



Junior Fire Fit

Social and community development

Junior Fire Fit is an innovative project which combines fire education and the promotion of a more active lifestyle, resulting in a long lasting effect on participants outlook and behaviour in school and in their local community.

The project consists of 6 afterschool sessions and is designed for students aged 11 to 15 years who are irregularly or consistently inactive.

It covers topics such as the life of a fire fighter, the importance of being active and community fire safety. The sessions include practical challenges, educational messages and key skills in first aid.

The project aims to transform the lives of young people, targeting changes in their behaviour, improving confidence and increasing self esteem, whilst at the same time raising awareness of the danger of fire and the critical role of the fire service.

Fire Fit provides the fire service with a more engaging method of communicating key fire safety messages to young adults at an important stage in their lives.

The fire service serves a multicultural community and the Fire Fit product enables them to engage sections of the community which traditional engagement hasn't achieved.

“We have a good relationship with the Cressex School. We received various hoax calls to the School in the last 18 months and our research and social demographic data suggests that the School's catchment is a key area we need to target and educate to reduce the volume of emergency calls we currently receive.

We are working in partnership to ensure they select the correct participants, as they have a better understanding of the physical and mental behaviours of the year group.”

Mike Baxter, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Sparked by insight

The target area falls in the top 50% of deprived areas nationally (IMD, 2016) and is one of the areas with greatest health inequalities and highest BAME populations in Buckinghamshire.

Cressex Community School was identified for the pilot as the school has been the source of an above average number of hoax calls in the last 18 months.

The fire service research and social demographic data suggests that the schools catchment area is a key target area to reduce the volume the volume of emergency calls that are currently received.

In addition the area also has a higher than average arson rate and was therefore identified as the ideal area to pilot the project.

To identify the target group within the school research was carried out prior to the project via the head of year and PE department at the school to assess behaviour and engagement levels.

PE teachers confirmed that participation is low in mainstream PE and sport, particularly amongst females who often drop off from PE engagement at 14.

When consulted, pupils said they wanted to try something different, away from the school environment.

This insight led to two single sex sessions targeting inactive and disengaged pupils being developed.

6 weeks per session
7% participants reported having a disability


1 group of boys aged 13 -15
1 group of girls aged 12 -13

28 participants attended 5 out of 6 sessions

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61% Asian / Mixed
39% White British

Target postcodes

 HP10 HP11
HP12 HP13

participants classed as inactive at the start of the sessions
61%

£1672.50
project cost

1 Firefighter provided training to gain fitness qualifications.



Prevention

A pre course survey showed that 50% of the participants had deliberately started a fire. Following the programme the same participants are now helping to communicate key fire safety messages to help educate friends, families and members of their local community.

Impact on students

Jessica who could be classed as a 'Cautious Introvert' and is not comfortable trying new things, liking the security of her friends said,

“I came along to do something with my friends instead of sitting at home texting. I wanted to be more active.”
Jessica, Participant

Effective local leadership

As part of Leap's partner engagement work we identified the fire service as a potential key delivery partner and initiated contact with them with the aim of broadening our partner base. They were keen to pilot a sport and activity project and developed the Fire Fit project. We supported the project development using good practice from other projects and youth insight to ensure it would appeal to the target audience.

We encouraged the fire service to build in the use of pedometers to engage participants in a weekly step challenge with the aim of nudging a change in long term behaviour. The location for the project enabled both the fire service and ourselves to meet independent targets in a combined project – the area and school selected has a high proportion of BAME communities, local activity and relatively high deprivation, it also has a high incidence where English isn't the first language with parents often unable to communicate in English and the school is involved in an above average number of hoax fire calls.

Opportunities for continued participation were built into the project to follow the initial 6 weeks. The local leisure centre was identified as the ideal location as it was on a direct bus route or on a well lit walking route from the school, meaning that transport and parental support would not be barriers to participation. The leisure centre also has a café area where the participants could socialise. The school supported taking the activity off site and delivering all the sessions by an external provider as the target pupils are not engaged in school and respond far better to outside agencies.

“Fire fit has been an absolutely fantastic opportunity for the girls at Cressex Community School, working alongside the fire service, going to the fire station, learning how to be fit and healthy and everything there is to know about the fire service', this project has offered; 'something completely different, they like it as it is not led by a PE Teacher. The excellent behaviour of the girls at the sessions has been maintained in school and the girls have taken the skills they have learnt in order to improve further academically.”
Laura Jones, Key Stage 3 Leader at Cressex Community School

Innovative practice

Leap worked with the fire service to create a course that felt current, appealing and had an identity that the target audience could connect with. Students were inspired and engaged by holding the first session at Wycombe Fire Station and seeing firefighters in action. They wore fire fighters uniform and used their equipment for the sessions. To incentivise regular attendance and continued participation each participant received fire kit, fire fit branded sports top and water bottle, a pedometer and fresh fruit at each session.

Evidence of sustainability and business development

The fire service fully support further development of Fire Fit and are working to launch an off the shelf package that any fire station can pick up and deliver. In the short term several more areas of the county are testing the concept using Sportivate funding this year with Wycombe fire station training staff in other stations to deliver the project. We have also expanded the brand to adult activity sessions and to expand this project further the fire service are applying for national funding.