night. We need to do these type of positive events more frequently across the Borough!" (Aaron Todd, Leicestershire Cares)

"I love being part of The Blaze City team, I feel as if I'm learning, growing and getting even more confident with engaging with young people! 2024 is going to be a great year for us as a project." (Ruby, A Junior Leader)



A few photos from the evening, for the full highlights video head to our socials @blazecity_project_

FLAME (our estate work):

Our FLAME outreach work is still continuing, however it is indeed looking a little bit different. We are still heading to the Lewis Road estate regularly and engaging with young people there. However things look a bit different, rather than spending hours and hours there weekly when the young people don't want to engage, we are also heading down to check up on them and chat to them if they want to. But we are not forcing conversations or awkwardly spending hours there. We have been looking at other things we can do to engage with more people, and have sought council and advice on the matter and have come to a new solution to engage with young people, which I explain in the very next section.

Content Creation and New Out Reach:

As of April 2024, we are launching a brand new out reach scheme we are excited for in partnership with Leicestershire Cares. Here, at The Blaze City Project if you haven't worked out already, we love helping young people to be creative and we love promoting creativity and positive change. On the first and third Tuesday of every month we are running a "Content Creators" group here at The NSC Arena. But what is it? Well it is a group which encourages various skills like videography, photography, graphic design, music production, podcasting and so much more. It allows young people to not only explore career paths they may never have heard of but also allows them to have their own voice. Through these session we will do podcast projects, video projects, music projects, but ultimately it is up to the young people to decide what it is that they want to do. We will also work with some industry professionals to deliver these sessions to the young people. In a world where social media and digital development is massive, I personally feel that this is a great way for young people to have a voice in society but also to support them to make positive life style changes. I believe this will help with mental health, loneliness, transferable and social skills and also I believe this will help young people connect with other creatively.



We are genuinely excited about this, my contact details are below please get in touch so we can chat about the project, and also if you think you can help us in anyway.

Another exciting adventure is that on the first Saturday of every month (starting on the 13th April 2024) we are aiming to head to the town centre and connect with the young people who are out and about. The goal of this is not only to connect with young people who are out in the town but then also help them connect to the other things we have got going on. It would be amazing for us to be able to use our equipment in the town centre with young people one Saturday a month. For example taking our football cage out, or partnering with an interactive bus and just being available to connect with different young people for a couple of hours in town. Maybe there are some of you who can help us connect with the right people to find us spaces in town to use etc. We ultimately want to help young people have the power to change.

To Conclude and Looking forward:

We are still in the early months of the year, and also the early months of the project. It's only this month that we will officially be 6 months old as The Blaze City Project. As I'm sat reflecting on 2024 so far, we have reached over 5,300 young people already across the country, and we are only just in April! It is truly mind blowing when I look back at what we have achieved in just a short period of time. We have some amazing plans for the rest of 2024, which I can't wait to share with you in due course. However, what is being achieved is significant and is indeed making a difference.

If you have missed any of our monthly reports you can find them on our newly developed website. If you follow the link and then head to the "Resources" page and then to "Monthly Reports" it will allow you to access all of our previous ones. Our website link is: www.blazecityproject.com

If you want to get in contact with me for any reason at all, my number is [07961639247](tel:07961639247) and my email is zach@paceuk.org.uk

Once again, thank you for supporting us and giving us your time. I look forward to speaking to you after the next quarter.

Look after yourself and we will speak soon I'm sure of it.

All the best,

Zach Weaver

PACE Youth Engagement & Development Lead

The NSC Arena, Loughborough

