

## The Teen Machine – Chatteris

The Teen Machine is a converted mobile Library vehicle that has been in operation as a mobile youth facility in Chatteris for over 8 years.

The aim of the Team Machine is to reach young people on their own territory ... a kind of detached work with a base! The vehicle is quite old as it had already reached the end of it's life with the Library Service when it was purchased , but it has proved to be good value for money and a cost effective way of providing access to hard to reach young people in the town.



The Teen Machine is currently in operation once a week but it also supports other one off events where having a base for information and support is useful. The vehicle can be moved to various locations but it's current position of a car park just off the town's high street makes it very accessible to young people who are in the town for the evening.

The number of young people who visit the Teen Machine varies from week to week but the average is around 15 with the age range being 13 to 19. The vehicle obviously has a limited internal capacity but youth workers regularly interact with young people outside the vehicle and the transient nature of visitors means that contact with different peer groups can happen due to groups coming and going throughout the evening session.

The biggest strength of the Teen Machine is that the young people it reaches are almost exclusively at risk and includes young people who are NEET, from poor socio-economic backgrounds, have been involved in anti-social behaviour or take part in high risk activities. The project also reaches young people who are simply disengaged with other services and has frequent contact with young people from the town's traveller community.

Being free from the constraints of a building means that youth workers can interact with young people in a way that enables the development of supportive relationships on the young peoples' own terms which keeps them returning even though the vehicle's comforts and resources are fairly basic. The emphasis is on communication and relationships as opposed to the provision of activities and with hard to reach young people it is a formula that works. Having said that the team do use resources from the local Youth Store where appropriate to enhance young people's visits.

Outcomes of the project have been:

- It is a base for C-Card registration and pick ups.
- A great deal of PSHE takes place which has even extended to teenage parents becoming involved.
- Involvement of hard to reach young people in surveys and consultations.
- A springboard for involvement in other community activities and young peoples' initiatives which has lead on to grant applications and accreditation.

Evaluation of the project tends to be carried out on a verbal basis as this is the most appropriate method given the nature of the young peoples' engagement.