



Active Essex presents...

“LIFE UNPLUGGED” PROJECT

Aimed to reduce teen 'digital separation anxiety' and online addiction. Incorporating a range of activities, creative empowerment workshops and holistic wellbeing experiences.

2x 3-day off-grid creative empowerment day camps and 6 weekly day camps throughout Summer and Autumn 2024.

Project aims and ambitions #1

A documented project highlighting the vital importance of taking time away from technology and taking time to appreciate and heal within nature. Aimed to reduce 'digital separation anxiety' and online addiction. An essential wellbeing and empowerment initiative taking marginalised and at-risk teenagers into lake based rural locations for a range of creative off-grid pursuits, workshops and activities. Predominantly based around **fishing** and **bushcraft** activities, the project also includes immersive **Drumming circle workshops, Bushcraft and wild cooking workshops, Gong bath and Shamanic journeys, Immersive Musical journeys & Filmmaking workshops.**

Project aims and ambitions #2

A standalone **Underdog Crew Studios docu-film**, created around the project to highlight the importance of taking time outdoors for mental wellbeing. **Aimed for submission to international film festivals** and as a lobbying tool to continue the debate on the teen mental health crisis and the critical need to introduce wilderness activities into secondary education. With participant interviews before, during and after the project to track their emotional state and interviews with experts, project mentors and workshop leaders.

** The documentary production becomes a professional work experience project in continuation of Underdog Crew Studios professional filmmaking training for current and new project members.

Project Partners

Active Essex, The Angling Trust, Anglian Community Trust, iCARP, Hintlesham Fisheries, Essex Youth Service.

Media partners: Colchester Gazette, Colne Radio **TBC** (plus several more).

Project Resident Expert

Doctor Mark Wheeler (of iCARP)

A chartered psychologist and experienced mental health therapist with over ten years' of working in the NHS. As a therapist Mark's area of expertise lies in treating trauma. His PhD focused on the benefits of group outdoor activities and the subsequent reduction of PTSD symptoms in military

veterans. Mark is passionate about working with this client group. A keen angler who enjoys spending time on the bank, Mark is excited to bring his field of expertise to help with both highlighting the importance of, and tracking the success of, the 'life unplugged' project.

Mark will be analysing and documenting the transformation of project participants.

Event support

The **ANGLING TRUST** will be supporting all angling tuition, together with providing all fishing equipment. **HINTLESHAM FISHERIES** and **iCARP** lake venues will be used for the rural retreats.

Anglian Community Trust, the **Colchester Gazette** and **Colne Radio** will be the project media supporters.

Selecting project participants

Project participants are selected by critical need from our referral partners including, but not limited to: **Action for Family Carers, Essex Youth Service, Youth Enquiry Service, Inclusion Ventures, Bright Lives, Underdog Crew studios members**, selected secondary schools and referrals via local doctor's surgeries and other youth welfare organisations.

Critical need and community involvement

As with other core UCS projects we encourage **family involvement** to strengthen relationships and shared interests. **Fostering a greater appreciation for our natural environment.** Working with the Angling Trust and Environment agency to **enhance 'pride and ownership' of our environment.** Involving **marginalised and at-risk 12 to 16 year olds** by referral we ensure to provide empowerment opportunities to the most in need. **Educating against the cost of living crisis** through enhancing and increasing our ongoing 'Active Essex' funded food education workshops.

Our members and 'critical need' target audience are **all facing barriers to inclusivity** and living with one, or more, from the following list: **Single parent families, Social anxiety, depression and mental health issues. Low income council tenants, Neuro divergent, Young carers, Victims of extreme bullying and School refusers.**

Through working alongside many at-risk teenagers and listening to youth welfare organisations we continue to adapt and expand our youth empowerment project to first engage and then empower many young adults from Colchester city. We are regularly meeting with like minded charities and welfare groups to ensure we are at the forefront of being able to provide a wide creative service list to provide activities, learning opportunities and projects that can ignite the passion of the hardest to reach individuals.

Family involvement

The ability for family members to camp out during the 3-day workshops and also pair up with their children for day camp sessions.

Activities

'Off-grid'

Fishing tuition and competitions, bushcraft, creative art workshops, wilderness cooking, drumming circle, gong bath and shamanic journey, story circles.

'Teen pleasers'

200" Dolby Atmos gaming and movies
Electronic music production workshops
Filmmaking and photography workshops

'Mentorship'

Youth counsellors working alongside project leaders. Soft mentorship with all activities.

Concept delivery and expansion potential

With expected funding in place the 'Life Unplugged' project has the potential to upscale into an annual celebration of off-grid youth empowerment. With so many regional artisan creatives the addition of an extra marquee or event gazebo allows additional project leaders and activities to join the day camp activity roster.

Examples: Pottery masterclass. Wood carving workshop.