

Bristol Community Energy Fund case study:

Sea Mill Boys and Girls Club

About the group

Sea Mills Girls and Boys Club, part of The Young Bristol Community Clubs Network, were granted £930 to run an educational and creative project with young people, teaching them about energy efficiency. The project directly benefited 14 people, although many others benefit from the impacts of the project. Sea Mills is a suburb of Bristol, situated 6 km north-west of the city. It falls into the local authority area of Kingsweston, where 36% of children are income deprived.

About the project

Six sessions were organised for local young people, including a trip to GENeco, an award winning renewable and sustainable energy company. The first workshop was held during the summer holidays and was focused on learning about energy efficiency and renewable energy. Young people were given questionnaires so they could monitor their current energy consumption and habits. During the second session staff from Young Bristol Creative Programme worked with young people to create phrases, images and icons that could be used to produce posters about renewable energy.

Sea Mills Girls and Boys Club worked in partnership with GENeco, based in Avonmouth, to introduce young people to issues of sustainability and to learn how GENeco uses waste to create energy and how that is put back into the local community. A group of young people were taken to GENeco's site for the day, to learn specifics about the way in which the organisation works, attending a learning session and consulting with GENeco's staff.

The 4th session took place back in the community club, where graffiti artist, Nick Halahan helped young people to create their posters using the information they had gained from their trip to GENeco. In the following session young people completed their posters and also recapped on how their energy saving message could be taken out into the community. The young people planned their campaign, discussing the best way to get their message out to a wider audience. They decided that the posters they had created should stay within the community club setting, but that they would create a Facebook video, create badges that could be given to friends and flyers that could be posted through local residents letterboxes.

The final session was a practical session where young people made badges, designed and printed their flyers and filmed the Facebook video about energy use. They then spent time over the following weeks posting flyers through local residents doors and handing out badges to friends and family.

Energy efficiency can be quite a complex topic to explain. Time was needed to help young participants to understand how little actions, like turning off a light, could help reduce global climate change. It was also important to reiterate how climate change affects the world and how a collective response to this, through recycling, not using fossil fuels, wasting less water and looking at energy efficient alternatives to transport, can have an impact.

One participant who took part in the programme - 'Leon' is 18 years old and could be quite reclusive and shy. Leon was not overly confident and didn't have much knowledge of energy efficiency or climate change; he has never recycled and neither do his parents. Leon joined the programme to gain skills as a youth mentor for younger participants and to gain some creative skills. He was excellent at supporting the ideas of others and was active in the design of the posters. He assisted young people on the trip to GENeco, offering ideas and asking questions of staff. Leon was a fantastic group leader during the planning and designing of the marketing campaign about energy efficiency and has now made changes in his home to consume less water and to encourage his parents and neighbours to recycle.

Gemma Adams, of Young Bristol said:

“this grant has helped young people to better understand their impact on the environment and have more ideas out how they can save energy themselves and contribute towards sustainability and green principles. Young people learnt new creative skills during the process and also designed, planned and delivered a marketing campaign in their local community to better inform local residents of changes they can make to contribute towards better energy consumption”.

The funding also allowed Young Bristol to link together with business i.e. GENeco and the local community, with young people taking part in the project from the 4 surrounding villages - Shirehampton, Lawrence Weston, Sea Mills and Avonmouth, to work together on the project. The funding also allowed for two young people to become mentors to younger participants, encouraging them with their artwork and learning skills such as active listening, enthusiasm and a positive attitude and role model to younger participants.

Next steps

The work has continued past the life of the grant as GENeco have commissioned Young Bristol's Creative Programme and young people from local community clubs, to create 3 renewable energy themed artworks for their newly refurbished offices. Sea Mills Girls and Boys Club hope to continue running this project, potentially in other Young Bristol Community Clubs to help young people actively make better choices when it comes to sustainability and energy efficiency.

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