

The Blaze City Project

September 2023 Report

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

Report presented by: Zach Weaver - Youth Engagement & Development Lead

Hello,

I have the pleasure of presenting you with the first monthly report from the youth department from PACE.

I would like to begin by saying a huge thank you. We passionately believe that you, the councillors, do amazing work around Charnwood and further afield. It is greatly appreciated, so on behalf of PACE and The Blaze City Project, Thank you!

It has been a busy few months in regards to the FLAME project (FLAME is the work we do on local estates). I wanted to write to you, as I said I would, to keep you updated with what is going on with the project and as we move forward.

The Background:

In July 2023, I attended a meeting hosted by the local police about community involvement in the area. Having just been appointed as the Youth Engagement & Development Lead at PACE, at this meeting I spoke with Inspector David Stokes in regards to the issues of anti-social behaviour in young people on local estates in Charnwood. I informed him of The Blaze City Project and our willingness to help in the area of youth on the estates. I suggested that we would have a meeting and discuss things further. At the time he seemed keen, however, I have tried to contact him on numerous occasions to firm up a meeting, and he hasn't contacted me back in any way since the first meeting.

At the beginning of August 2023, the CEO of PACE, our Charity Manager and myself, had a meeting with Councillor Sandie Forrest to discuss us potentially working with young people in the areas of Charnwood in greater need. This meeting was organised to help us discover some of the local issues and to explore what provision is already being provided for the young people in Loughborough. We spoke about how PACE could help and what we would like to deliver. Off the back of this meeting, we concluded it would be a good thing to meet with all the councillors in the area to discuss things further concerning the town's youth situation. A breakfast meeting was arranged for Saturday 9th September.

Obviously, I have spent significant time in and around the estates that Councillor Forrest highlighted. For example, the Bell Foundry estate, Warwick Way, Shelthorpe and Southfields Park. This was to gather some information about what was happening on the estates.



Hot chocolates being given out on Lewis Road

The Councillors breakfast meeting (September 9th):

The meeting was held at The NSC ARENA on Belton Road West, where PACE is based. Invitations went to all the Charnwood Councillors of all parties, along with a number of community workers. In total there were 8 councillors / community workers and 4 representatives. Those present were: Sandie Forest (Labour), Betty Newton (Labour), Claire Forrest (Labour), Birgitta Worrall (Labour), Anne Gray (Labour), Jenni Tillotson (Labour), Liz Blackshaw (Labour) and Lorna Hughes (Marios Tinenti Centre and Altogether Place).

After the full breakfast was enjoyed by all, we presented The Blaze City Project vision and opened the meeting up for discussion which was very productive. We presented 4 specific booklets, that I designed and had professionally printed on 4 key subjects, Knife crime, Anti-social behaviour, Mental Health Awareness & Substance Misuse.

It seemed to us that the meeting suggested that the FLAME estate work should commence on the Lewis Road estate. And then later into Lodge Farm and the Bell Foundry area.

At that meeting I was also able to show those present around the amazing facility that the NSC ARENA is. We are grateful for each councillor / community worker that took the time to be with us on that morning.

Follow-up Meeting:

Following this meeting, the CEO of PACE and I met with Councillor Forrest on 15th September to get some feedback from the meeting and to discuss a timeline and a way forward where Lewis Road was concerned. I would like to thank Councillor Forrest, in particular, for the tremendous help and support she has offered.

On September 18th, I met with Lorna and Rebecca at the ATP (All Together Place) on the Warwick Way estate, to discuss launching the sessions in the Lewis Road area. We discussed what paperwork is potentially needed and some of the logistics in regards to what we would deliver. Again, this was a productive meeting.

On 22nd September, I met with Councillor Forrest who agreed to walk around the Lewis Road area to explore the areas where we could deliver support in, and how we could further work together in the project. This was a particularly useful time.



The first session on the Lewis Road estate

Meeting with Leicestershire Cares:

On Monday 25th September, I met with 2 representatives of 'Leicestershire cares', an organisation based in Leicester who help and support other charities in delivering their projects. I met with Neetu and Aaron and shared the project and what we were planning to do. This was received enthusiastically and agreed that Aaron would join me and my team on Tuesday nights to support and assist us with engaging with young people.

The first FLAME session took place on Lewis Road at the end of September. We were able to engage with 26 young people in and around the park, also taking hot chocolate, snacks and equipment. They received us well and good connections were made. It would seem the young people's biggest request was to have their own personal shelter by which they can 'hang out' in. I am pleased to report that there were no issues or problems throughout the session. In fact, we found the young people welcoming and respectful.

This has become a weekly thing, so every Tuesday we will be out there with the young people. We are also investigating how we can help them with getting jobs and work experience, voluntary work etc. We ultimately want to help them have a better quality of life and show them that they can get out of the life they live.



Some of our young people eating together on a Thursday

In Conclusion:

It has been an exciting couple of months, I am truly delighted to be able to say that we have officially launched our FLAME project and have already had an impact on some young people.

We are working towards an indoor festival style gig on a Saturday night at the end of November, where we are going to invite all the young people we engage with to make greater connections and have greater impact.

We continue to run our Thursday evening youth sessions at the NSC ARENA, there is anything between 25 and 35 young people in attendance. We feed them a hot meal and they do various activities. We are also able to share some life skills and personal social matters with them.

I will send out a monthly report similar to this on a monthly basis to keep you informed with what we are doing. It is a real privilege for me as I lead the Blaze City Project to work in partnership with some of the councillors and estate workers.

Thank you for taking the time to read September's report, and thank you also for your continued support with the project,

Kind regards,

Zach Weaver
PACE Youth Engagement & Development Lead

