



Photo credit: <https://bit.ly/2kDV3hh>

Theme(s): Partnership, Inclusivity, Stakeholder involvement

Type of initiative:  
Public Squares

Year: 2014

Location:  
Huddersfield  
United Kingdom

Owner: Kirklees Council Sports Development team

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### DESCRIPTION

The project took place during the winter months due to the rise in complaints regarding anti-social behaviour within the town centre and due to the lack of skateboarding opportunities for young people. Engagement within the summer months took place in the local outdoor skate park. The sessions took place every Wednesday night during winter and consisted of two and a half hours worth of provision per session. The purpose of the session was to formalise and to provide structure to what the young people were already doing, therefore the session was split into two distinct sections; coaching and free recreational play. The Adventurous team located within the Sports Development Team delivered the skateboarding provision by taking portable equipment, providing coaching and encouraging free recreational use. The initiative was branded as the Extreme Sports Club, in order to bring other urban sports such as parkour under the banner of this club, as this too was causing problems within the Town Centre. The Sports Development team attended the Town Centre Management team meetings which proved crucial in discovering the information relating to the complaints of anti social behaviour in the car park and the town centre. Consultation took place in the summer months prior to winter, in order to provide more feedback to the Sports Development team.

### SUCSESSES

The key success to this project was instilling within the young people an understanding of the relationship and the impact that they personally have on the facility. Even though the provision wasn't sustained after a year, it has given the young people an understanding of how to behave in a shared space and show respect to the main users of the car park. Further to this, by formalising the offer, this led to the session and the participant numbers for the session growing. However this brought it's own problems with it too as then the young people were trying to access the space on their terms and not adhering to the ground rules that had been set out. Building a relationship with the police officers and street wardens who would frequently attend the sessions gave young people a rapport with these members of staff.

In addition to this, the Sports Development Team liaised with staff from the local skateboard shop in the town, in order for them to lead and take some ownership of this group by providing discounts, special offers and to promote this offer within the skateboarding community in Kirklees. The project leader received loads of anecdotal stories and reports from police officers, stating that they weren't dealing with kids in the town centre anymore due to this provision.

### CHALLENGES

Having to influence and, essentially win over, the staff who managed the car parks within the Town Centre Management team to buy into this initiative was, and continued to prove, problematic throughout the lifespan of the initiative. It was the Town Centre Managements team's belief that the car park shouldn't be encouraged to be used as a recreational space as the skateboards damage the floor. Initially this was overcome by the Sports Development Team using the influence of the Street Wardens and Police Officers who were also in the Town Centre Management team and pitching them against the staff who managed the car parks. This led to ground rules being set out as to how the provision would be delivered.

However, the car park floor was crumbling and became damaged due to the project, which unfortunately meant the use of the venue was denied by the Town Centre Management team the following winter. However, a skateboarding group still meets on a Wednesday night and uses the car park in a completely unofficial capacity and utilises the top floor of the car park to stay out of the way from the majority of pedestrians and vehicles. The projects objectives of giving the young people an accessible space to participate in urban sports was achieved.