



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Engage

The Engage Project

Families all over Derby are talking about the courses run by the Engage Project. Offering activities as diverse as music production, joinery and plumbing, rock climbing, acting and script writing, Engage gives disadvantaged families a chance to learn new skills, spend time together and improve their relationships.

Families are referred to the project by a range of services including The National Probation Service, Derby Youth Offending Service, Schools and the Family Intervention Project.

“Most of our referrals are young people on the edge of getting into real trouble,” says Gareth Sayers, Project Coordinator. “They may have had cautions or visits from the anti-social behaviour team and we are asked if we can do something to prevent them from getting into further crime.”

The courses offered by Engage last seven weeks and cover a variety of subjects. This is long enough to form new relationships and learn new skills but not long enough to be too daunting.

“The biggest challenge is getting the families to come in the first place,” explains Gareth. “Many of them have been completely disengaged with learning and although they may make a show of bravado, their self-confidence is rock bottom and they are scared to go new places and try new things.”

One way of combating this problem has been by using volunteers, in partnership with SOVA (Supporting Others through Volunteer Action). The volunteers are assigned a family and offer home visits and telephone support, telling them what they can expect.



The volunteers can also offer transportation to the course and provide encouragement, someone to talk to and take part in other activities with the family outside of course time.

Cycle Derby have been working with the project to offer a BMX course at Alvaston Park. Families attending not only get to ride the track but also learn basic bike maintenance including how to change a wheel and mend a puncture.

Belinda has been coming to the course with her son Armani every week.



“I have really enjoyed coming here,” she says. “I had a go on the bikes but I preferred to go round the park where it’s flat rather than the BMX track. I like watching Armani go round, and I can sit and have a chat to the other parents while I watch him. He’s really got into the biking since we’ve started this and is now coming every week to Cycle Derby’s club and getting into the racing.”

“The courses have provided families with two hours each week that is fun and removed from the pressures of everyday life,” says Gareth. “When they’re here they are talking and listening to each other, and sharing experiences. For each course they take away things that they have created – music CD’s, DVD’s on the digital media course, a photo album of activities from the outdoor pursuits course – but, more importantly, we are creating family memories.”

Belinda agrees.

“The course has been really good, we’ll definitely be back for more,” she giggles. “I can’t believe they’ve got a picture of me on a bike on the certificate!”



Who do I contact for more information ?

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