

Spotlight on...

Award winning project to reduce arson

What the need was and how we identified it

MAGIC is an award-winning project involving young people identified as being at risk of, or already involved in low level crime. A partnership between WYFRS, Con-Sequence (set up by ex-offender Arfan 'Naz' Naseer), West Yorkshire Police and Bradford Council, this 'no holds barred' initiative helps hard to reach, vulnerable young people make positive changes to their lives.

With permission from their families, 10-12 12-18-year olds volunteer to take part in a 9 week programme for 4 hours on a Saturday. This includes workshops on the Bradford Riots, knife crime, speeding and road traffic collisions, gun crime, citizenship, arson, car crime, extremism, anger management and drugs. There's also a gym session and a visit to a Police cell.

Throughout, they work with positive role models, including members of the Bradford Arson Taskforce, Firefighters Abid Qureshi, Ahsan Ali and Ronnie Goldwater, and crews from Bradford, Fairweather Green, and Shipley Stations. They've also worked with sportsmen from the Brendan Ingle Gym, and police officers – all of whom they know or recognise from their own communities. Guest speakers, such as

young people who've been in prison for car crime, and self-employed business people, explain the realities of setting up and running their own business.

What we did and the difference we made

Being involved in MAGIC has given WYFRS the opportunity to understand what these young people think about us and what we do. This has helped us tailor the fire and road safety advice we provide to meet their specific needs and concerns. We've played a direct role in helping them understand the impacts of antisocial fires, arson, speeding and making prank 999 calls. Consequently, they're made aware of the positive alternatives to getting involved in antisocial and criminal activities, and the choices available to them.

By working with members of staff, Graduates have developed more positive attitudes towards WYFRS staff at Bradford. The Project has also supported the young people in giving something back to the community, such as improving the local environment such as the grounds of local churches and Mosques.



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Outcomes

With support from Bradford MBC's West Area Committee, 5 MAGIC Projects have been delivered to date in Allerton, Heaton, Manningham, Thornton and Toller. Both Graduates and Partners have provided positive feedback on what MAGIC delivers. Graduates say they've gained independence, confidence and new life-skills, and understand how the emergency services make them, their families and communities safe. They understand that the consequences of their actions can be positive, especially on their families.

Some have become volunteers for local charities or returned to education. They act as ambassadors in schools and as role models on subsequent MAGIC courses. Others carry out voluntary work with the businesses involved in the project from the catering and retail sectors, to help them gain real-life experiences.

WYFRS has benefited as this project has contributed to a reduction in antisocial fires in the Fairweather Green area from 604 in 2009 to 559 in 2010. In addition, WYFRS is perceived by the other agencies involved as an equal partner, with a major role to play in making communities safer.

Building on these successes, more agencies have asked to get involved, including the Magistrates Service and the Army and it's hoped the Project will raise funds for the Firefighters charity and Help for Heroes. MAGIC Project 6, starting January 2012, will be aimed at girls from the community.

Keys to our success

- Delivering 'no holds barred', hard hitting messages.
- Focusing on the positive alternatives to anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- Members of staff building rapport with the young people in their station area and being seen as positive role models.
- All Partners adopting a collaborative approach to designing and delivering the project.
- Sharing resources, particularly premises.

Contact

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