

2005 European Crime Prevention Award

UK Entry

1. What is the title of the project?

Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE)

2. Please give a short general description of the project.

This youth engagement scheme, developed by the London Fire Brigade, aims to tackle fire-related anti-social behaviour amongst young people (e.g. fire setting and hoax calls) and thereby help to improve community safety. The five day programme comprises practical skills based learning which deals with the consequences of fire-related anti-social behaviour.

3. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

The course is specifically designed to change the attitude and behaviour of the young people by getting them to:

- adopt a new set of values
- address the consequences of antisocial (firesetting) behaviour
- work co-operatively with others
- see the advantage of improving their own learning and performance
- gain self esteem and self confidence and to communicate better and consequently achieve self empowerment.

4. How was the project implemented?

The LIFE programme started in Tower Hamlets primarily as a way of improving community relations and reducing antisocial behaviour directed at firefighters carrying out their operational duties. It was quickly recognised that there were other directly measurable benefits to the Brigade and the communities we serve. It was run originally by a Borough Commander in Tower Hamlets who coordinated the programme with the assistance of local firefighters. LIFE is now facilitated by a Team Leader who co-ordinates resources to support the courses.

5. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

Partner agencies have always been involved since the start of the programme as they provide referrals of young people and other partners provide forward strategies for the young people for example providing them with opportunities for further training on completion of the LIFE programme.

6. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project?

The LiFE programme has been evaluated and the report is currently being finalised. From this recommendations have been made to ensure the programme is monitored against a number of criteria including aims and objectives of the London Fire and Rescue Service and also measuring the impact the programme has on the young people who attend. Some of this evaluation is carried out by partner agencies.

7. Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

The project is currently being evaluated by Morgan Harris Burrows.

8. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

The draft results are as follows:

Behaviour	Yes - took part in this behaviour before course		Yes - took part in this behaviour after course		% change
	count	% (of total)	count	% (of total)	
Hoax calls to FB	8	12	0	0	-100
Fire Inside	6	9	0	0	-100
Abuse to Fire-fighters	2	3	0	0	-100
Prevent Fire-fighters doing job	1	2	0	0	-100
Hoax calls to Police/Ambulance	17	26	1	2	-94
Starting fire outside	15	23	1	2	-93
Truancy	31	48	5	8	-84
Burglary	4	6	1	2	-75
Broke into cars	11	17	3	5	-73
Vandalism	18	28	5	8	-72
Being in a stolen car	15	23	5	8	-67
Graffiti	20	31	12	18	-40
Hit or hurt someone	21	32	16	25	-24
Threatened/Bullied	12	18	10	15	-17
Attacked Fire-fighters	0	0	0	0	

Results will be finalised in November 2005.

LiFE: The programme has a number of benefits, the four key ones are listed below:

- **Community benefit:** Youths (age 13-19) in the borough are referred by agencies because of anti-social (fire related) incidents. Community benefit is demonstrated through a significant non-offending rate among these participants. There has also been a noticeable reduction in deliberate firesetting behaviour and attacks on firefighters in the boroughs where the scheme is operating. LiFE has engaged with over 700 young people and a number of these have been helped into local community employment or have embarked on the fire service recruitment process;
- **Innovation:** The LiFE project is a fire safety based, social crime prevention initiative which combines cutting edge youth issues thinking in line with the Home Office White Paper: "Respect and Responsibility - Taking a stand against anti-social behaviour". A large number of other Brigades are starting to implement the programme, having seen the success of LiFE in London. The London Mayor Ken Livingstone awarded the scheme the London Day Fire Service Award in July 2003. The delivery of the programme is by local operational firefighters rather than a dedicated team. This ensures that the role model relationship that develops on the programme between young person and firefighter has continued benefit for the local community.
- **Learning culture:** LiFE promotes a vibrant learning culture through the opportunities that abound for interactions between participants and the local firefighters who share their real LiFE experience, knowledge, skills and abilities.
 - The learning benefits for the young people whilst on the programme are often quite simple like, not setting light to refuse, not making hoax calls, or be something as serious as recognising the danger of fire setting in the home or at school.
 - Deputy head teacher at Bishop Challenger School in Stepney Ed Coffey said: " It is amazing to see the difference one of these courses makes. We've had 75 students on the courses and they all come back changed people. They are focussed, before they were disengaged and not focussing on school work, taking part in the curriculum or LiFE in general. They come back and self-esteem is there with them, they all feel they've achieved something, they've actually learned a lot about themselves and about LiFE. They are all changed for the better, their school work improves noticeably and they all behave with a responsibility we've never seen before."
 - Our own workforce benefits by improving their skills in leadership, community engagement and social understanding.
- **Leadership:** LiFE provides true inspiration in the pursuit of management goals, by giving fire-fighters an opportunity to help others, serve their community, effect real change and "make a difference". LiFE also promotes the fire safety agenda in the local community whilst creating development opportunities and providing job satisfaction for those involved.. Our involvement in youth engagement also helps to ensure that the London Fire Brigade is viewed more positively, as part of the local community by the public and the other agencies.