

# CASE STUDY

Copenhagen Youth Project:

Long-Termed, Joined-Up

Approach



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Competence	2
Abstract/Introduction/Background	2
Key Words	3
Key Characters	4
The Case Study Story	5
Questions, Comments and Topics of Discussion	7

## Competence

Engage with Stakeholders.

This involves identifying stakeholders and developing and maintaining relationships with them.

## Abstract/Introduction/Background

Copenhagen Youth Project (CYP) started life as a youth club 19 years ago (2001). A youth club is a space where local children and young people (youths) can meet within a safe environment and where at least two youth workers are present to supervise their interactions and facilitate activities.

CYP is located within the London Borough of Islington, which is one of the 32 boroughs of London and it was often thought to be one of the most affluent boroughs within London. However, Islington was the 6th most deprived borough in London in 2019, in terms of income deprivation and high levels of childhood poverty.

Within Islington, there are pockets of extreme deprivation and CYP is situated at the heart of one. Caledonian Road, known locally as “The Cally”, is an area where there is a wide social economic gap between the residents of Islington and down the road from CYP there has been huge regeneration of the King’s Cross area. In ‘The Cally’ a large portion of the residents struggle financially, have complex issues such as mental health issues, substance misuse (drugs and alcohol), being unemployed and varying forms of violence are quite high within the borough. The children and young people within the borough also struggle with these issues, as well as having to navigate the minefield of gangs and gang life!

### **Copenhagen Youth Project (CYP) Service Provision:**

19 years ago (in 2001) Stephen joined CYP as the Senior Youth Worker changing CYP from a grassroots youth provision into a charity in 2002, with the support of the board of trustees. This change allowed CYP to offer a consistent and broader youth community offer under one umbrella.

CYP’s new status allowed them to access new funding streams, as some funders encourage charities to apply and are more inclined to allocate funds to organisations with charitable status. One of Stephen’s first jobs was writing applications to secure funding for CYP, everyone involved with CYP knew that sport and physical activities are a magnet to draw young people into the project. The decision was made to apply to funders who funded organisations through sport and/or for working with disadvantaged youth, using this approached funding was secured for 6 years through Sports England, Football Foundation and Comic Relief who’s funding was to ensure that children and young people were part of the Kings Cross Central Development Regeneration.

This funding covered staff cost, training, service delivery and left a small pot for any unforeseen costs. It also allowed Stephen to get to know the local young people, local area, and the new community he was working in. Stephen knew that for his vision to work he had to build trust within the local community and provide a safe space for the young people to access CYP’s services.

The breakdown of young people that use CYP services today:

- 65% BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic).
- 35% White/other backgrounds.
- The age range is 11 – 25 (however those that use the youth services are generally 14-21).
- Young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and have additional needs, make up a large percentage of young people.

- Complex needs young people also make up a large percentage of service users.

This did not mean that Stephen no longer applied for funding, it allowed him and his team some breathing space. It allowed them to reflect on their provision, observe and in collaboration with young people identify in what direction CYP needed to develop. Stephen was also able to become a part of the wider networks within the borough such as the Children and Young People Voluntary Sector Forum (Stephen had been invited to attend meetings and steering groups, because of his local knowledge of the young people and the high levels of crime within the area committed by young people), local council (CYP is part of Islington's Youth Provision), youth organisations and local businesses.

Through the delivery of CYP's first employability programme Stephen became aware of three distinct groups of young people that use CYP service:

### **Group 1**

Offending young people (who struggle with real-world ideals), who are furthest away from the job market and they struggle to communicate and engage with society in a constructive way, including their local community.

### **Group 2**

These young people can easily slip into the bottom group, they are an engaged group that mainly need to be provided with employability opportunities and upskilling. They also need to be taken to employers and exposed to employer talks.

### **Group3**

These are aspirational young people; they need work experience and specific opportunities within their chosen work fields. This group needs specific mentoring and IAG guidance.

A fair proportion of the young people that used CYP had been excluded from mainstream education and had special educational needs such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Speech and language difficulties and Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD). Stephen also observed that group 1, the most complex young people needed a holistic approach to employability and in general that young people lack information about the world of work and employability.

## **Key Words**

- autonomy
- roles
- relationships
- mindsets
- theory and practice
- intrinsic motivation
- growth mindset
- mastery approach

## Key Characters

### Stephen's Journey:

Stephen joined CYP 19 years ago (2001) as the Senior Youth Worker, he came from a background of Sport and Youth Work and an early career of professional boxing. Stephen had completed his education, but from an early age decided to focus on sport and became a professional at 18 his career lasted 5 years before physical injury brought it to an end. He returned to education as an adult learner, studying a course of sports science and psychology at college and became a sports coach and personal trainer. His chosen career did not particularly fulfil him, he made the decision to change the path of his career and he joined youth services in Barnet and Hertfordshire, working predominantly with homeless young people. During his 10 years with Herts Young Homeless Group, Stephen set up 4 homeless development teams in the 4 districts of Hertfordshire, his funding came from Social Services and ESF (European Social Fund). After the separate deaths of 3 young homeless people, Stephen made the decision to leave the service for his own mental health and decided to go into youth work within the inner city at this time he also decided to study for a degree in psychology.

Stephen Griffith became the Director of CYP in 2008 and has now worked with young people for over 30 years. He feels privileged for the work that he has been able to do with young people, he likes to be at the forefront and frontline of everything that happens, which enables him to continue to build relationships with the young people and also identify what might be lacking within CYP service provision. This approach arms Stephen with the information to go into pivotal meetings with the local authority (council) as well as paint a picture of youth needs within the local community when applying for funding, engaging stakeholders, and working in partnership with external organisations.

8 years ago, another local organisation called Global Generation approached Stephen and CYP to work in partnership with delivering an employability programme to the hardest to reach young people who were classed as NEET's (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Global Generation had secured the funding and were well aware of how successful CYP were at engaging the most complex young people within the area that other services found near impossible to engage.

CYP's involvement with the employability programme had highlighted that many young people had not thought much about their future and had received little career guidance, if any.

Stephen now knew that he needed to build relationships with local businesses and employers on behalf of CYP, which would enable him to introduce local young people to the world of work and explore employability skills required to secure employment.

A lot of regeneration had taken place locally to CYP and the Kings Cross area of Islington now had a new business community which included global businesses: GOOGLE, ARGENT (leading construction company), EUROSTAR, CROSS TREE (real estate) and TED BAKER (retail men's clothing) to name a few. Together they became Urban Partners: a voluntary business partnership made up of organisations in the Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras area.

As well as new businesses they had new buildings, lots of them were for residential and business use. Some of these buildings were huge and intimidating, as local young people said, "these are for posh people not for the likes of us!". Stephen knew he had to assist local young people to feel comfortable and at ease in such buildings, especially as there were spaces within these developments for the residents.

## The Case Study Story

Provisions needed to change at CYP, Stephen knew that change would happen, and employability needed to be woven through the whole of CYP's service delivery.

Stephen knew that to help the most vulnerable and at risk group they needed to take a root level approach, they decided to focus primarily on a young person's identity and how they see themselves in and around the local community and further afield. This would be the first step towards employability for these complex young people, together they would explore themselves, then others and then how others might see them including, tone of voice, language, physical stance, dress, and gestures.

Offsite trips began to change, as well as going bowling, theatre and to other cultural spaces across London (such trips to develop young people's communication, listening and social skills), new trips were offered to the young people that explored the local history, visited the café's inside one of the big intimidating buildings for drinks and snacks, and they also went to the opera in another one of those buildings (these trips developed young people's pride in the local area, introduced them to different forms of the arts and showed them different environments). Local young people started to feel at ease and comfortable inside the 'posh' buildings, some even started to see a future where they could work within them.

Urban Partners had strategies to help support the surrounding communities and the people who lived within them. Stephen made it a priority to attend all events he was invited too by the partnership and in doing so, he managed to build relationships with some of most senior individuals within these global organisations. However, he found their expectations of young people to be quite disturbing in some cases, very stereotypical and lacking in vision to see hope within local youth. In other cases, he found kindred spirits, individuals who came from similar areas and backgrounds as the local young people. Together and after quite a few meeting's, they had developed a programme of delivery which would enable CYP's young people to see the world of work and explore various sectors. The like-minded business leaders came and talked to CYP's young people, sharing their stories of personal growth, how they overcame barriers and achieved.

However, before these strategies were put in place, Stephen and like-minded business leaders had a plan to remove stereotyping and foster hope within the local youth. The senior members of global organisations were invited to CYP for lunch and activities with the young people, they were asked to dress casually. Amazingly numbers were good and at one stage Stephen stood back and observed, they were playing PlayStation together, listening to and making music, dancing, talking, eating and some were even playing football with the young people. Every director, senior manager or owner who left CYP that afternoon was amazed at the resilience of the young people and how engaging they were!

So, the work began to weave employability throughout CYP's delivery and now that Stephen had built the relationships with local businesses and helped the young people see directors, senior managers, and business owners as human beings. He was excited.

Young people at CYP were asking if it would be possible to go and visit various companies in those big buildings and if he thought they would allow them to do their work experience there. All of what the young people were asking for was part of the programme of delivery Stephen and the like-minded business leaders had discussed, he was delighted and it felt like some of the young people could actually see a future now. Together with the CYP employability worker and youth mentors the work truly began at all levels, the mentors worked with the complex young people on their identity initially. The employability worker supported young people to write emails or letters to companies requesting work experience placements and with the older group developed their CV's.

Young people visited different companies within various sectors, spoke to the employees and asked very relevant questions. The young people started to tell Stephen more about what they would like to do or what

other companies or businesses they would like to explore, they were amazed that they had seen employees like themselves. Work experience placements and taster days went ahead as planned through the partnership and young people felt listened to, which Stephen knew because the young people were exploring possible careers within the creative and digital sectors.

Some of the young people now knew what they wanted to do and how to obtain their positive pathway to their chosen career.

Stephen continued to invite members of Urban Partners to events that CYP held as these showcased these amazing young people. He also continued to attend every event run by the Urban Partners. When he goes to meetings, he often sees some of his young people working in the café, as security and others are working within fashion design and digital companies, to highlight a few successes.

4 years ago, CYP started to work with young people who wanted to develop entrepreneurial skills and it became apparent to Stephen and his team that more needed to be done in upskilling these young people. A year ago, Stephen launched another project called FishTank for young entrepreneurs, the main aim of FishTank was to upskill these young people and support them to develop their enterprises it was decided that this project needed to be off CYP premises, to enable these young people to thrive and stop them from being negatively impacted by some of their peers.

FishTank were provided workspace within the Havas KX building based on the Kings Cross Central Development. Havas is a media company and the building is full of creatives and entrepreneurs. Being close to CYP, Stephen saw that there was a relationship to build with Havas and much to learn from the creatives and this media giant now based in King Cross Central. So, Stephen worked with Havas to deliver seminars, create a training programme for the entrepreneurs, develop opportunities to collaborate, create work opportunities in content making and youth consultation. Fish Tank is a project out of the local community, enabling the young people to interact with a new community and fully focus on their dreams. FishTank is still in its early stage in terms of a longer-term impact and sustainable outcomes, Stephen knows FishTank will assist some of local young people to open their own businesses and become entrepreneurs, role modelling success for the next generation.

Stephen looks back on his time at CYP and knows that with the support of the staff team, volunteers, and the steering committee, CYP is on the right path to support its young members to obtain their dreams. The mentoring programme supports young people to think for themselves and learn from their mistakes with staff support. Stephen knows that a lot of the local youth are traumatised from a significant local event such as criminal activities, stabbings, and death. Earlier this year one of their members was fatally stabbed and died on Caledonian Road, he was a well-loved member of the CYP community and had been attending the project for a couple years. It had a profound impact on the local community and the young people, the loss of this young man reinforced Stephen's view of CYP's place in the local community. It is a place of safety where children and young people can be nurtured, inspired, educated, and guided along their personal journeys of development and change.

Stephen and the staff team at CYP are only able to do the above by listening to local young people, giving them a voice, whether it be just asking them where they want to go on the next trip or asking for their input when he is applying for funding. Stephen always asks young people what kinds of projects they would like CYP to run, their ideas and reasoning are written into the funding application. The young people know that all that Stephen and his team do is for them and they are very respectful of that relationship overall.

Stephen's continued engagement with local businesses, community, and statutory organisations, has proven to him the importance of taking a long-termed approach with CYP's service delivery and development.

## References

CYP's website <http://www.cyproject.org/>

Urban Partners website (<https://urbanpartners.london/>) gives the definition of Urban Partners – (We have a diverse membership base with global organisations and local businesses from a variety of sectors including transport, technology, media, publishing and hospitality.)

## Questions, Comments and Topics of Discussion

1. Considering the approaches that you use when working with young people, in what way is Stephen's/CYP's approach similar or different? In what way has the case study story highlighted other approaches you might use. If so, who can help assist with developing and implementing new approaches?
2. What stimulated Stephen's/CYP's need and opportunity to develop an employability programme for the young people they support? What can you learn from his/CYP's approach? In what way is this approach joined-up and potentially long-term?
3. Reflecting on the case study, how did Stephen uncover and overcome preconception, barriers and challenges faced by employers and young people?



# CONTACT

Rinova Limited

[www.rinova.co.uk](http://www.rinova.co.uk)

CONTACT

Julie Parish, Principle Development Manager

2nd Floor, Moorfoot House,

Meridian Place, 221 Marsh Wall

Isle of Dogs, London

E14 9FH

Phone: +44 (0) 20 8536 8300

Email: [info@rinova.co.uk](mailto:info@rinova.co.uk)

---

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**RINOVA**  
innovate, create & regenerate

**CITY OF TAMPERE**  
EMPLOYMENT AND GROWTH SERVICES

 **MetropolisNet**  
European network of local development  
partnerships in metropolitan areas

 **Euro  
circle**

 **europe  
direct  
Provence**

 **BALLYMUN  
JOB CENTRE**  
Building a Brighter Future With Work

 **CIOFS-FP**  
Centro Italiano Opere Femminili Salesiana  
Formazione Professionale