

EXPLORE

AUTUMN NEWS LETTER 2017

Dear All,

On behalf of the staff team and the Trustees of Explore, I am pleased to present to you our report for the academic year ending August 2017.

Since becoming a registered charity in January 2000 Explore has now held sessions with **almost 100,000 young people**. In 2016 - 17 we worked in 72 schools reaching 7,867 students aged 15-18. We saw growth in the number of new schools engaging with us, particularly in Romford and Hampshire.

Question

What difference does an Explore session make?

Feedback from the students.

“That it’s possible to work through even big arguments and not give up”.

“I’ve learnt how relationships hold together and how they make it work”.

“I’m going to be less superficial in relationships”.

“To be more understanding and forgiving”.

“That marriage is worth it! “.

“It will help me to have a successful marriage knowing what skills are needed”.

“I learned the importance of commitment and that you have to ‘decide to love’”.

“Marriage is a great thing and trust in each other is vital”.

“I got to see a real couple’s marriage and not one from the movies”.

We are heartened that what we set out to do well, Relationships Education, now has broad all-party support to be included in the curriculum across all schools from 2019. This underlies how fundamentally important our work is and it is recognition that Society very much needs the kind of work we undertake. We are ‘watching the space’ to identify opportunities to deliver our methodology as an example of best practice, to work in partnership to expand our reach and to ensure that our work is sustainable beyond the new curriculum guidelines.

2016/2017 has been a year of general ‘modernization’ also for Explore. We have introduced some new team players and recently appointed a new Trustee, Mrs. Katie Thom, Deputy Head of St. Mary’s Southampton. We have initiated a digital dimension to our operations such as a new team communications tool Slack.com, an impact reporting process run through SurveyMonkey.com. This we are currently trialing with schools who are receptive to enabling students to give feedback via their mobile phones to us instantly at the end of each session – and we now have a regular blog post aimed directly at our youth audience through articles written in-house by Michaela Hyde our Essex-based local development officer – see www.theexploreexperience.wordpress.com. In addition, we have appointed a Development Manager, Lisa Gagliani MBE, who is helping us with funding strategy and marketing. Lisa has introduced a social media strategy, using Twitter @Explorecharity which from humble beginnings now has over 300 followers and is enabling us to have a wider voice in the youth

charity space. Shortly, we will be rebuilding our website with a focus on making it easier to reach new schools and for them to make enquiries and even bookings for Explore sessions directly online. Teachers, we acknowledge are extremely busy and need to be able to access materials and extra-curricular resource when they need it.

Over the year, we have recognized that whilst 'knocking on doors' is always important, it is also true that teachers cannot respond easily 'during office hours' so it is perhaps more helpful to enable them to book Explore when they have time to do so.

Another digital dimension is through our fundraising; in June we took part in small charities week Big Advice Day and also encouraged volunteers to give and get a small donation doubled via giving to us at www.localgiving.com/explore and were pleased to receive £1,200+ during the week. We now look forward to taking part in another matched-giving campaign, The Big Give Christmas Challenge www.thebiggive.org with a pledge secured by our Founder Rex Chester MBE already.

In the coming months, we will be making other changes to the way we operate. As Chief Executive, for over six years, I will be retiring by the end of 2017 and have served notice to the Trustees.

We have undertaken an operational review and believe the financial needs of the charity will be best met in the year ahead via some consolidation of our areas – so we maybe letting go of some of our outlying areas and some part-time staff, to focus and strengthen our delivery across Hampshire, London, West Midlands, Essex and Kent. This will reduce our overheads considerably and will also facilitate the continuing improvement and focus of our work in delivering excellent quality relationships education with schools and through partnership with like-minded youth charities.

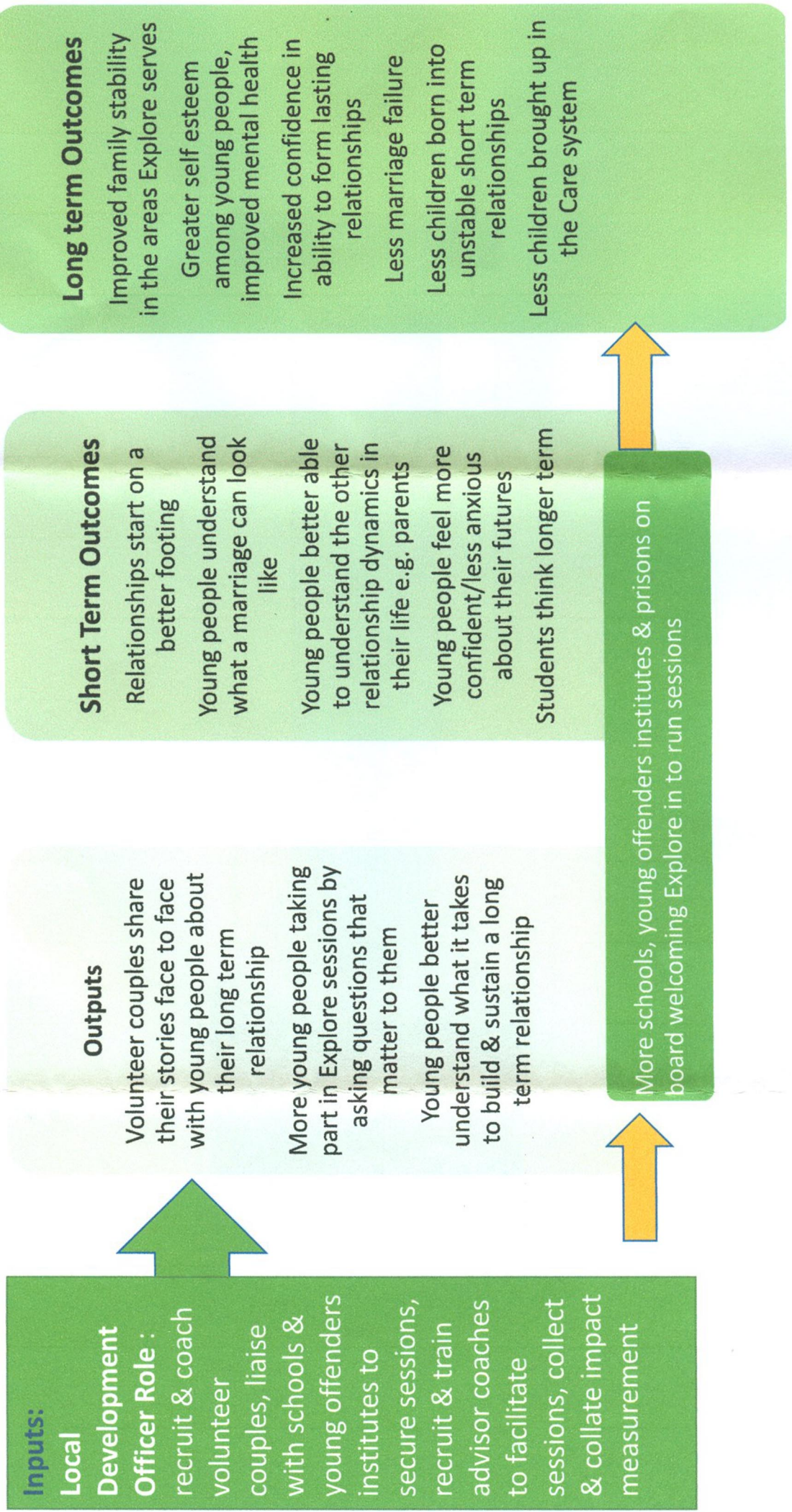
We have this year also developed our draft Theory of Change – see attached. We are confident that this will help us enormously as we continue to make progress in measuring and reporting our impact to funders. We are piloting using Survey Monkey, which gives a snap shot of the kind of value young people experience through our sessions.

Thank you to you all for your ongoing support of Explore and for your encouragement to me personally. In due course a new CEO will be appointed to carry forward the work of Explore.

With all good wishes

Chris Ford

Explore Theory of Change v2 April 2017 : enabling young people to understand the realities of long term relationships



PRAYER DIARY AUTUMN TERM 2017

General points here and specific items over the page:

*Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
Psalm 127*

Trustees

God has a vision and strategy for the future of Explore! Please pray for the Trustees as they seek that vision and strategy: that the Lord would give them clarity, wisdom and courage and provide a godly man or woman to become the new CEO who can lead the work forward. Pray for the funding that is needed.

Staff

Give thanks for all that Chris Ford has brought to Explore. Pray for the Local Development Officers and Local Action Groups as they contact schools, recruit and train volunteers and carry out their work. Ask for protection from weariness and discouragement and for wisdom and joy as they carry out their work.

At the heart of our work are the young people. Inquisitive, hopeful, daunted. Sometimes hurt and lost from broken homes. God is calling us to meet them where they are and enable them to discover His wonderful plan for marriage. Let's pray that the Lord would open their hearts and minds to the truth about relationships and give them hope!

Gatekeepers

Pray for favour with all the contacts in schools, PRUs and other institutions who make decisions about inviting Explore in to work. Ask that they will grasp the value of this work and be supportive so more young people can be reached.

Volunteers

Give thanks for all those who give their time freely to Explore. Pray for more couples and adviser coaches to be found and for every session to be fully manned. Ask the Lord to help the couples to listen carefully to the young people and to dig deep into their experience, so the young people hear what they need to hear. Also that the ACs will have the wisdom to help the young people to process what they hear and draw conclusions for their own lives.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 2 Cor 4v7

GENERAL POINTS FOR PRAYER

- ❖ **General** - it is early days in the academic year, please pray for fruit from all the conversations that are going on with schools across the country about potential events. For fruit from the various digital media developments going on.
- ❖ **Essex** – AC training early September and October, two mornings.
- ❖ **Westminster** – for a number of schools being approached to commit and confirm their dates.
- ❖ **Derbyshire** – For a potential half day conference at Stockport School in November. “I do have good news and an answer to prayer from last term. I managed to get a meeting at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ashbourne, God is good! We are planning a taster session with yr 10s in October, with potential to cover the whole of yr 11 in Nov/Dec as part of their core RS syllabus.”
- ❖ **Berks** – Give thanks for an opening to speak at three services at a local church and that those who heard will come forward to volunteer, pray or support financially. Pray for the Local Action Group as they pick up the work without an LDO.
- ❖ **Bucks** – For schools to confirm events - Blessed George Napier Catholic School Banbury and Thornton College (nr Milton Keynes), Burnham Grammar, Silverstone UTC, & Alfriston in Beaconsfield; and volunteers to take part.

Specific events:

September	
27	East London - Palmer Academy Ilford Year 12 &13. Pray for couples that are needed.
28	West Midlands - Grace Academy in Darlaston
October	
3	Berks – Integration PRU Reading Years 9-11, 1 st afternoon session
5	Kent - St Richards, Bexhill, (More volunteers needed);
7	Essex – Adviser Coach training
11	West Midlands - Grace Academy in Coventry
12 & 17	Hants - Churchers College in Petersfield Year 11
20	Wilts - Bishop Wordsworth/South Wilts Year 11 Citizenship Day
31	Essex - St. Edward's Secondary School, Romford – year 10 PSHE lessons (the 1 st of two) Berks – Integration, Reading PRU Years 9-11, 2 nd afternoon session
November	
3	Westminster – London Oratory boys (morning) Year 11 Hants - Ballard School in New Milton Year 11 – Couple needed for an early start
9	West Midlands - Grace Academy in Solihull Hants - St Swithun's School Winchester with about 60 Lower Sixth Form Students. Essex – Becket Keys School, Brentwood – Year 11 drop-down day
10	Hants - Ballard School in New Milton Year 11 – Couple needed for an early start Westminster - St Mark's Hounslow Year 13 RE classes (100 students)
12	Berks – The Porch PRU Newbury, Years 11-13, morning session with 4 small groups
15	Hants - The Arnewood School in New Milton, 'mini' conference for 115 Sixth Form students
22	Kent - Bennett Memorial School, Tunbridge Wells Essex – St. Edward's Secondary School, Romford – year 10 PSHE lessons (the 2 nd of two dates)
22 or 24	Westminster – Finchley Boys (morning) Year 12 classes
December	
7	Westminster - Douay Martyrs (morning) Year 12& 13 classes

Thank you so much for your continued support and prayers. Please let me know if you have any additional prayer requests. Liz Percival on dave.percival@btinternet.com