

## Education, Opportunities and Aspirations Task and Finish Group proposal

### Rural East Suffolk locality NEET project.

Access Community Trust is based in Saxmundham and delivers youth services in rural east Suffolk, particularly in the Leiston, Saxmundham and Woodbridge areas. We deliver the Emotional Wellbeing project in local schools as part of Vision and Voice which is a social prescribing based approach to support student's wellbeing both in school and within their communities. We have provided youth clubs and accommodation services within the area and currently deliver the Skills Connect youth employability programme and partner with local employers such as EDF to help young people to gain necessary skills and experience for the workplace and we also deliver our Pink Orange meal kit service for low-income families in the region.

From both a raft of reports nationally and our own experience of continuing to engage with young people throughout this difficult year we have witnessed those young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds suffering a disproportionate amount of disruption both with their academic and social development. Whilst we have been able to maintain contact and support with some through adapting delivery and particularly the use of digital support we are concerned that post-Covid-19 the dislocation suffered by a substantial number of young people and their families will have long-term negative repercussions for both individuals and their communities.

As we are able to identify many individuals in this situation and have formed relationships with them we would like to be able to offer outdoor education opportunities for young people to take part in to sustain their engagement, equip them with both soft and practical skills and support them to be able to move forwards to take advantage of the employability programmes and opportunities that Access and other agencies offer.

We are particularly focusing on those with poor records of school engagement and attainment who have not engaged with further education and training and those who have fallen out of further education of whom we have seen an increase as the lack of one-to-one and more personal support has made it easier for those with less support and resilience to disengage and disappear from positive aspirational activities.

We will base our activities at Sax'cess House in Saxmundham, but will also utilise both beaches and countryside for activities and are able to provide transport for participants as this is also a major issue for young people in rural communities. We are well versed in working within the Covid-19 guidelines whenever necessary as we currently deliver some of our proposed activities at a Pupil Referral Unit in Lowestoft. The sessions are typically 2-2.5 hours long for up to 6 participants and will include activities in 2 broad spheres. Firstly, soft skills which will work on communication, co-operation, teamwork, mutual respect for others and the environment and other confidence based pursuits and secondly practical skills which will also boost confidence and esteem but can also equip young people with transferable skills for independent living, employment, or indeed self-employment.

Some survival based activities such as camp building, navigation and tracking are excellent to help young people develop empathy and soft skills and also help to build rapport and relationships with peers, staff and volunteers.

Our practical skills sessions will cover fire lighting, shelter building (with natural & manmade materials), safe use of tools (blood bubble, PPE, safe techniques, removing misconceptions, forest knife, Axe, Bill hook, Bow saw, draw knife etc.), the use of a Shave Horse, outdoor cooking & nutrition

and forest First Aid. All these activities have the additional benefit of giving each participant a sound knowledge of basic Health & Safety.

Outcomes will support young people to be more confident, aspirational, nearer to employment and social inclusion.

We would like to affect greater integration into the local community and encourage more intergenerational contact. We will encourage community/Access volunteers to involve themselves in community projects within their locality with support from our volunteers. We will also encourage young people to volunteer with Access or other voluntary organisations.

The use of tools and materials will teach young people how to make a variety of creative products such as plant hangers, bird boxes, toys and walking sticks which could either be developed into a social enterprise that we could operate in co-production with young people based at Sax'cess House. Alternatively, products could support community cohesion by gifting them to elderly resident's community residents or adding them to Pink Orange parcels for disadvantaged families.

The most important long-term outcome would involve young people embarking on their own employability journey after participating in the project. This can be monitored by signing up to Skills Connect, signposting to volunteering and work experience opportunities take-up or participation in on-line work-focused training.

The funding this project would require is £7,500 over 12 months, covering staff salary, transport cost and equipment.