Youth Social Action in 16 – 19 Study Programmes

East Kent College
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East Kent College is committed to ensuring its students make a positive contribution to their community. This is reflected in its Student Engagement Strategy:

‘By 2019 East Kent College students will be renowned for their positive contribution in the community through a wide range of practical projects and charitable activities. Students will not only apply to East Kent College because of its outstanding learning and teaching but also because of the opportunities to develop their personal skills outside the classroom.’

This started two years ago when two community days per year were set aside for all students and staff to volunteer for local community organisations.

Due to the success and positive feedback both from students and the community, the following year this developed further and became an integral part of all full time students’ study programmes. The curriculum has 6 weeks (the last week of each term) during the academic year which are called Progress Weeks, within these weeks students are also expected to work on their social action project. The structure is set out as:

- Week 1 – Social Action Planning
- Week 2 – Fund Raising
- Week 3 – Volunteering
- Week 4 – Careers Fair
- Week 5 – Volunteering
- Week 6 – Celebration

The College employs a Community Project Co-ordinator to support the curriculum managers. The Co-ordinator is responsible for researching local organisations that have projects that can link with particular curriculum areas. The role supports the curriculum staff in organising the activity and capturing partner and student feedback. They also liaise with local press to ensure the good work students do is publicised which helps present a positive image of young people.

Materials or equipment are often needed in order to complete the project. In many cases the community organisation benefiting from the students’ work will fund the materials etc. However, students are also required to fund raise to meet some of these costs.
Some examples of their volunteering activities:

**Sport**
Supporting Parkinson's Exercise Group
Two groups of Sport Level 2 students visited Parkinson's Exercise Group in Margate, where they supported the sessions. The students raised money to buy equipment for the group which were presented to them on the day.

**Teacher Trainers**
Building an outdoor stage for a Junior School
Students hosted a wonderful Murder Mystery evening at the school—they provided a two course meal with drinks and games, and the teachers of the school acted out the play. The money raised went towards the materials needed to build an outdoor stage at the school. The students built the stage for the school on their volunteering days.

**Painting and Decorating**
Painting some community teaching rooms
Students worked throughout their half term to re-vamp two large classrooms used by the local community. Students were given the opportunity to work in a real life working environment whilst working in partnership with the community and achieving the sense of giving something back.

**Hairdressing**
All day styling services for a local care home.
Students offered free hair and styling services to the residents of a local nursing home.

**Electrical Installation, Painting and Decorating, Carpentry**
Cleaned up and repainted an area of the promenade of Louisa Bay in Broadstairs. Students worked in partnership with Broadstairs Town Team (Brush Up Broadstairs), Thanet District Council and Broadstairs Rotary Club to make an immediate impact on their local environment.

**Catering**
Hands-on gardening help at a local park
The whole department got their hands dirty during some all-day gardening work with Quex Park's head gardener. Students also got to learn about how the vegetables they work with are grown.

**Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities**
All day preparing food for the homeless
Learners made savouries which were given to the Queens Road Baptist Church who were putting on a lunch for the homeless.
The students' social action work not only benefits the community but it develops their employability skills and supports their work experience. Students are directed to treat their community partner like a client, who gives them a brief to which they work to. The community partners are asked to feedback on the students' behaviour and professionalism. During the academic year the Community Project Co-ordinator and the Careers Adviser deliver workshops on recognising transferable skills, the workshop is entitled 'Developing your employability skills through social action'.

Social action is regarded by East Kent College as being as important as their work experience because beyond the employability element it develops their ability to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the College and to society more widely.