



COVID IMPACT  
REPORT  
2020-2021

**SOUND COMMUNITIES**

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# OUR VISION

We work to create communities of empowered, confident and resilient young people with the aspirations and skills to build a better and fairer future.

# OUR MISSION

Our mission is to engage and mobilise marginalised young people. We will help them to lead digital production opportunities together, to improve their well-being and facilitate expression, creativity and agency.

# WHY A COVID IMPACT REPORT?

This impact report will focus on how we have supported our young people in Torbay to face the challenges of COVID-19, recurring lockdowns and social distancing.

As an organisation working with primarily vulnerable young people and digital technology, we knew that we had a responsibility to pivot quickly and harvest the resilience of our existing team of young people to support their community. Our young team of producers rose to the challenge by co-designing and then producing many opportunities for young people both locally and nationally to engage, be inspired and stay connected to support their mental health and well-being.



# OUR COVID IMPACT IN NUMBERS

## 2020-2021

### Our Activities Involved...



**16 Outreach Sessions**



**11 Interns and Work placements**



**5 Paid Young Leaders**

### Our Young Producers Created ...



### We Achieved...



# OUR COVID IMPACT IN NUMBERS 2020-2021

Our Ocean Together Outreach Sessions helped our Young People feel...



Making live shows and producing content during lockdown helped our young people feel...



Our Online Academy during lockdown made our Young People feel...



# WHAT WE DID

## We:

- sent producers kit to their homes to broadcast + produce quality content
- created live zoom radio shows featuring young presenters from home
- migrated to radio.co - a 24 hour play out system
- created podcasts + live radio shows and to support partner organisations to stay connected with + engage their participants
- ran online taster + skills development sessions
- produced locally + nationally broadcast podcasts on transitioning to secondary school and youth loneliness
- produced social media posts for Torbay Council to reach young audiences around social distancing + hidden children
- worked in partnership to target vulnerable young people for small group and one-to-one sessions
- ran detached street and community-based outreach sessions in our new Boom Bus
- developed our progression pathways + team by securing 6 remote work experience placements, hiring 2 interns, a Time To Shine Leader, setting up 6 Kickstarter placements + starting our new employability programme, Ocean Upwards



We have continued with professional development and training with our staff including sessions on trauma-informed approaches, managing challenging behaviour, working with young people with anxiety and depression, music production and visioning. We have also reformulated our vision and mission statements to reflect our learning, current team and practise.

We have also become an Alternative Provider of education which means that we can take referrals directly from local authorities and are now registered as an AQA centre so are able to offer multiple AQA qualifications to our participants.

# WHEN LOCKDOWN HIT



An urgent response was needed that offered young people positive and collective engagement, enabled their voices to be heard, and accessible, safe delivery in the places where young people would normally congregate, both physically and digitally.

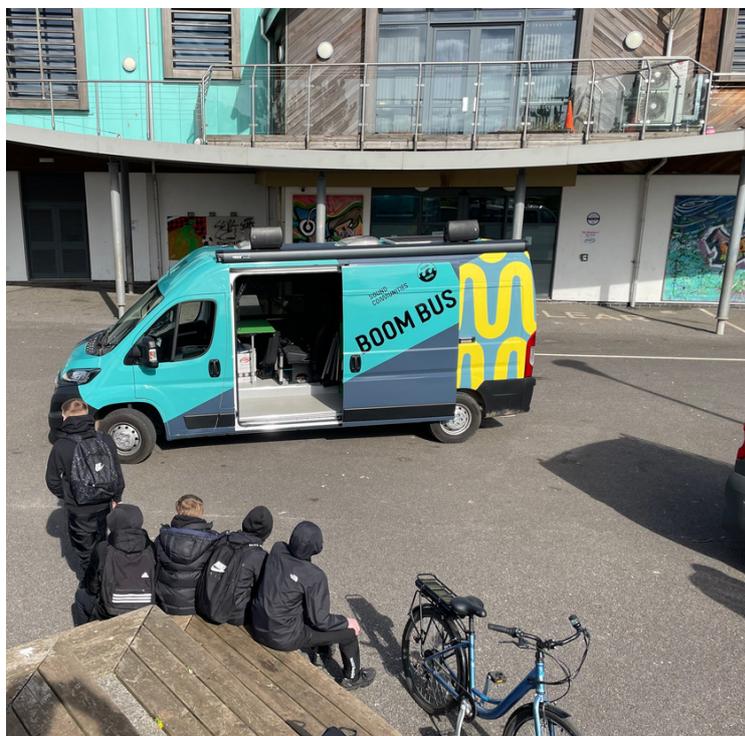
We soon became aware that the most at-risk young people in Torbay effectively 'disappeared' under lockdown; not engaging with school or support organisations. We know about the high incidence of risk-taking behaviour in Torbay and how vulnerable our young people are when there is a vacuum at a local level of positive ways to engage, for these 'disappeared' young people to county lines, gangs and knife crime.

Young people in Torbay told us they were experiencing isolation, loneliness, becoming disengaged from school work, feeling de-motivated and disorientated. We became very concerned about the immediate impacts of this isolation and the longer-term impact on young people's well-being and mental health.

**"The young people loved going live for the podcast and getting to dedicate songs to people who've helped them through lock down and they also were able to share the things that helped them get through a very testing few months." Youth Leader, Paul.**

We co-designed with our young team new approaches to engaging, connecting and inspiring young people and we are excited about how these changes will benefit our participants in the future. Our young producers have been remarkable in their creativity, development of skills and support of other young people.

We needed to support the mental health and well-being of young people as they faced isolation, boredom, anxiety and, in some cases, deprivation, neglect, exposure to increased domestic violence and substance and alcohol abuse.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Ocean Together supported hundreds of young people in Torbay to come out of social isolation in a positive, creative and safe way and provide progression from street and community centre sessions towards exciting and celebratory events in their communities. We worked in partnership with Torbay's Youth Trust.

These sessions increased young peoples':

- confidence + self esteem
- mental health
- aspirations
- skills
- taste for social action
- agency
- connectedness to other young people

We bring people together in workshops, at community events, on air, in schools, and online to share music, opinions and develop community cohesion, skills, aspirations and confidence.

## Ocean Together

We worked with local community centres and agencies to deliver 45 street-based outreach creative music and radio sessions to teenagers in challenging circumstances in the most deprived areas of Torbay. These sessions will build up to a live performance night in each town and a float broadcast/performance at Paignton Carnival in July 2021.

**"One girl's demeanour and outlook changed dramatically over the 2 hours. She started off by telling me she'd had an awful day at school and she wasn't going to enjoy anything about the Boom Bus, to being totally engaged and really enthusiastic. She loved music production & using the digital recorders to create a spoof nature documentary."**

**Youth Leader, Jenny.**

**"This was one of the best sessions I've ever seen here with Lifeworks."**

**Setting Leader, Matt**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Locked On In Lockdown



When lockdown dictated that we suspend our street-based sessions we co-designed with our young people a new live full weekend schedule of radio shows using Zoom and we sent radio kits to our presenters' homes.

We invested in prizes and produced lots of teaser content which we promoted on social media to attract new young listeners to these shows. We got a huge increase in listeners.

**"That was the best thing I have ever done in my life."  
Blake, 13**

## Online Sessions

We also ran a 6 week programme of drop-in online training sessions and whole class/year group zoom sessions for primary schools. We used content from these sessions in our Locked On in Lockdown shows.

**"This project has been so engaging and inspiring for Dan. He's loved it!"  
Dan's Mother**

# EARLY INTERVENTION

Our Alternative Provision is one of the main tenets of our early intervention programme however we also target young people through close relationships with local schools in the last years of primary school before lack of confidence and fear of failure can often set in. We managed to keep this going during lockdown although it was harder to reach new students as schools closed quickly.



## Step Up

We targeted 15 Year 6 primary school students who were identified as vulnerable to help produce 60 playful, supportive and informative content vignettes to support young listeners facing the challenge of transitioning into secondary school during the first lockdown when some schools closed for the school year in March. These pieces were played out on Ocean Youth Radio and on the national DAB children's station, Fun Kids Radio.

## Step Up

Tales about moving up to secondary school recorded from home



This project increased participants':

- sense of belonging
- confidence about transitioning to secondary school
- communication skills
- ability to express how they are feeling

**"Moving up to Secondary School is normally a magical time but now it's just difficult. This project has really helped because it has given me time to think about moving on and what it means to me and my friends." Alex**

# ALTERNATIVE PROVISION



This year we became a registered Alternative Provider of education and take an increasing amount of referrals from local councils, agencies and schools for young people to come to our studios for one-to-one or small group sessions. We also run sessions in Pupil Referral Units and other Alternative Education settings including young people who have engaged with the Youth Justice Team or who are at risk of offending.

Our participants explore and reflect on their lives and their current challenges using songwriting, spoken word, DJing and digital music production.

Participants are encouraged to take offered progression pathways with Ocean Youth Radio and will complete several AQA qualifications.

**"They are seeing the things they are good at and are interested in could have a future for them. One of our students is going to start an apprenticeship with Sound Communities and that young person had no idea what he wanted to do, but since then he's joined a football club, he's joined a youth club, he's become a peer mentor. None of that would have happened because he thought he couldn't do anything and his future has just opened up. It is amazing for that young man, the difference in him, he is a different person. Truly.**

**"It's like a personal release of a personal pressure valve to be able to write and perform their music but its also giving them an interest, to carry on with during their own personal time, and a way that's helping them with their mental health. " Amanda Seymour, SENCO, Brunel Academy**

# EMPLOYABILITY

We have worked hard this year to develop progression pathways at Sound Communities through Ocean Youth Radio and we have employed a Time To Shine leader to manage this work. We are developing AQA qualifications, employability training programmes, a work experience programme and pathway through from junior producer to trainee senior producer.

## Ocean Upwards

We have used radio and music production to build self-confidence and employability skills in sixteen young people aged 16-25 living in Torbay. They have participated in 8 training workshops followed by work experience to further develop and practice their skills in a real world setting over a period of 6-12 months.

These sessions increased:

- participants' confidence
- transferable digital and communication skills
- understanding of their own strengths
- understanding of the kinds of jobs that are available
- knowledge on how to research and apply for work

**“It's quite outstanding what Ocean Youth Radio has achieved. There is a clear, transformative effect and I believe this station could well serve to be a best practice model for engaging CYP in certain areas across the UK to develop skills.”**

**Community Radio Awards Panel Feedback, 2020.**



**“Doing this course has helped me to open up and work in a team more effectively.” Luke**

**“It was great. This is the first time I have ever completed a course like this.” Matthew**

**“The course really gave me a chance to flesh out my music skills and tap into new areas of audio like radio and podcasting.” Jay**

# PRODUCTIONS

Our participants have been winning a growing number of commissions and local stakeholders increasingly see the value of their production skills. This arm of our work helps Sound Communities to become more sustainable as our young people earn an income to support our activities.

They have been commissioned to reach young audiences through consultations with Ocean Asks?, podcasts during lockdown, messaging around social distancing using social media posts to support Torbay Council's Covid awareness campaign and messaging to reach hidden children vulnerable to neglect during the pandemic.

“”

Taking that leap out my comfort zone helped release that inner isolation and loneliness...

**SOUNDLIFE**

Episode 6 | Listen Now

## Soundlife Podcasts



We brought together a team of 12 young people to produce 6 podcasts to help improve young people's mental health and reduce the stigma attached to youth loneliness. These podcasts featured young people's stories, provide local signposting information and self-help strategies to support young isolated listeners across Torbay and nationally too.

The young people also co-designed a social media campaign to accompany the podcasts online and learn digital marketing skills.

**"This project has really inspired me and has been so, so helpful, especially without the usual routine of school" Dove, 12**

# OUR PEOPLE

Our vision has always been to build our organisation through employing our participants, providing exciting work opportunities and raising aspirations. We show our young recruits the possibilities for progression at Sound Communities and contributing to the dynamic cultural life of Torbay.

## CASE STUDY

### CHARLIE

PAID YOUTH LEADER/CORE TEAM/  
SOCIAL MEDIA LEAD

Charlie came to us through the Medical Tuition Service. He was lacking in confidence and just immediately loved broadcasting. He has become one of our most talented producers and is now leading on social media.

Charlie made a huge impact on Ocean Youth Radio's output during COVID, supporting young listeners and other participants too. Charlie produced his own show weekly from home when the studio shut down, including lots of interactive and engaging content. He has led the way in his promotion of his shows on social media too.

Charlie also contributed very powerful and personal stories to support other young people as part of our transition to secondary school series, "Step Up" and our series on youth loneliness.

Charlie is also supporting workshops with young people with learning disabilities both in group sessions and one- to-one sessions. He is inspirational in his creativity, generosity and willingness to learn.



**'Before I started Ocean Youth, I wouldn't really talk to many people, it has helped me cope better with my social anxiety, made me more confident and helped me massively during lockdown, by giving me something to focus on and block out my anxieties.**

**I'm now a paid member of staff, teaching others and learning more. It has helped me become more independent and has opened up opportunities for the future."**

**Charlie**

**"Since starting at Ocean Youth 2 years ago, we have seen Charlie become much more confident, socially and in himself.**

**We are proud of what Charlie has achieved and it wouldn't have been done without Ocean Youth." Charlie's Dad.**

# CASE STUDY



## XIE CORE TEAM/PRODUCER

Xie came to us in 2017 when still at Primary School. Xie has been a confident, expressive and committed presenter and producer ever since. Xie joined our core team last year and during Covid has really impressed us with her shows and content.

Xie has gone above and beyond, producing extremely powerful pieces about moving up to secondary school for our "Step Up" podcasts and about the loneliness of the process of questioning one's gender in our "Soundlife" podcasts. Xie has also produced her own original songs, one of which was featured on "Soundlife" which was played out on 26 community stations across the UK.

**"Ocean Youth helped a lot especially during lockdown because it helped with my confidence and helped me be able to express myself more freely and openly.**

**It made me feel like I belonged to something and made me feel like I was part of a team. It's helped a lot with my mental wellbeing and made me motivated to get on with my day. It helped make me feel that I could express my emotions."**

**Xie**

**"With so much uncertainty in their life, having Ocean Youth literally gave them something to get up for, giving them the feeling of purpose. Planning and producing shows gave some structure to their day and something to look forward to. They have made new friends and built their confidence where it had deteriorated over times of lockdown. Talking openly about their feeling and emotions has also helped.**

**"Xie's Mother**

# CONNECT WITH US

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