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Summary: Route 81 Youth Project

Route 81 started up in 2003 in response to the major problems of anti-social behaviour and under-age drinking within the area. When consulted, young people expressed a sense of boredom with nothing to do and the need for their own 'youth space'.

Throughout the period 2003-2011 a dedicated group of adult volunteers, young people and two part-time funded youth workers worked collectively to seek premises and funding. We started fortnightly youth events to keep young people engaged and develop ownership and this in turn permitted strong relationships to be built. We are completely focused on helping young people with such teenage transition issues as confidence, self-esteem, relationships, alcohol and drugs through the provision of a safe, trusting environment, and supporting them whenever issues arise.

In 2011, Route 81 moved into their new premises, the former Garelochhead Outdoor Centre, now known as Centre 81. The Youth Project has its own dedicated space within the 'Hub' and the remainder of the building accommodates a Youth Hostel for up to 40 people, a community gym with classes, café, hall, meeting room and IT suite. Community events and needs are catered for within Centre 81, generating income which contributes towards the cost of ongoing work of Route 81 Youth Project.

Route 81 provides FREE youth provision for young people aged 11-18 living within the catchment area of Hermitage Academy. Our work links in strongly with the Youthlink Scotland 'Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work'.

We offer a varied of programme of events throughout the year, including drop-ins, workshops, Easter and summer programmes, community events. One to one sessions on an ad-hoc and formal basis are also offered to all young people and is a strong area of growth within route.

Testimonial:

"Route 81 has impacted on my life by giving me the opportunity to do something positive and different with my life, meet new friends, but also train up on different skills. It's like being a part of a big family at Route 81 and you develop really strong relationships and it has changed my life – I am much more confident – I used to be quite unstable and unconfident. I could not have got the support from anywhere else. Without this support I would not be the person I am today. I would not be so ambitious as my confidence and skills have grown so much."

The Future

Project 81 remains heavily reliant on external funding. We have really struggled financially for the last eighteen months as it has become increasingly difficult to obtain funding. The Board has also suffered some serious challenges. It is only through the help of the Big Lottery that our doors are still open, however that funding is coming to an end in the very near future, and unless we become successful at winning funding applications we are still in very real danger of having to close in 2016.

We have spent considerable time considering whether we actually continue to have a "fundable proposition". Our research tells us it is clear that we do – we make a difference to young people's lives. If we were we to close, the problems of boredom, violence, alcohol and drugs for young people

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in our catchment area would increase again, with significant adverse consequences for our community.