



The Tilley Award 2001

'LOWBIZA'

SAFE 'CLUB SCENE EVENT' FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

CATEGORY: Crime & Disorder Reduction

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SAFE `CLUB SCENE' EVENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Summary

The **LOWBIZA Partnership** was formed following the Youth Consultation process in the Waveney District in 1999 which aimed to identify the main concerns of young people in relation to policing and council service provision.

Problems included;

- **lack of sustained youth provision/services**
- **lack of social facilities**
- **poor transport particularly in rural areas**
- **poor relations with officers on the beat particularly in relation to communication**
- **growing disenchantment concerning inactivity following similar outcomes raised at a previous years conference**

Crime Analysis had shown that 25% of all arrested persons that had been reported, cautioned or charged in Lowestoft in the previous year had been 17yrs or under.

In an attempt to address this problem a meeting, involving all interested agencies and groups, took place to identify solutions that would not only tackle youth related crime but would seek to provide an alternative to nuisance behaviour/offending in the form of positive enjoyable activity that was affordable and accessible by all in the target age range 13 - 17 yrs.

Details of a Crimestoppers `safe dance' project in Bedford were considered and it was agreed a similar project should be developed for the young people of Waveney. Marketing under the Crimestoppers Trust was considered inappropriate due to royalties. The Partnership wanted to seek their own identity and plough all profits into local youth provision .

The aim of the project was to engage young people through providing a drug, alcohol and tobacco free dance event in a safe `club' environment, at the same time promote a healthy awareness of real life issues that affect young people today.

The '**Lowbiza**' partnership brought together the following agencies;

- **Suffolk Constabulary**
- **Waveney District Council**
- **Suffolk Health**
- **Norcas/Wads (Waveney Alcohol and Drugs Service)**
- **Community Education**
- **Waveney District Crime Prevention Panels**
- **Lowestoft Neighbourhood Watch Association**
- **(Later) The Millennium Volunteers**

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'**Lowbiza**' events in Waveney have gone from strength to strength with the latest event attracting 467 young people. Having secured their interest the audience is now captivated and receptive to key messages the partnership would like to and are able to deliver.

From 1st April 1999 to 31st March 2000, 27% of arrested persons reported/ cautioned/ charged were aged 17yrs or under.

Since the commencement of 'Lowbiza**' ie. from 1st April 2000 to 31st March 2001, 13% of arrested persons reported/cautioned/charged were aged 17yrs or under.**

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Description of the Project

Following the inaugural meeting of the partnership work got underway to secure funding and sponsorship, local businesses were approached, Waveney District Council agreed to underwrite up to £1,000 in order that a well known girl band 'Daphne and Celeste' could appear live on stage. 'Tiffin' nightclub agreed to provide a free venue along with door staff and bar staff at half the usual fee. The 'theme' was agreed as 'drugs and alcohol' and a 'chill-out' area would be utilised where information would be freely available with Youth Workers on hand for advice etc.

The date was set for Wednesday 26th April 2000, a night the club was not usually open, and a date in the Easter school holidays. The 'theme' was going to be 'drugs and alcohol'. Local bus companies agreed to provide transport in from the rural areas at no cost to the Partnership although a £1 charge would be made to try to raise funds to assist to cover costs. A local graphic designer - David Girling, designed the 'Lowbiza' logo and tickets and posters were produced featuring the logo. Costs for artwork and logo design were heavily discounted thanks to David Girling and printing costs were kept to a minimum by utilising Suffolk Constabulary FHQ Printing Dept. The Partnership recognised at an early stage the need to adopt good marketing techniques and the logo seeks to identify the project through product labelling.

The first event was advertised through the High Schools and promoted in local newspapers and mentioned on local radio. Tickets were £5 (£4 in advance) and on sale at the High Schools on certain lunchtimes prior to the event and also at Youth Centres throughout the Waveney District, Ticket sales were slow and take up was poor.

There was no demand for transport so the bus companies offers were politely refused.

It was clear the project had not been 'sold' in the schools, despite having been given full information packs and clear evidence that the project was backed by Community Education and Suffolk Health. Tickets were, on sale from a police 'pod' on the two Saturdays preceding the event but only a few were sold.

Local businesses contributed merchandise for a free prize draw, including a colour TV, personal CD player, CD ROMs, cycle equipment etc. A local DJ who had been involved in 'Safe Dance' projects previously was booked and was briefed to promote '**Lowbiza**' and the project aims throughout the course of the evening.

The event went ahead as planned - at 7.30pm the nightclub owner withdrew permission for the DJ to use the in-house sound equipment so we were forced to agree to use the in-house DJ's. '**Lowbiza**' was not promoted nor too the ethos behind the project. The 'chill-out' area had been well used with lots of leaflet material being taken away by the young people. The cloakroom facility was not free as had been promised and the soft drinks were too expensive. 180 youngsters attended the event. 92 questionnaires were completed. The event was featured in the Lowestoft and Beccles and Bungay journals and photographs taken at the event by the '**Lowbiza**' team were published. The press coverage was on the whole good and the next event date was promoted as 'venue to be fixed'.

Conclusion-

1. The event needed better publicity, more support and advertising within not only High Schools but Middle Schools as well.
2. Better advertising on local radio - The Beach and in the media.
3. The use of the Police Pod for ticket sales had been unsuccessful.
4. The venue needed to be reviewed and a contract drawn up with the Club Owner.
5. Ticket prices needed to be reduced, drinks cheaper and no charge for cloakroom facilities.
6. Transport needed to be promoted and needed to be 'Free'.
7. The Live Act needed careful consideration as 'Daphne and Celeste' were not as popular as expected.

At the debrief meeting the '**Lowbiza**' partnership discussed the future. It was agreed that the project should go ahead but needed additional funds to kick start it sufficiently. Costs had to be kept down to a minimum. Det Sgt Goddard had applied to the Suffolk Police Authority for funding and the outcome was awaited. The problems with Tiffins owner - Mr Gibson could not be ignored and a new venue was sought.

Alan Keely ;the Community Safety Officer with Waveney District Council secured the Waveney Leisure Centre as a free venue for the second event on Weds 2nd August 2000.

Pc Keightley made enquiries with the Bedford `SNAP' project and identified an up and coming boy band `Give `n' Take' and secured them for the next event at minimal cost. Beach Radio were approached and Simon Timms (Radio presenter/DJ) was invited to join the partnership to assist with promotion and advertising. Discounted radio advertising was secured through 'sponsorship' and Simon agreed to support the Partnerships DJ on the night. A local female singer, Leanne Mitchell, was to perform free of charge as she wanted to promote her recent record contract. Ticket prices were reduced.

The event was publicised again in the schools and Youth Centres and in local shops and various places providing young peoples leisure and entertainment. Beach Radio advertised the event at reduced cost and flyers were handed out on the two Saturdays prior to the event in Lowestoft Town Centre and to young people attending a Club Xtreme event at the Waveney Leisure Centre.

The event went ahead. The DJ was disorganised and did not confide in the group until very late in the day that he had been unable to secure a sound system. Community Education thankfully stepped in and provided loan equipment from the `Metro ' project. The stage construction was not straightforward as live performers caused too much vibration for the sound system. The stage had to be re-set on rubber matting. At 7.30pm on the night with over 400 young people queued up outside there was total failure of the sound system - no music U Pc Keightley and the Live Acts' manager were frantically trying to identify the fault and traced it back to an amplifier that had been damaged, the DJ having not secured the equipment properly whilst in transit. Fortunately the technical difficulties were overcome and this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the young clubbers who had been kept fully informed of the difficulty. 425 people attended the event, 64 questionnaires were completed. The bus companies again supplied buses free of charge, posters advertising the event in the rural areas also promoted the free transport. Those requiring a seat were required to reserve it by telephoning Halesworth Police and leaving their name.(administration by police staff). Again there was a free raffle and prizes had been donated through local business sponsorship.

Conclusion-

1. The venue whilst used by other dance providers, did not meet the requirements of both the Partnership and music purists (ie. acoustics, atmosphere and lack of stage).
2. The set up and break down of the stage construction and sound equipment was extremely labour intensive and by its temporary nature was problematic to say the least.
3. The DJ was poor however the mood and spirit of the evening was lifted by the personal appearance of local radio broadcaster Simon Timms.

4. Whilst Leanne Mitchell's performance was flawless it was mistimed by the DJ and one song too long, the youngsters became bored.
5. Give 'n' Take were extremely well received and there was *very* good interaction between the young people and members of the group later in the evening.
6. The buses which had been advertised as 'free' had been used this time with 40 people attending from the rural areas. Community Education had agreed to 'supervise' the journeys both to and from and there were no problems.
7. The 'Chill-out' area had been wrongly located as the area had to be closed off to limit public access mid-way through the event.
8. A local photographer had offered a photograph service but this too had been wrongly located within the main hall and dance area (only place to go) although the take up had been good.
9. The free raffle was well received.
10. Publicity before and after the event had been good. A web site had also been set up giving details of the event together with an e-mail address.

At the debrief meeting it was decided that of the two events 'Tiffin' had provided the more suitable environment and a 'club' setting with 'in-house' lighting, sound system and stage were essential. The evaluation and comments that had been made suggested that the Live Act had to be carefully selected, the music had to be better and the night club environment had been preferred by some.

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It was decided a new night club venue was needed so negotiations took place to secure 'The Arena' at Lowestoft. Andy Crisp the owner, was approached and was fully supportive of the project. He agreed to provide a free venue, free registered door staff / bar staff, free cloakroom facilities, reduced price soft drinks and non-alcoholic cocktails. The video link system throughout the club was utilised to promote the Partnership, the aims of the project and the theme for the event. A contract letter was signed and a full risk assessment for the event was carried out.

The event was planned for Wednesday 21st February 2001, close to Valentines Day and in the half term holiday. It was advertised as a 'Valentines Bash' and the theme was appropriately 'Health and Sex Education'. The tickets were redesigned with slight amendments and printed up in pink to complement the theme.

The Millennium Volunteers joined the Partnership and assisted to promote the event through close contact with schools. They designed 'Splat Boards' which advertise '**Lowbiza**' and placed them in all the schools. The boards are updated with information and photographs from the '**Lowbiza**' events and will be used to advertise 'the next event'

The Waveney District Community Safety Strategy Group were approached to assist with funding and awarded £750-00. This was in addition to £500-00 awarded by the Police Authority. The Partnership purchased polo shirts bearing the '**Lowbiza**' logo for the members to wear at the event making them highly visible and identifiable as event organisers. Give-aways in the form of '**Lowbiza**' shaggies (furry bugs) were purchased to be handed out at events. Roses were purchased for re-sale with a view to raising funds. The bus companies again agreed to support the evening by running free buses. A sign making company - Perspective Signs Ltd, of Ipswich, sponsored the production of an illuminated '**Lowbiza**' sign for use at 'The Arena' on '**Lowbiza**' nights. Community Education secured funding to have 1,000 'Safe Cards' produced and handed out at the event. The cards could be endorsed with the holders name and emergency contact number and gave reference to a local taxi companies telephone number together with the National Drugs Hotline, NORCAS and the Local Information Support Detached-youth workers.

The advertising was very much the same as the last event with Beach Radio running slots during the week prior to the event at reduced cost. In addition, Community Education ran a display in the Library in Lowestoft from 5th to 23rd February 2001. 25 tickets were given to the local press to be offered as prizes for a write in competition, a similar number also went to Beach Radio for a phone in competition. Both run in the two weeks prior to the event.

The night club extends over three floors - the ground floor and point of entry was used as a 'Chill out' area. All the health and sex education information was available from here. Youth Workers from Community Education, Suffolk Health and Waveney Drug and Alcohol Service were on hand for advice. All the information was free and readily available for anyone wanting it. The bar on this floor was not in use. The young clubbers had to queue in this area for entry up stairs to the next floor and were a captive audience. They could not avoid seeing the displays and all knew the information was available. The second floor provided a bar selling soft drinks and the dance floor. The third floor provided a viewing gallery over the dance floor, seating areas and a bar serving non-alcoholic cocktails.

467 young people attended the event, 54 used the free bus transport. 260 questionnaires were completed. Those who took the time to complete them were rewarded with bugs and sweets.

Conclusion-

1. The venue was ideal - the separate 'chill out' area worked well as it was quiet and people were able to talk without shouting. The bar should have been open serving soft drinks and encouraging more use of the area by those who wanted to have a quiet chat and drink.
2. The lack of live music was not an issue.
4. Of the 54 who used the free bus transport 2 did not return. They had not let anyone know their intentions and there was no method of identifying who they were so parents could not be contacted immediately. Records will now be kept and passengers checked on and off and asked to let the Community Education Officers know their plans before they leave the bus on arrival at the venue.
5. The organisers were easily identifiable and could be immediately approached if required and giving overall, a more organised and professional image.
6. The give-aways were popular and there is mileage in selling affordable merchandise to generate funds for '**Lowbiza**'.
7. The need for a 'label' cannot be over-emphasised - the comments and feedback indicate that the youngsters attending did so because it was '**Lowbiza**' and even though the events are strictly 'No Alcohol / No Drugs / No Smoking' they were not put off. No real problems encountered.
8. The information and leaflets were in demand and the Youth workers were actively engaged most of the evening. It is crucial to make information easily available and not force it upon those attending the events.

At the de-brief meeting the question asked by everyone was 'where do we go now?' The venue and arrangements were clearly a success and can be replicated. Two more events are planned - Weds 25th July 2001, and Weds 24th October 2001. The theme for the first event will be - 'be safe'- including personal safety and safe in the sun. The theme for the second event will be decided through consultation at the first event. We need to meet the needs of the young people themselves. Various options will be put forward on the evaluation questionnaire together with an option to choose a theme.

The Crime Reduction Officers in the neighbouring Suffolk Coastal District Area are keen to adopt '**Lowbiza**' and extend into Felixstowe. Following an initial planning meeting a partnership has been formed. Keyplayers from the same agencies have been asked to form an organising committee. A suitable venue has already been secured and the manager of 'The Wave' Nightclub in Felixstowe is in full support.

Discussions have taken place regarding the possible introduction of a 'Lowbiza' membership card which would not only serve to assist to identify an individual cardholder in the event of an emergency but would also provide an emergency contact number for their next of kin. The card could secure privileges at 'Lowbiza' events or secure the holder discounts at local outlets eg. Leisure I entertainment centres, food outlets, clothing and music stores etc. The card would encourage 'good citizenship' and 'good behaviour' and could be withdrawn in the event the cardholder abuses those privileges. A lot more work is to be done in this area in consultation with the Youth Offending Teams. A local identity card making company has been approached and support is anticipated.

From the evaluation of the last event it is clear the majority of those attending have been 13 yrs old with a gradual decrease up the age range with only a few 16 - 17 yr Olds actually attending.

Recent Crime Analysis has indicated a decrease in levels of youth offending over the last two years. Of the 370 persons arrested in Lowestoft and either reported, cautioned or charged during the period 1st April 1999 to 31st March 2000, 27% were aged 17yrs or under.

Of the 324 persons arrested in Lowestoft and either reported, cautioned or charged during the period 1st April 2000 to 31st March 2001, 13% were aged 17yrs or under.

Whilst 'Lowbiza' cannot claim all the credit it may be that the project has gone some way to improve police/public relations specifically with young people and has encouraged sensible behaviour. It has certainly shown the young people of Waveney that they can have a good time without the need for 'drugs, alcohol or tobacco'.

The process has provided the multi-agency management group which is closely linked with the Community Safety Partnership an ideal forum in which to consult young people from the District in relation to issues raised within the District Community Safety Strategy. Key messages can be delivered on a wide range of subjects in an informal way and are backed up by a support network of Youth Service Providers in Waveney who have in the past found it difficult to engage the young people who are possibly in most need.

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