



ACoRP

Developing engagement of young people in community rail: a strategic framework for 2019-2022

Prepared by the ACoRP team in consultation with members,
partners and board members, Jul-Dec 2018
For review in late 2019-20

BACKGROUND

i) Why do we need this framework?

We have developed this framework with the aim of supporting greater engagement of young people within the community rail movement. It sets out how ACoRP, as the national association for community rail, will support its members (community rail partnerships, station friends and other station-based groups around Britain) to develop their confidence, skills, abilities and activities to reach out to and effectively engage young people – including by working in partnership with others, and respecting young people's ability to make a real difference.

We have produced this framework in response to both needs, interests and enthusiasm within the community rail movement, and wider social factors and public policy goals. Some key factors include:



Within community rail

- Keen interest expressed in engaging young people more through our members' survey
- Many members not engaging this age group currently
- Many say they are wanting in skills/ capacity/ confidence to engage young people
- Important for community rail groups to engage widely, represent their communities and promote social cohesion and inclusion
- There's a need to consider 'succession' among community rail volunteers and staffing
- It helps to bring in fresh thinking, skills and approaches
- There are some great examples we can learn from, where young people, communities and railways benefit

Wider factors

- Young people form travel habits and mobility horizons that affect their entire lives
- Young people want to access opportunities to improve their prospects, and are enthusiastic about making a difference to the world around them (including sustainability), but can face barriers to engaging in social action and become marginalised or worried, especially around job security¹
- Young people are increasingly priced out of driving and dependent on public transport, yet may feel rail is out of their reach
- Sedentary lifestyles have ill health effects, and transport is part of the solution to this
- Society is changing rapidly; we must work with young people to ready transport for the future
- The rail industry lacks diversity, and industry and government are keen to rectify this

BACKGROUND

ii) Who do we mean by 'young people'?

The term 'young people' varies in its use, but often refers to 16-24 year-olds. For the purposes of this framework, we are focusing on **supporting engagement of 11-25 year-olds**. *This focus does not de-value work with other age-ranges, nor does it mean that ACoRP will not share and support good practice in working with younger children or other groups.* It is simply that this is identified as an area for development with wide-ranging benefits to be gained. This seems appropriate for this framework, due to:

- The need to allow for flexibility among community rail partnerships and groups to develop activities that work for them and their local area and partners – this broad age range would mean we develop support and advice that can be adapted for a range of needs;
- Engagement of secondary schools and colleges and this age range is presently under-developed across much of community rail, yet this age group is especially important to engage in learning, discussion and skills related to transport and travel. It is around the start of secondary school when young people often start to travel independently and form views and habits to do with transport;
- This age bracket encompasses young people going through higher education and entering the job market, who community rail can positively benefit through supporting sustainable and healthy transport choices, broadening mobility horizons, opening up wider access to opportunities, and supporting skills and employability. There is therefore a particular opportunity to align with and support wider efforts to help reengage young people with education, employment or training, addressing 'NEET' figures. This also fits with the Young Person's Railcard offer.

This is a broad group, so in delivering youth engagement, consideration still needs to be given to age-appropriate approaches. In addition, within any age range, in any locality, 'young people' are a diverse group with wide-ranging backgrounds, circumstances, challenges, aspirations and views. This framework is therefore founded on respecting young people and their ideas and goals, and recognising what they can bring to community rail and their local areas. It encourages recognition of diversity, and consideration of how different approaches might engage and support young people with particular needs, and who stand to especially gain from involvement in community rail.

As is acknowledged below, it should be noted that added value can be delivered through integrating and aligning work to engage people of different ages, and across different demographics, such as enabling interaction between young and elderly people, or delivering a full programme of engagement from early years up to leavers and higher education. In addition, successful work with other age groups might be adapted/learnt from/replicated with young people, especially in considering how we engage young people transitioning to secondary school.

iii) Government policy context

In November 2018, the Department for Transport published its Community Rail Development Strategy. This sets out how community rail can be developed and supported to deliver ongoing, increasing impact related to four themes: **providing a voice for the community; promoting sustainable and healthy travel; bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion; supporting social and economic development.**

The successful engagement of young people within community rail aids delivery under all four of these pillars. The strategy also specifically says that '*there is scope for community rail to extend its reach, especially through engagement of young people, with the 'potential to build long-term healthy and sustainable mobility with significant implications for individuals' and communities' prosperity, health and wellbeing.*'

The strategy therefore proactively encourages development of this area of work, and recognises its importance to the rail industry too, in terms of its diversity and development.²

The engagement of young people in community rail has been expressly acknowledged within the government's cross-departmental strategy on Tackling Loneliness, as a powerful force in enabling young people to overcome confidence barriers, access opportunities and play an active role in society. This also links to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Integrated Communities agenda.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Based on consultations ACoRP has carried out around the development of this framework with its team, members, board members and partners (including organisations working to empower young people), we recommend that all work to engage young people within community rail is founded on these principles. These align with recognised good practice and research on youth engagement showing the types of approach most likely to deliver meaningful and beneficial outcomes.³ They also fit with experience and research carried out within community rail,⁴ showing that young people tend to be full of ideas and inspiration, with a strong focus on building a positive, sustainable future, and using communications, creativity and community engagement to achieve this.

Listening and respecting – drawing on young people's views and ideas and helping them to voice these; respecting and valuing their diversity, needs, and contributions, and their role and importance as active citizens, with rights to participate⁵

Empowering participation – carrying out deep and meaningful engagement that empowers young people to participate actively, achieve their goals and make a difference in their area; making them partners in delivering action, rather than telling them what to do or who to be

Broadening horizons – supporting young people to explore and access with confidence the range of opportunities that are open and important to them; facilitating positive interaction with people and places around them, enabling them to affect change in their own lives and society

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

Through engaging young people in community rail activities, in line with the above principles, we recognise that the below positive outcomes can be achieved, potentially with profound implications for young people's lives, as well as benefiting the community rail movement, our railways, and society as a whole.

Community rail can:

- draw on young people's ideas, perspectives, help, dynamism and future-focus
- engage more volunteers, greater support and involvement, aiding succession
- better represent and understand the community
- deliver and demonstrate greater social value

The railways and rail industry can:

- draw on young people's ideas, perspectives, help, dynamism and future-focus
- influence travel habits and encourage rail use
- better understand current and future passengers' needs
- develop its workforce and diversity
- achieve reduced anti-social behaviour at stations

Young people can:

- integrate, interact, participate and make a difference in their community, beyond mainstream channels
- broaden their (mobility) horizons, and realise they can reach further afield and access more
- improve their confidence and capability to travel
- access and get into wider employment/training/education/social opportunities
- adopt sustainable, healthy, safe travel habits
- develop skills, confidence, health and wellbeing
- feel empowered, gain self-efficacy and a 'voice'

Society and communities benefit from:

- interaction across generations and difference, building cohesion and resilience
- less pollution, improved local environment, reduced climate impact
- increased education and employment
- improved health and wellbeing
- 'early intervention' on social problems
- active citizenship
- social inclusion, social justice, social equity

Longer term, if we are successful in developing youth engagement within community rail, we may be able to achieve further outcomes, collectively across the community rail movement, such as:

- Community rail is better known and understood within communities, and across generations;

- Young people's voices heard at a strategic level within rail and transport development.

ACoRP will, in consultation with members and partners, keep opportunities to work towards these longer-term goals under review.

FOUR BROAD APPROACHES

Community rail partnerships and groups can engage with young people in a spectrum of positive ways, and different approaches will be right for different groups. This framework does not seek to dictate what approach to take, however the below sets out four broad 'tried and tested' approaches that ACoRP is encouraging and supporting its members to consider and make use of, and which can be used in combination and adapted to suit different local contexts.

a) Community rail volunteering

Community rail volunteering (at stations, events and office-based) can be promoted and managed in ways that make it more appealing and beneficial to young people. This might include: promoting a range of volunteering opportunities that will suit different interests, skills, availability and commitment levels; making clear that people of all ages are encouraged to get involved and showing that your group is here for the community as a whole; making clear the benefits of volunteering, in terms of skills, employability/CV development, enjoyment and social interaction; recognising and celebrating volunteer achievements, such as through certificates and 'volunteer of the month/year' awards, and in communications; partnering with youth engagement or volunteering organisations to reach out to young volunteers specifically. Volunteering might be taken further, so young people are encouraged to serve on management committees or boards, informing and engaging in the running and decision-making of groups, drawing on their creative thinking, ideas and different perspectives.

b) 'Task and finish' projects and campaigns

There are countless opportunities for engaging young people in specific projects or campaigns, such as designing and running events, marketing campaigns, arts projects or heritage research. Typically lasting 6-10 weeks, these projects can be empowering and beneficial for both young people and the community rail group, especially where young people are given a simple brief and allowed to create, steer and deliver the project themselves, and where there is a tangible result and recognition of their impact. Experience within and beyond community rail shows that young people tend to be brimming with ideas, often orientated around communications and creative projects. These projects can be run in partnership with schools, colleges or youth engagement organisations that can organise groups of young people to take part, and which will need to ensure projects fit with their wider goals. They can also link with rail partners, providing them with access to young people's perspectives and ideas (e.g. as part of community consultation on their plans, or to explore how to promote a line to young audiences).

Good practice example: The Abbey Line challenged college students to create a presentation on attracting new passengers. They presented ideas from date nights to cycling events to rebranding, most including use of social media and apps. The top three were presented by students to the train operating company at their headquarters, and some ideas are now being implemented.



c) Work experience and placements

Community rail partnerships and groups may be able to help young people develop skills and explore and pursue different career pathways (including within rail) through hosting or facilitating work experience, work placements, internships, visits, talks and other opportunities. These might be hosted directly, or through connections with the rail industry or other local partners. These may be especially empowering for young people due to the way community rail can often offer experience in an unusually wide range of community engagement and transport-related activities, as well as linking in with mix of public, private and third sector partners.

In addition, community rail's role in facilitating access to sustainable travel means that it can play a multi-dimensional role in partnering with educational establishments and youth organisations: supporting access to work experience opportunities, as well as facilitating the opportunities themselves. The community rail organisation can benefit significantly too, from the added support and new perspectives.

FOUR BROAD APPROACHES

Good practice example: The Penistone Line Partnership works closely with the University of Huddersfield and takes on year-long student placements. These students can shape their work on the placement according to their interests and ambitions, as well as aligning with and adding value to the Partnership's activity plans. One student recently organised a successful year-long arts programme, engaging a range of other groups in the community in creative projects.

d) Railway confidence programmes

Numerous community rail partnerships run some form of railway confidence or educational initiative aimed at helping children and young people to develop skills, confidence and awareness to be able to travel by rail. However, many are focused more on primary schools, and there seems scope to extend the approach, age-appropriately, to older age groups, who are likely to be starting to travel independently and consider what education, training, employment and social opportunities are within their reach. If they are delivered in an empowering way which draws on young people's aspirations and concerns, such programmes could have a transformative effect in enabling young people to broaden their horizons, consider opportunities that might have seemed out of reach, and to form sustainable, safe and healthy travel habits.

Good practice example: Community Rail Lancashire's Railway Confidence Programme engages thousands of children and young people each year, including many from deprived backgrounds and with special education needs. Many have never travelled by rail before, and lack understanding and confidence. The scheme builds awareness in planning and making journeys, connecting young people with wider opportunities. It also includes targeted, intensive employment programmes within rail and community rail, promoting career opportunities to a wide range of participants.



ACORP'S OFFER TO MEMBERS

To support the wider roll-out and adaption of the above models for youth engagement – or other types of youth engagement that might emerge – ACoRP will continue to develop its advice and support, training and development, events, resources, partnerships and evaluation activities for members. This will be an iterative process, in which we will continually review and consider what members are telling us and what works, to shape the detail and content of these services.

However, the below summarises the main ways we will seek to support members, and some broad aims for developing this support over the three years. This responds to identified barriers that members tell us they face, including:

- A need to develop confidence, skills knowledge and ideas to engage young people;
- Difficulties engaging schools, colleges and youth groups;
- Insufficient time, staffing and resources;
- Worries about unaffordability of rail and other attitudinal barriers.

Ad hoc support and advice

A big part of our support for members is the advice and help provided directly by our operations team, including responding to queries and requests, and coordinating planning meetings. We will use this to support youth engagement by:

- Developing our operations team's knowledge of youth engagement, through our own training and development programme and partnerships with youth organisations;
- Proactively prompting members to consider youth engagement as part of their planning & delivery;
- Point members towards the positive outcomes that can be delivered, and suggest how these can be achieved and assessed, as well as relevant funding sources to develop capacity;
- Encourage members to share good practice and learn from each other, such as facilitating buddying/mentoring, encouraging engagement with CRL's Education Network, and encouraging use of the other services below.

Training and development

Our training and development programme has already had a strong focus on helping members to deepen and widen their community engagement, including specifically with young people. We will develop and roll this out further by:

- Running sessions on outcomes-orientated planning, which use the above outcomes with young people as examples;
- Offering further learning opportunities on inclusive volunteering (format and content to be considered), with some specific attention to engaging young people;
- Offering training on youth participation, potentially on topics such as how to involve young people in governance and empower them into shaping decisions that affect their community and railway;
- Embedding principles of good practice in youth participation in any relevant sessions that are run as part of the training and development programme;
- Signposting members to relevant youth focussed organisations and where possible creating best practice templates for effective partnership working;
- Considering members' needs in regards to child protection, safeguarding, school/college procedures and disclosures, and provide appropriate training/advice/signposting.

Events

We have developed our events programme in recent years so the content is suitably varied, engaging, challenging and insightful, in line with what members need and want.

Our challenge with events is to focus closely enough on key topics to enable meaningful exploration (rather the skirting over lots of issues in a superficial way), while ensuring mass appeal across varied members. However, given the widespread enthusiasm for this topic expressed by members, we will hone in more on youth engagement by:

- Dedicating regular workshops/slots at members' seminars to youth engagement in line with this framework, especially drawing on external partners and sharing members' successes;
- Encouraging entries to the awards that demonstrate deep, meaningful engagement of young people;
- Aligning our events work with training and development and resources development, so these work-strands are complementary and build on and follow-up from one another.

ACORP'S OFFER TO MEMBERS

Resources and communications

We continue to grow our range of tools, resources and case studies for members. While many materials we have produced touch on or relate to youth engagement (for example, our reports and guidance on social inclusion, social enterprise and social media), none focus in particular on this topic. We will therefore:

- Draw attention to the aspects of existing resources that can be used to support and inform youth engagement, especially our social inclusion report, and our forthcoming 'Value of Community Rail' report, which will draw attention to additional value that can be gleaned through youth engagement;
- Consider and seek funding for a dedicated guidance resource or toolkit on engaging young people in community rail, aligning with this strategy, and drawing on our partners below and relevant research into engaging young people and their views, and signposting to existing relevant materials. This might particularly include materials to aid collection and understanding of young people's views, and to aid genuine participation and two-way, engaging communications;
- When supporting development of communications and marketing in community rail, give attention to methods and content that might particularly appeal to young people and support two-way dialogue;
- Promote successes in youth engagement through case studies and communications, particularly highlighting evidence of the outcomes above being delivered, and encouraging partnership working.

Signposting partners and funders

Many of our members have fed back that a lack of confidence, skills and capacity in this area of work, and difficulties engaging schools, colleges and youth groups, is holding them back in engaging more young people. As well as supporting development of skills, knowledge and confidence through the services above, we will also proactively signpost and facilitate links with funders and partners who can help to break down these barriers, by bringing expertise and experience, established youth engagement programmes and 'access' to young people, and resources and funding. We will facilitate this through:

- Working to establish formal partnerships with key youth organisations, which can help us overcome the barriers mentioned above, and which recognise the benefits of working with community rail to promote sustainable mobility and access to opportunity;
- Promoting relevant funding opportunities through the above member services;
- Exploring with funders and our youth engagement partners whether community rail groups can be offered specific advice and encouragement on applying for funds.



WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Prince's Trust

ACoRP is pleased to be entering a formal partnership with Prince's Trust, to facilitate and encourage local partnerships between community rail groups and Prince's Trust local programmes. This will involve:

- Putting our operations team in contact with regional Trust representatives, to enable cross-referral of our members and Prince's Trust community and employability programmes to one another;
- Issuing communications to our members and local Prince's Trust programmes, highlighting the benefits and potential ways of working together, and showing how to get in touch;
- Focusing particularly on how community rail can aid employability and access to opportunity, and advising our members on developing and evidencing impact in these areas;
- Carrying out national communications around this partnership to show how community rail is committed to engaging with young people to promote wider access to opportunity.

Groundwork

We have been working with Groundwork to run workshops for our members on engaging young people, and to consult on this framework. We will seek to develop this further, with a particular focus on developing our members' skills and confidence in running meaningful volunteering and outdoor/local environment projects (so especially related to approaches a and b above), and encouraging links between our members and Groundwork's local groups and youth ambassadors network.

Other partnerships

We are conscious that there are numerous other organisations working with young people, with which it may be beneficial to build links. We will therefore also explore links with National Citizens Service, Scouts Association, Girlguiding, Duke of Edinburgh, YHA.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

This is a three-year strategic framework to guide and underpin ACoRP's support for its members in relation to youth engagement. It will therefore be applied and integrated into ACoRP's annual work plans for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, with specific activities, timescales and targets laid out. As part of ACoRP's annual review and planning process – and in our quarterly reporting to the Department for Transport – we will consider progress made, lessons and successes in relation to this framework.

In particular, we will assess the following key measures in the following ways:

- Number of members with dedicated focuses/activities related to engaging young people in their annual plans – assessed through annual planning process;
- Number of known local partnerships between community rail and our partners in engaging young people – assessed through annual planning process;
- Analysis of positive outcomes achieved through our training courses and workshops about youth engagement to do with confidence and ability to engage young people – assessed through training and workshop feedback;

- Proportion of members who report (through our members' survey) a lack of skills and confidence, uncertainty about what to do, difficulty engaging schools/colleges/youth groups, or a lack of capacity as barriers to engaging young people – assessed through our members' survey, against 2018 benchmarks of 28%, 32%, 44%, 52% respectively;
- Number of Community Rail Awards entries that specifically highlight engagement of young people (within the entry summary) – assessed through CR Awards data, against a 2018 benchmark of 10 in the children & young people category, 14 in other categories;
- Analysis of outcomes above evidenced as being delivered through community rail case studies and award entries collated each year by ACoRP, including feedback collected from young people through members' projects.

As part of our annual review and planning process, we will consider if this framework should be further improved or amended. Towards the end of the three-year period, we will undertake an in-depth review of our success and progress, consulting with team and board members, partners, members and young people who have engaged in members' activities. This will be reported to our members and funders, and inform our next steps in this crucial area of community rail work.

End notes

¹ See, for example, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/opinions-generation-zs-ambitions-and-priorities-differ-greatly-between-generations>

² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-rail-development-strategy>, especially p30-32

³ See, for example, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5059/pdf/5059.pdf>

⁴ See Community Rail Lancashire's community rail consultation with young people, 2018

⁵ As set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

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