



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

| LIFE



LIFE

(Local Intervention
Fire Education Scheme)

“ We've had about 75 students on the LiFE course and they have all come back changed people.

LiFE targets the students who have disengaged with school and are in danger of being excluded entirely. They are the kids that are in trouble with the police, belong to gangs, take drugs and are on ASBOs. Almost all of them have a history of challenging authority in one form or another.

They come back to us and they are full of self-esteem. They know that they have really achieved something and realise the dedication that goes into becoming a firefighter. By completing the programme they have also learnt a lot about themselves and gained important life skills.

Their school work improves noticeably and they all behave with a responsibility we've never seen before... It is amazing to see the difference one of these LiFE courses makes.”

Head Teacher ED Coffey, Bishop Challenger Collegiate, Shadwell



The LiFE programme



One of the aspects of the London Fire Brigade's safety plan is to work with the local community and help reduce anti-social behaviour.

One of our most effective programmes is LiFE (Local Intervention Fire Education) where it is estimated that from each referral made to the course, the crime reduction benefit is £9,940 per person¹.

Our LiFE programme started in Tower Hamlets in 2002 and is an intensive week-long course delivered by operational staff in fire stations. Its main aim is to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase the confidence of the young people taking part, while educating them in fire safety skills and responsible citizenship.

The programme is targeted particularly at young people aged between 13 and 17, who have either offended, are

at risk of offending, are not succeeding in mainstream education, are suffering from low self-esteem or those that may have been victims of crime.

One of its aims is to prevent young people from becoming persistent young offenders by providing an intensive five-day experience. Within a tightly structured and focused team environment it offers alternative activities for young people through a wide range of partnerships. The partners all have a common vision for young people; to move them into positive activities by either getting them back into mainstream education or into employment.

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

- Adopt a new set of values
- Address the consequences of anti-social behaviour
- Work co-operatively with others
- Improve their own learning and performance
- Gain self-esteem and self-confidence and communicate better with the community
- Value equality and diversity.

¹ Morgan Harris Borrowes

LIFE – what's it all about?



WHY LIFE WORKS

The Brigade engages with the local community and is a highly regarded, well-structured organisation with self-disciplined staff who can serve as role models to disengaged young people.

Statistics show that almost half of all crime is committed by young people between the ages of 13 and 21. Through the LIFE programme, the Brigade has a positive impact on young people.

The programme also offers participants the opportunity to have a positive experience, opening up career opportunities and gaining a real sense of achievement.

The number of deliberate fires and hoax calls has fallen in recent years, particularly in boroughs with active Brigade schemes aimed at young people. The evidence strongly suggests that this is not coincidental².

COURSE PROGRAMME

Each LIFE course teaches young people between the ages of 13 and 17 firefighting skills alongside real firefighters. Throughout the week the young people take part in many activities, including the use of ladders, breathing apparatus, casualty rescue techniques, first aid, hose practice, using lines and problem solving tasks, all of which are designed to improve motivation, self-confidence, discipline, team building and communication skills. We also pass on fire safety and fire prevention messages.

The course is facilitated in a structured manner and the young people are given a set of boundaries which have to be adhered to, in the form of an agreement contract. This contract is also the standard that all of the instructors have to work to.

Every young person has their progress evaluated by a Brigade trainer. This allows for the formulation of tailored

strategies to meet the needs of the young person to improve their key skills. The ratio of Brigade personnel to participant (1:2) means that a strong bond of trust is established, and this invariably means that any advice given is listened to and acted upon.

The programme culminates in a passing out ceremony, at which the candidates demonstrate the skills that they have learnt throughout the week. Each trainee receives a detailed portfolio containing all of the certificates that the young person has earned throughout the week and individual assessment forms.

This is followed by an individual instructor's appraisal and the young people are given the opportunity to speak about their experiences on the course. This is all demonstrated in front of family and friends, as well as representatives of local authorities, police, funders and other partners.

² Morgan Harris Borrows

LIFE achievements



ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS

The LIFE programme has attracted wide interest, both inside the fire service and outside. The programme received recognition and acclaim from the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson when he visited a LIFE course at Dagenham Fire Station.

LIFE has built an impressive list of achievements over the last six years and feedback from local firefighters, schools, youth groups, community organisations and youth offending teams has shown huge improvements in local relationships:

- 80% reduction in self-reported non-offending rate among participants six months after attending the programme.
- 97% attendance rate on the programme.
- Noticeable reduction in attacks on firefighters.
- Noticeable reduction in deliberate firesetting behaviour in the boroughs where the programme is operating.
- Two are now serving firefighters in their local communities.
- LIFE has been featured on national and regional news including London Tonight, BBC and Inside Crime.
- Over 40% of young people enrolled on the course are from the black minority ethnic community.
- Many young people who have been on the programme have gone back into education or employment.
- Seven other brigades have implemented the programme having seen the success of LIFE in London.
- In July 2003 the LIFE programme won the London Day Fire Services Award.
- The LIFE programme was the UK entry for the European Crime Prevention Awards 2005.
- Tower Hamlets won 'Outright winner' at the National Careers award for initiatives for social inclusion 2007.
- In 2008 the LIFE programme successfully ran its first course for young people with special needs.

SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Over the years LIFE has worked with many partners, these partnerships are still proactive within LIFE to this day.

- London Ambulance Service
- Youth Offending Teams
- Pupil referral units
- Gun, knife and crime awareness programme
- Army recruitment
- Army Cadets
- Drugs and Alcohol awareness programme
- Connexions
- Schools
- Police
- Safer Neighbourhoods teams
- Kickz Project
- Jack Petchey Foundation
- Social services
- Other fire and rescue services
- A range of funding partners, both private and public.

The facts of LIFE

30

out of the 33 boroughs across London are covered by LIFE.

7

UK fire authorities have now adopted the LIFE programme.

2008

In February of this year the New Zealand Fire & Rescue Service launched its first LIFE course.

85

courses per year are run by the LIFE programme.

10

LIFE course students have embarked on the fire service recruitment process.

4000

young people have enrolled on the course with a 95% completion rate.

BENEFITS OF LIFE TO LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

- Enhanced community relations
- Increased understanding of diversity within the community
- Reduced attacks on fire personnel
- Reduced firesetting
- Reduction in hoax calls

The programme has also brought staff into close contact with young people from a wide variety of cultures, helping provide different perspectives and an improved understanding of local people and the communities they serve. All of these factors are contributing to an enhanced image for the London Fire Brigade.

THE LONDON LIFE CHALLENGE

Another activity offered to young people after successfully completing their LIFE course is the London LIFE Challenge. This fitness event is held alongside the Fittest Firefighter competition in Covent Garden. The young people are chosen to compete in the event following a series of heats held across London. They are put through a structured programme of exercise and nutrition, with the aim of further building on their team work, confidence and self-esteem.

A PROVEN SUCCESS

Evidence of the success of LIFE courses is considerable. This includes an independent evaluation for LFB by Morgan Harris Burrows, commissioned in 2006. They interviewed a sample of 65 young people who attended a LIFE course:

97% felt it showed them that it can be good to work as part of a team

88% said the course gave them skills they could use elsewhere

75% said it improved the way they see themselves

92% had more respect for firefighters and the job that they do

83% said they were more confident in themselves

49% were able to give an example of how the course had helped them change positively

Morgan Harris Burrows also reported that police national computer data showed a significant fall in offending behaviour by ex-LIFE trainees and that other evidence showed reductions in the number of deliberate fires set, the number of hoax calls, incidents of abuse to firefighters, and in truancy and vandalism.

COST SAVING PER ATTENDEE ON THE LIFE PROGRAMME

Type of incident	Average cost per incident	Number of incidents prevented per attendee per year	Cost saving per attendee
Fires in public places	£1,650	1.08	£1,782
Hoax calls to LFB	£400	1.98	£792
Hoax calls to police or ambulance	£400	2.05	£820
Acts of vandalism	£866	3.34	£2,892
Graffiti	£100	8.02	£802
Fires inside buildings	£27,960	0.03	£838
Cars broken into	£858	1.06	£909
Burglaries	£3,268	0.20	£653
TOTAL			£9,490

Why we believe in LIFE



BILLY O'KEEFE

Head of Mpower Vocational Centre

“Our vocational centre accommodates students who have been failing to engage in the traditional curriculum at their school. Consequently our students are characterized by having poor self-esteem and lack confidence and social skills. The LIFE course offers a unique experience whereby young people can experience and acquire real life skills that will prepare them for their future. They acquire these skills in a demanding, supportive and enjoyable environment, and thus leave the course empowered to meet future challenges. They simply grow on the

course and this impacts on aspects of their work and self-worth.

The course has on several occasions provided us with a positive opportunity for a young person when all our other interventions have failed.

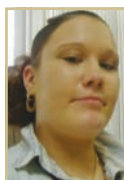
The inclusive nature of the course, welcoming the most difficult and troubled of our young people, makes the provision outstanding. We are always amazed how engaged and enthused our students are after attending a LIFE course. Long may it continue.”



ABDUL IBRAHIM

aged 15 on Course 43
Jack Petchey Award Winner

“I thought the course would be interesting and very helpful and may be an opportunity to become a firefighter. It taught me that you need to be a very good team player, work hard and get on with people. They teach you that you need fitness and motivation, the ability to make split second decisions that can impact on your life and others around you. I learnt skills I will be able to take with me anywhere, every young person should have the opportunity to be part of LIFE.”



KERSTIE ROMERIL

aged 20 on Course 25
now working as a
Senior Youth Ambassador

“I thought the LIFE Programme was a good experience for young people. We learnt the importance of the role of firefighters and how we can assist as a community. The programme made me realise that firefighters risk their lives to save others and that they should be seen as heroes. I left feeling that I could achieve things I couldn't before and that if I wanted, I could be a firefighter.”

CASE STUDY

BILLIE, DAGENHAM LIFE

“Before I started the LIFE course I was hanging around with the wrong group of people and I was going down the wrong path. When I was 13 years old I got myself into a fight outside of school with a girl my age. I was arrested for GBH and was on bail for six months and had a two day court trial.

My whole attitude at school was getting worse and I couldn't be bothered with learning and listening to teacher. Then I was transferred onto the Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP) and one of the women that worked there put me onto the LIFE project.

At the start I was worried about going to Dagenham Fire Station as I didn't know anyone on the course. My first day was great. Everyone was smiling and talking, so I felt comfortable and I had so much to tell my parents on the first day.

The trainers were so friendly and if I felt uncomfortable about anything or I had a problem I knew I could talk to any of them. They don't judge you before you start and think you're a horrible child. They don't want to know the reason why you're on the course and that makes you feel more comfortable. By Friday none of us wanted to leave. We all got on really well and everyone got on with the trainers.

I have achieved so much from doing this LIFE course I am now studying for a Public Services National Certificate at college and I look at life in a completely different way to what I did before the course. I think anyone that goes onto this course should come in with an open mind and give it 110%. It is the most amazing experience and it will stick with me forever.”

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