

Spotlight on...

Our partnership with Halifax Boxing Club

What the need was and how we identified it

In the Mixenden, Illingworth and Boothtown areas of Calderdale District our firefighters have been subjected to high levels of violence and there have been high incident rates of anti social fires. We identified the Halifax Boxing Club as a new approach for engaging with young people to help reduce these incidents.

Following a visit to the Boxing Club by one of Calderdale's Fire Safety Inspectors and discussions with the District Commander, a partnership was set up between West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Boxing Club and West Yorkshire Police. SC Robin Ward leads on the partnership.

Its aims were:

- Promote safer communities by reducing re-offending
- Promote safer homes through provision of education
- Promote road safety
- Promote fitness and well being
- Integrate WYFRS into an area of high deprivation
- Reduce the occurrence of anti social behaviour in the neighbourhood

What we did and the difference we made

We asked for interested parties from Calderdale Crews who would be willing to attend boxing sessions. They would receive 2 hours overtime in exchange for two voluntary hours at the Club. To get the project up and running CC Carl Foulds, Blue Watch Halifax initially attended on a voluntary basis until funds were secured for a small overtime budget. Additional volunteers came forward – FFs Steve Lewis, Kris Whitworth and Rehan Mansoor and we now have 4 instructors trained to the Amateur Boxing Association Assistant Coach level. They agreed to commit voluntary hours to match the paid overtime, however they are actually volunteering twice as many hours than they are being paid - such is their commitment to this community initiative. The Halifax and Illingworth crews continue to engage the community in Boothtown and Ovenden by attending events. We also have a display board in place at the Boxing Club dedicated to community safety education.



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Outcomes

The original idea of the partnership was to try a different route for engaging young people in the area, to reduce attacks on firefighters. To date these attacks have reduced by 50%, which is encouraging.

Although we are in the early stages, an unexpected outcome has been the opportunity for our employees to gain additional skills and immense satisfaction from being a boxing coach and making a difference to the whole community. The Firefighters also act as positive male role models for the young people at the club.

The Youth Offending Team is also using this initiative. They refer their clients to the Club, using boxing as a way of getting offenders engaged in a highly disciplined and focused manner, with role models from the Fire and Rescue Service.

The close involvement of our firefighter coaches and crews has raised WYFRS' standing in the community and Cllr Bryan Smith has been actively involved in the partnership.

What next?

It would be unrealistic to expect the four firefighters to take on all the responsibility for all these events so now further opportunities will be available for other crew members to be involved.

The Club now has 300 young members from a range

of backgrounds, including a large number targeted through an outreach fitness programme.

We have seen a reduction in the number of recorded occurrences of violence towards staff and a reduction in anti-social fires so we are keen to continue supporting this initiative.

At the outset of the partnership we asked members to complete a questionnaire on their knowledge and experience of working with the fire service. This will be repeated after 12 months to evidence the impact of the WYFRS education programme on changing behaviour.

Key to our success

- Support from senior manager in recognising the benefits to the Service and the community
- Commitment from employees to work with their community and volunteer their time
- Working in partnership with the Halifax Boxing Club and West Yorkshire Police

Contact

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FIRE PREVENTION AND
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