

MJ Charity Ball 2021 x Wigan Youth Zone

Wigan Youth Zone has tremendous gratitude to the Dr Michael Josephson MBE Charity Ball 2021 for the significant grant of £43,150 in 2021.

It is our pleasure to report on what was a very successful twelve months for Wigan Youth Zone, first with key statistics and then with some highlights from the year. Thank you for your significant support, which supported our essential services in 2021/22.

Key Statistics

Wigan Youth Zone's vision is to inspire and empower young people in Wigan and Leigh to fulfil their potential – therefore, we are proud to have achieved the following outcomes in 2021/22.

- Total number of young people worked with – 5,502, of which 2,807 were new.
- c10% of all members had an additional need or disability.
- Over the course of the year, the Youth Zone's services were utilised 71,996 times.
- 4,126 individuals made a total of 37,186 attendances to sports related activities.
- 777 individuals made a total of 2,381 attendances to our wellbeing activities.
- We supported vulnerable members with 3,000 free memberships and 6,650 free visits.
- 23 young people received 1-2-1 mentoring for six months.
- 14 young people were supported into employment, education or training.
- 35 volunteers supported us with a total of 4,500 hours.

Key Highlights

**April
2021**

In the two-week Easter Half Term Wigan Youth Zone had 723 smiling visits from young people throughout our eight Satellite Centres. Expanding our clubs across Wigan and Leigh gave us the opportunity to offer fun, engaging and Covid-secure 8-day holiday provision, an essential provision for vulnerable young people eligible for Free School Meals.



An incident over the Easter weekend highlighted the importance of our Outreach work. When three young girls were seen being harassed by older youths, two Youth Workers from Wigan Youth Zone came to their help and walked them to a point where they felt safe. Their mother later wrote to us *"I am very grateful to the two young men who came to help them and find it very reassuring to know that there are people like that around. I just wanted them to know how grateful my daughter and myself are."*

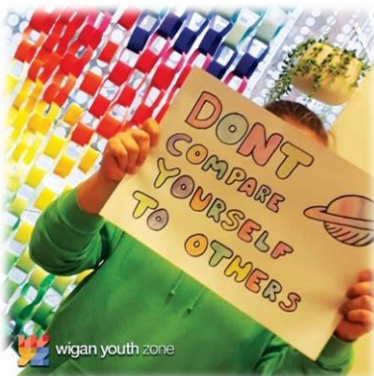


April saw some activities restarting though with strict limits to group sizes, continued social distancing, temperature checks and wearing masks (over 12s), and regular hand sanitizing. For example, Wigan Athletic Community Trust Kicks sessions re-started, and we advertised 18 new job roles to join our team of incredible Youth Workers.



We celebrated Happy International Dance Day, a celebration of the body as an instrument of expression and communication, through which our members learn teamwork, focus, and improvisational skills, a chance to pour their creative energy out into the world and to express themselves.

**May
2021**



During Mental Health Awareness Week, we ran a variety of themed activities - for example, Josh created a video sharing his top

tips for better mental health and our talented member Cerys worked super hard in the studio to create a song about mental health.

We also started a new gardening club and were excited to offer "LET'S KICK IT!" in partnership with Wigan Athletic Community Trust (WACT), using a variety of themed football activities to embed meaningful discussions about a variety of important topics.



Another partnership project with WACT, Pathways 2 Participation, offered a range of activities including one to one mentoring, sports & physical activities and cultural activities. Members particularly enjoyed a great day sailing on Scotsman Flash.



With the pandemic restricting numbers allowed in the Youth Zone, outdoor projects were a great alternative and in May we took groups of Junior members to Angelzarke quarry in Rivington for some Rock Climbing.



We were delighted to receive the UK Youth Social Action Quality Mark (SAQM) recognising our delivery of high-quality social action projects.

June 2021

In June we celebrated our 8th birthday and reflected that since the grand opening in 2013 the facility has seen over 26,200 young people walk through its doors, with almost six-hundred thousand visits from the young people of Wigan and Leigh. Along with celebratory events throughout the week, Wigan Youth Zone also gave free renewals and memberships to all current and new members.



We thanked all of our past and present mentors who had volunteered with us. Our mentoring programme supports 8–19-year-olds throughout the Wigan borough by offering guidance and advice on both personal and academic matters. It gives our young people someone to talk to and the opportunity to gain new skills at the same time.

Many of our activities in June were themed around Loneliness Awareness Week. 74.5% of members identified a reduction in isolation, 82% had more friends, 86.5% are more confident because of going to Wigan Youth Zone.

Throughout Pride Month, Wigan Youth Zone was decorated with pride quotes and its members made rainbow flags, enjoyed a pride picnic, ate colourful cupcakes and shared various constructive Pride related debates and conversations. Wigan Youth Zone celebrates Pride Month to allow its members to come together to commemorate and honour LGBTQIA+ communities within the centre and around the world.



**July
2021**

Our 'Get A Job' students had a great day kayaking, part of our innovative approach to developing skills in team building, working together, following instructions and trying something new. We pride ourselves on taking a fully rounded approach to the young people we work with, so in addition to the more formal employability skills we also provide social, emotional and physical support through a variety of programmes we run at the Youth Zone or via partner organisations. We believe that strong mental health is essential to move young people closer to, or into, employment, education and training.



We celebrated the Olympics with daily sporting competitions, an inter-Youth Zone Olympics competition and daily online content that showcased all things sports. Sport activities included weightlifting, triple jump, rowing, gymnastics, scooter and BMX trials, speed climbing to name just a few as well as an Inter-Youth Zone Olympics.



A group of our members set off on an experience of a lifetime, a two-week expedition in the Scottish Highlands with the British Exploration Society. Over the course of the two weeks, our members planned their own expedition, chose their own trekking objectives, planned their routes and agreed on their remote campsites. Our members were completely self-sufficient with only the equipment and supplies they carried on their and even had to plan their routes to ensure they could collect water for drinking and cooking from streams!



**August
2021**

Our August Holiday Clubs recreated all those important events and holidays that we missed throughout the seemingly never-ending lockdowns. In partnership with Wigan Council our extraordinary staff team had a summer to be proud of with over three hundred children and young people, all eligible for Free School Meals, attending our Holiday Clubs. We had 2,078 attendances, went on 34 trips and arranged 230 activities a day across the whole provision.



“She has absolutely loved her time at Summer Camp! Thank you for making it so wonderful for her. The summer holidays are long! So anything that can help a working parent, a tired parent or just a bored child is such a blessing. You are a blessing.”

We created this video to capture the memories.



From 16th August we reopened our Universal open access offer, with the whole building accessible for all young people. Masks and social distancing were no longer mandatory, sanitiser was still available, and we continued enhanced cleaning and ventilation. To celebrate we extended our Free Memberships and Renewals.

In August we launched a new Comic Book Club to normalise and raise disability awareness through the power of comics. This took the form of a weekly inclusive session for both Juniors and Seniors to build a comic book that reflected and expressed the lives of young people with disabilities.

**Sept
2021**

In September Wigan Youth Zone's partnership work with Wigan Council was shortlisted as a finalist in the category of 'The Partnership Award' at the prestigious Children and Young People Now Award, in recognition of our excellent collaboration over the past year. We were proud of our accomplishments locally and were thrilled to have received this national recognition too. Over the pandemic we have been proud of the way in which we adapted and thought outside the box with regards to all our programming - particularly our partnership approach across the community.

**Children &
Young People Now
Awards 2021**

Finalist

**Oct
2021**

October was the busiest month since pre-Covid, reaching over 1,500 attendances per week, highlights including:



Our senior member Georgia Linde had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity at The Michael Josephson MBE Charity Ball 2021, singing on the same stage as Ella Henderson and Soul II Soul with a tear-jerking cover of When You Believe originally sang by Whitney and Maria Carey; which received a standing ovation.

Our young Roving Reporters created a variety of documentary-style videos surrounding the free holiday club provisions that were hosted throughout the Wigan and Leigh area over the summer, showcasing the impact these clubs had on young people, as well as exclusive interviews with Wigan Council Chief Executive Alison McKenzie-Folan and Lead Officer Gaynor Eastham.



Autumn holiday clubs were a great success with over 200 smiling faces each day during Half Term.



**Nov
2021**

From the 15th – 19th November, it was Anti-Bullying Week in the UK. We used themed activities in our sessions to teach about bullying and the devastating effects it can have.

In art, young people made anti-bullying themed posters and artwork to put on display in the youth zone. These posters talked about body positivity and feeling good in your own skin and also had factual information about bullying.



In music, our members created an anti-bullying playlist, filled with songs that helped them to feel good and celebrate being themselves.

Our sports department had an anti-bullying themed zoom meeting with Wigan MP and Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, Lisa Nandy.

We hosted our first-ever Young People's Awards to recognise achievements of our members across a range of categories, such as the Bill Ainscough Rising Star Award and the Dave Whelan Sportsman of the Year Award. The evening was the perfect way to recognise the valuable contributions that young people are making within the Youth Zone and the local community.



	<div data-bbox="330 199 571 443" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Some of our senior members were given an amazing opportunity to work alongside local artist Jessica Riley to celebrate the Wigan dialect and design a permanent mural which was unveiled at Wigan North Western train station. The mural looks beautiful and is a real credit to our town.</p>
<p>Dec 2021</p>	<p>We hosted Christmas parties for both our junior and senior sessions, with all kinds of festive fun, such as a snowman competition, snowball fight, Christmas inflatables, a just dance session and much more.</p> <div data-bbox="344 595 734 981" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="783 595 1169 981" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Given the uncertainty around the Omicron variant of Covid-19, we adapted our vital Family Christmas Meal event, which supports vulnerable families, by taking Christmas to their homes.</p> <p>Teams from both Wigan Youth Zone and Wigan Athletic Community Trust volunteered their time to be Santa's Little Helpers and delivered six minibuses full of presents and food hampers to people's doorsteps, as well as touring the borough dressed as elves giving out treats and colouring books.</p> <div data-bbox="330 1375 659 1702" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="764 1375 1267 1702" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>This Christmas alone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🎄 We helped over 300 vulnerable people including young people 🎄 We created a memorable Christmas for over 80 struggling families 🎄 We welcomed 1,560 young people to the building throughout the period 🎄 We fed 238 young people who were reliant on free school meals 🎄 We offered over 420 young people a Free Holiday Club



Our young enterprise team Bee-lieve! won Young Enterprise's 'Trade Fair Competition', which was open to teams across the whole of the UK. Their business focused on raising awareness about the declining number of bees throughout the UK.



**Jan
2022**

We hosted a 'Health Yo-Self' event for our senior members, aimed at providing young people with the tools and knowledge required to improve their physical, nutritional and mental health.

Youth Workers had lots of fantastic discussions and there were lots of activities on offer, from meditation sessions to exercise classes.



In January teens were put through their paces by a former rugby professional, as part of a new 2022 'Workout for your Wellbeing' programme.

This brand-new six-week programme was run by a former Leigh Centurions player and aimed to help the young people improve their mental wellbeing by increasing the amount of regular physical exercise they undertake.



In celebration of #MentoringMonth2022 – our Music Coordinator, Ian, created this video sharing his mentoring role experiences.



We continued our campaign around practical advice and information to young people about safety at night, including providing personal safety alarms.

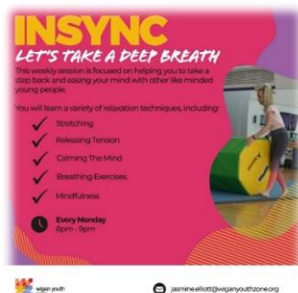
**Feb
2022**

We ran a Winter Olympics themed holiday club for 5 days and welcomed over 252 individual members, with 520 combined visits.



Hannah, our Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, marked Children's Mental Health Week with this video blog about all of our wellbeing activities.

We launched three new weekly programmes: **INSYNC**- taking a step back and taking some time to slow down and release built-up tension; **'BROgression'** - targeted at helping young men and boys with their emotional development; and **'The Period Project'** which educated young people on menstrual health and breaking stigmas.



In February we exceeded 5,000 active memberships which was a satisfying achievement and our highest number in over 5 years.

**March
2022**

We celebrated International Women's Day with this compilation video of our female members.



Our Juniors raised money in aid of the current crisis in Ukraine through baking cakes and biscuits.

