

**We are here  
for young people  
*whatever it takes***

## COVID-19

### IMPACT REPORT 2020



**SOMEWHERE TO GO...  
SOMETHING TO DO...  
SOMEONE TO TALK TO...**



PART OF THE **SLIDE** NETWORK

# BLACKBURN YOUTH ZONE

# 2020

# COVID-19 IMPACT REPORT

When the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis hit in March 2020 Blackburn Youth Zone adapted quickly to ensure that we were continuing to meet the needs of the children and young people of Blackburn with Darwen with us having an average of **931** attendances a week throughout the crisis.

Although these are such unprecedented times, the irony of COVID-19 is a hugely increased demand for our services and young people needing us now more than ever. Our youth workers have been reporting on average 8 safeguarding concerns a week – double the norm. Of these, mental health concerns have nearly doubled (30% vs 17% pre-crisis). Domestic violence concerns have tripled, from 5% to 15%. Increased numbers of self-harm, physical abuse, CSE and domestic violence concerns have also been reported.

In May, 344 young people took part in an online consultation showing 67% had struggled through the crisis and asked for support from BYZ, specifically with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. 93% told us they had greatly missed the face to face support they would normally receive from BYZ, with 58% describing feeling lonely. 31% shared that their family was struggling for money due to COVID-19 redundancies and job losses. 76% were worried that loved ones might die from COVID-19.





# A snapshot of the difference we have made:

Over the last 3 months we have:

## Health & Wellbeing

We spoke to 354 young people, through consultations, 67% of young people stated they had struggled through the crisis and had benefited from the support BYZ has provided them with.

During the crisis we cooked 8520 healthy wholesome meals and worked collaboratively with partners to support the distribution of 10,520 meals to members of the community.

We have provided 2,476 welfare calls to our most vulnerable young people.

12 of our most vulnerable young people have received 121 digital mentoring sessions each week delivered by volunteers.

We have provided 150 members with personal care products such as toilet roll and sanitary products.

## Skills & Aspirations

Supported 903 young people through targeted youth support via our 'Internet Youth Club' and our 'Youth Zone at Home' programme on social media.

115 young people have benefited from a range of different employability opportunities providing them with vital skills and techniques.

30 local businesses came together to share their COVID-19 preparations via the BYZ Patron virtual breakfast series. Over two events in March and June, business leaders discussed their concerns and shared learnings about furlough, health and safety and business continuity. In the first session we heard from our Chairman Rt Hon Jack Straw and our Treasurer David Gorton, Partner of PM+M. Whilst the next event was hosted by Hannah Allen BYZ CEO with guest speakers Michelle Mellor MD from Cummins Mellor and Fiona Eason, former People & Culture Director from Crown Paints, with legal support from Emma Swan from Forbes Solicitors.

## Social Integration

We celebrated cohesion and social integration by bringing 70 members from across the community together to celebrate the boroughs first online community Iftar. The initiative was supported by up to 30 volunteers from BYZ's patron network including BAE Systems, Canopies UK, Granby Marketing, Graham & Brown and PM+M.



## We have worked towards supporting the following priorities of the Blackburn with Darwen Adolescents Strategy

### KEEPING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE IN THE HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

***'There are over one million young people with known needs that have been amplified by the pandemic and an estimated two million young people with emerging needs triggered by COVID-19'***

*National Youth Association, 2020*

- As the crisis hit we were ready to launch our 'Youth Zone at Home' programme. An innovative programme of online engagement, enabling young people to virtually access leisure, creative, informal education and support. Each week on average 555 young people have engaged with the programme with us leaving an impression on 50,000 people a week across all social media channels.
- Throughout the crisis we have continued to be committed towards safeguarding children and young people. Our Youth workers have reported an average of 8 safeguarding concerns a week- double the norm.

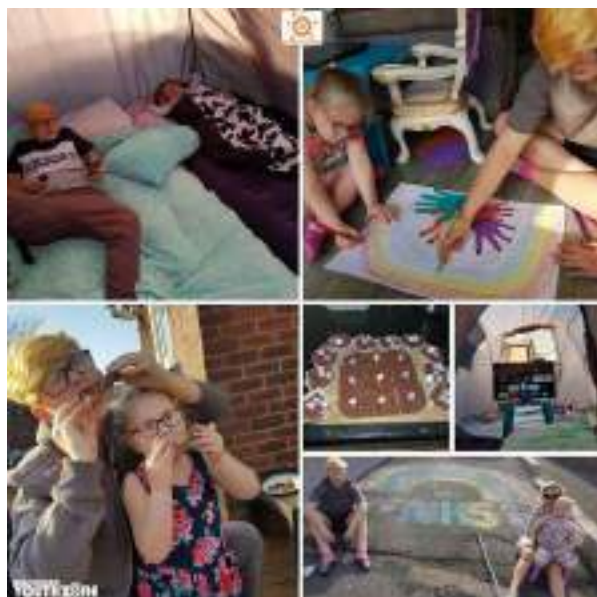
***'Where the loss of youth services is pronounced, vulnerable young people in particular are falling prey to loneliness, poor mental health and fear of youth violence'***

*(Blackburn with Darwen Council Adolescent Strategy 2019/2023)*

- Throughout the crisis we have provided 386 hours of youth work to support our members of which 40% are BAME, 14% have a declared additional need(s) and 1/3 live in the most deprived areas in Blackburn.
- In addition to this throughout the lockdown period we have created and shared 60 leisure, creative and informal education activity videos shared through our digital platforms.
- Our internet youth club that runs 7 days a week has engaged 303 individuals with targeted and skills support

including a virtual health and wellbeing salon, Brook Sexual Health drop ins, Go2 drug and alcohol advice, The Wish centre domestic abuse awareness, 18+ careers advice, Juniors Minecraft sessions, Fab Lab sessions with the making rooms and the arts award in partnership with Lancashire BME.

- We have run a number of online gaming competitions designed to provide a safe, engaging and young person focused gaming experience whilst connecting young people. 21 young people have taken part competing with young people from other youth zones. 100% of them stated the platform gave them a space where they could positively connect with other young people and 100% agreed it was a great way of socialising and making new friends during the lockdown.



**Unicef found that 57% of parents say their child has experienced mental health challenges during the lockdown** (Unicef, 2020)

- Each week we have provided welfare calls to our most vulnerable members. In total the team have made 2476 calls, supporting young people with mental health challenges, emotional wellbeing and helping mitigate the difficulties of loneliness/isolation.
- We have supported 12 young people with crucial weekly 1-2-1 online mentoring sessions delivered by volunteers.



## CASE STUDY

Ben has been a member at Blackburn Youth Zone for 4 years. When at the Youth Zone Ben particularly enjoys taking part in activities such as Art, Digital, Coding and photography. When reaching Key stage 4 at school Ben, like a lot of young people, was confused and felt pressure from home, school and society to decide on his next steps. With a number of options in mind including art and design, gaming and engineering. After attending a number of open days, careers events and BYZ employability sessions Ben made the decision to study Engineering at Burnley College.

Ben wanted to inspire younger BYZ members to engage more with Arts, Digital and STEM so he became a young leader at BYZ. When the Covid-19 crisis hit and our offer moved to a 'virtual youth zone' Ben was keen to continue his work as a young leader and continue to support younger members during a time when they needed it the most.

In his own time Ben used his initiative and skills to create a 'virtual Youth Zone' on minecraft ensuring young people's continued access to activities, keeping them connected with youth workers and engaged with our Arts, Digital and STEM provision, through a new, digital, 'virtual' Youth Zone, where themed activities take place.

Ben's Minecraft Youth Zone is now being used across the country as an example of how Youth Work can continue during the lockdown period.



Ben said: "The opportunities that Blackburn Youth Zone have given me not only taught me a range of new skills, it gave me the confidence to do new things and push myself out of my comfort zone. It also opened my eyes to other opportunities out there. I recently applied for a youth work position at the youth zone and have been successful in securing this for the summer."



Prior to the onset of COVID-19 child poverty in the borough was 39.5%, significantly worse than the national average of 27%. The impact of child poverty can lead to poor physical and mental health, poor dental and optical care, and a poor diet, with 22.2% of children aged 10-11 years in the borough classified as obese before the pandemic. With the school closures and lockdown restrictions children are likely to be less physically active, have poor diets, longer screen time and disrupted sleep patterns which can all lead to increase in obesity.

**Since the lockdown started the lack of access to food is one of the top 3 main concerns of young people during this time** (Young Minds Survey, 2020).

- Blackburn Youth Zone launched its food offer on the first day of the lockdown, providing healthy, cooked meals to young people and their families every day throughout the crisis. In total we have supported the distribution of 10,520 meals to members of the community in need during the crisis.

Thank you to all patrons, partners, supporters and local businesses who donated food to support our covid-19 efforts. It would not have been possible to support this many people in the community without you.



***'Partners from across Blackburn with Darwen will work together to strengthen relationships between people from different backgrounds, to help the borough become a place where diversity is valued, and where people's faith and cultures are understood and respected'***

*(Blackburn with Darwen Our Community Our Future Strategy, 2019)*

- During Ramadan we ran the boroughs first ever online Iftar where over 70 people from different backgrounds came together to share an Iftar video call in an ambitious project led by Blackburn Youth Zone and supported by the BwD Strategic Youth Alliance. The Big Iftar event, on the evening of Thursday 21 May, was arranged with the help of the Youth Ambassadors and Community Ambassadors, both projects delivered through the Our Community, Our Future social integration programme.
- We have taken an active leadership role in the Strategic Youth Alliance, we developed a digital programme ensuring all young people in the borough had somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to during the crisis
- We worked with partners across the Borough through the Crisis Food Response Team supporting the Food Bank and providing meals daily to those in need.
- We have run a number of consultations for Public Health, Blackburn with Darwen Social Integration Team and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) gathering vital information on how the coronavirus has impacted young people.

**Rebecca Ramsay, Our Community, Our Future programme manager said...**

*"It was wonderful to see so many people sharing a meal together in this new way. The current lockdown is a difficult time for so many people, but we've shown that as a community we can still come together, and support one another".*

## Reduce the number of children & young people in care

***'Nationally we have seen increasing concerns around mental and physical health, online grooming and radicalisation, a rise in domestic abuse and emotional abuse against children, as well as concerns around the widening socioeconomic gap due to unemployment, poverty and disparities in access to education and digital connectivity.'***

*(National Youth Association, 2020)*

- We support on average 170 young people a year at risk of entering the care system through safeguarding, mentoring, targeted provision and universal provision- Throughout the crisis we have supported 41 young people at risk of entering the care system through welfare calls, digital mentoring and internet youth club sessions.
- ***'For many young people - a positive youth work experience can set them on the path to success, overcoming challenges relating to self and/or family circumstances and supporting young people through times of trauma to make better life choices that help support young people's development and help families to stay together and be happier together'***  
*(Blackburn with Darwen Adolescent Strategy, 2019-2023).*
- Over the last 3 months we have run 12 family engagement sessions for young people with disabilities/additional needs including online games and activities, quizzes providing families with the opportunity to do quality meaningful activity together. Our support has been extended to parents who may also be finding lockdown difficult, helping families access relevant services to meet the increasing and ever changing difficulties which some of our families have endured throughout lockdown.



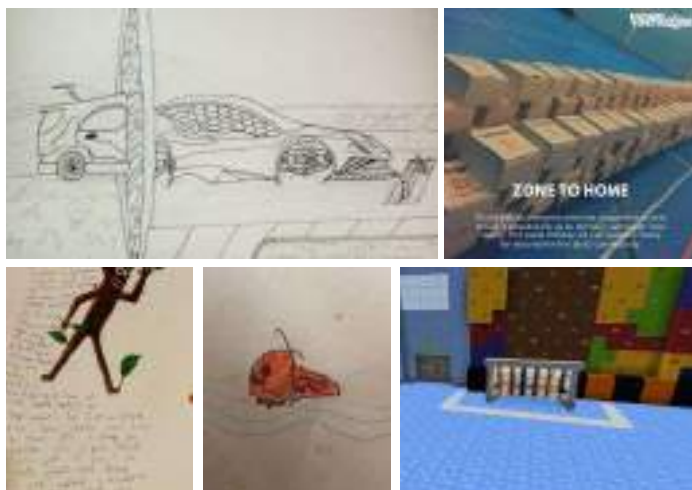
- Throughout the crisis we have also run 2 large campaigns - 'Zone to Home' and 'The Big Iftar' each of these provided 500 families with the ingredients and recipes to allow them to have fun together through cooking a meal.
- We have provided a positive youth work experience to 203 of our most vulnerable young people throughout the lockdown period, supporting them with difficulties they are facing.
- Throughout the crisis we have referred 20 young people to external services for early intervention.

## Reduce the number of children in the criminal/ youth justice system

***Research suggests that young people who perpetrate group-based offending and violent behaviour will often have been the victims of abuse or neglect. For example, where violence is a common occurrence in the home or wider community, such behaviour becomes normalised and this will have an impact on the likelihood that young people will perpetrate this behaviour*** *(Young et al, 2007)*

Blackburn with Darwen is assumed to have 465 'Troubled Families' all of which have children. Coordinated support on offer for these identified families will be reduced by the lockdown restrictions.

- Throughout the crisis the Blackburn Youth Zone building has been available to specialist services to support 'Key' children including through the Youth Offending Team and Adolescent Support Unit SEEDS (Support, Experience, Enjoy Develop, Succeed). 51 young people have benefited from receiving the specialist support they require being able to use our state of the art facilities during this time.
- As part of our 'Virtual Youth Zone' we have continued to run weekly boxing sessions through a digital platform. These sessions are designed to provide positive activity and engagement as a way of discouraging young people from criminal/risk taking behaviour, each week 18 young participate in these sessions.
- Once lockdown restrictions were lifted we ran 3x weekly detached sessions at Bangor Street, Mill Hill and Darwen. These engaged an average of 19 young people each night.



## Stop Children from becoming 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

**Bwd NEET rates for those aged 16-17 is at 6.1%, higher than the England average (Blackburn with Darwen Adolescent Strategy, 2019-2023).**

- > Over the last 3 months we have run a range of programmes designed for young people to gain skills and raise aspirations. In total these programmes have supported 62 young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.
- > Each week we have run an Internet Youth Club specifically designed for Blackburn Youth Zone members aged 18+ who require support with employability skills. 87% of participants stated that they have benefited from attending the sessions each week.
- > We partnered up with Lancashire BME to run the nationally recognised Arts award with 6 young people developing their knowledge on their selected artform as well as key employability skills such as communication, planning, problem solving and delivering to groups.
- > In June we launched our highly anticipated 'Gatsby Project' which brought together 8 local businesses and 11 schools to help raise young people's aspirations. The project sets to connect the local business community and young people, helping young people receive industry lead advice, knowledge and insight as they prepare for the next stages of education, traineeship or work through online masterclasses. The first session engaged 47 young people and the project will engage 250 young people throughout its delivery.

### Andrew Larking, Careers/Personal Development Lead Our Lady & St John Catholic College said:

*"Thank you for all the work you and the Youth Zone have put in this term, the masterclass programme has been excellent. Very well organised. One of the girls who attended regularly has just been awarded Head Girl."*

Would you like to get involved and support Blackburn Youth Zone? Contact us on 01245 292000 or email: [enquiries@blackburnyz.org](mailto:enquiries@blackburnyz.org) for more information

Charity No. 1135949

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Tel: **01254 292000**

PART OF THE **ON SITE** NETWORK

## EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

*(right time/ right place/ right young people)*

**Partnership working and multi-agency teams enable the borough to be innovative and responsive to the needs of our young people. The multi-agency teams already in place in the borough are achieving better outcomes for young people.** (BwD Adolescent Strategy, 2019-2023)

- > Blackburn Youth Zone has supported multi-agency teams in place within the borough by providing a safe space and positive activity to 51 young people with key workers throughout the crisis.
- > We have attended regular multi-agency Transforming Lives meetings that represent a thorough cross section of available services working across the entire life cycle of a person.

**There has been a shift in the nature of young people's vulnerabilities and the intensity of particular needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally we have seen increasing concerns around mental and physical health, online grooming and radicalisation, a rise in domestic abuse and emotional abuse against children, as well as concerns around the widening socioeconomic gap due to unemployment, poverty and disparities in access to education and digital connectivity** (National Youth Association, 2020)

- > We have supported 203 of our most vulnerable members with effective intervention throughout the crisis. This could include weekly wellbeing calls, digital mentoring, positive activity and providing meals.
- > We have made 20 referrals to specialist services to support young people with early intervention.

*The Strategic Youth Alliance Network is a collaboration of Blackburn with Darwen youth organisations from the public, voluntary and faith sectors. This collaborative approach will aim to reduce duplication, identify gaps in provision, and to work together to increase resources for young people in the borough* (BwD Adolescent Strategy, 2019-2023).

- > Blackburn Youth Zone has worked alongside the Strategic Youth Alliance (SYA) as well as Fare Share and Westholme School to ensure we were able to meet demand and have enough meals to go around. This approach allowed for a much more collaborative approach and avoided duplication.
- > BYZ is working collaboratively with the SYA as young people emerge from lockdown to ensure we deliver a coordinated approach delivering vital community-based youth work, engaging young people through positive/diversionary activities across the borough.





# YOUTH ZONE in Darwen

## Get Stuck In

This Summer Youth Zone has been running the 'Get Stuck In' programme in Darwen Town Centre. The project which was one of the only ones open to ages 8-12 year olds provided 40 spaces for young people to participate 4 days a week in positive activity and receive a healthy wholesome meal each day.

The programme was hugely over subscribed with 67 8-12 years requesting a place and 17 13-16 year olds reaching out to ask if they could take part.

Despite local restrictions/ measures membership retention throughout the summer has remained high with 65% of all participants who booked a place still attending the sessions every day. If young people have been unable to attend due to shielding the BYZ team have gone above and beyond to ensure that all young people still receive a meal and activity pack with access to an online digital programme.



Julian age 10 said

*"I found lockdown boring, I had nothing to do and it felt like the same day over and over. Every day I woke up it just felt the same and it would get me really down and I found it really hard. Coming to the Youth Zone Get Stuck In at Meeting Places really cheered me up, it is something new every day, the staff are so kind, funny and supportive. I have learnt new skills like internet safety, DJing and animation. My favourite thing has been making my own pizza for the very first time."*

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# YOUTH ZONE IN DARWEN THIS SUMMER

## Young Leaders

This summer we re-launched our young leaders programme expanding into Darwen with the support of Darwen Rotary Club. Young people completed a three stage training programme, boundaries, safeguarding and understanding young people. 7 young leaders have been supporting the Get Stuck In programme this summer they have all developed skills in team work, employability and planning.



## Partnerships

The Youth Zone has established partnerships with Meeting Places, Darwen Rotary Club and 'We are Noise' all of which are based within Darwen, these partnerships have supported creating a strong summer offer for the young people of Darwen.

## Detached Work

This summer we have delivered detached work weekly in Darwen, providing the opportunity for young people to participate in positive social distancing activities. These were really popular and attended by 66 young people, some of which were coming back each time.



Martin, Cofounder  
of We Are Noise said:

*"The working partnership has been fantastic, we expected the young people to enjoy the workshops but the feedback has been brilliant. They have all expressed a desire to continue with the musical activities and shown a keen interest in music technology, production, singing and performance. We have seen the benefit from the engagement with increased confidence in a relatively short space of time."*

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PART OF THE **SLIDE** NETWORK



# BLACKBURN YOUTH ZONE

## GET stuck IN

### SUMMARY

- **10,496** interactions with young people.
- **96%** of young people agree/strongly agree they are happy with our service.
- **656** individuals per day benefited.
- **89%** of young people feel 'happy'.

### ACTIVITIES

- Open **4 days a week** across 3 sites.
- **64 hours** of face-to-face delivery a week.
- **22 hours** of community outreach per week.
- **9** vocational accreditations available.
- **420** young people accessing on sight activity per week.
- **89%** of individuals have stated they have grown in confidence since attending HAF.

### MEALS & ACTIVITY PACKS

- **10,496** healthy meals provided.
- **5** days a week delivery service for families that can't attend the centre.
- **3120** activity packs delivered to young people who can't attend the centre.
- **82%** have young people stated they are satisfied with the activity packs they received.

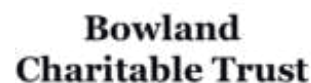
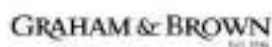
### DIGITAL

- **14** hours of digital activity a week over 6 days
- **87%** of young people said the online activity helped them connect with others.
- **100%** of young people said they felt safe while online with BYZ services.
- **78%** young people felt they learnt a new skill.





Thank you to all the local businesses and organisations whose support makes the Youth Zone possible



The **Senator** Group

