

Case Study



# Engaging communities 'On Your Doorstep'



Image: Electric Egg, Fenside Community Centre Launch

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in partnership with



supported by



By being flexible and adapting  
its project to suit the community,  
Transported built up trust and  
engaged local people in arts activity  
at Fenside Community Centre.

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**Case Study Author:**

Nick Jones  
Transported



# Background

## On Your Doorstep: engaging local people in Fenside Community Centre

### About the project

Transported is a community-focused programme which aims to get more people in Boston Borough and South Holland enjoying and participating in arts activities. It is funded by Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme.

On Your Doorstep is one of eleven different strands in the second phase of the project. It invites communities to nominate spaces to be improved by the intervention of art.

The Fenside Community Centre Coordinator, following information from CVS, nominated her under-used community centre. It is based in a deprived community with a lot of tension, including with the migrant community.

The Coordinator wanted to bring people into the centre to tell their stories. Conversations with Transported ensued and Paul Floyd Blake was appointed after a vigorous interview process.

### Objectives

- To improve an underused community space
- To involve members of the community in this improvement
- To celebrate the community through the use of the space
- To record the history of the community
- To help reduce tension between the established community and the migrant population

### Target Audience

- Members of the community of Fenside

# Process & Outcomes

## Process

Transported appointed an artist after a rigorous interview process. They held a launch event for the project at the community centre but nobody attended.

The artist, accompanied by the former mayor of Fenside, undertook a walkabout on day two to meet people in the community.

The artist took photos and encouraged people to bring their photos to the community centre.

A photo album was designed and created and now sits as a live history book in the centre.

An exhibition curated by staff and members of the community was also developed and photos of people were attached to the outside of the building.

The centre was re-launched in January 2015.

## Outcomes

- People use the community centre more now, making its existence more justifiable. It is currently vulnerable as it is next to land being built on with flats.
- Some local residents who hadn't been to the centre for years returned for the re-launch.
- The Centre Coordinator and team can consult with members of the community now that they attend.
- There is greater trust between staff and the community.
- The community centre is more vibrant - the exhibition and photo album were impromptu (the exterior pictures were the intended result) but as a result the centre is more welcoming. They create a reliable talking point.
- The Facebook page is used by people to continue to talk about their stories. For example, photos have been uploaded of babies who have been born since the project and they will be added to the album.
- Fenside has a history which is valued and recorded.
- The community learnt a lot; the artist explained why he took a photo in a certain way and shared basic skills, which was not commonplace at the centre. The community members were interested in learning. A coincident careers cafe project has seen clients show great interest in the artwork.

# Conclusions

Flexibility was key to the success of this project. Transported, the artist and community centre staff/volunteers re-shaped the project to meet the needs of the Fenside Community.

The choice of artist was vital and going through a thorough selection process ensured that the artist was 'right for the job - he shared our vision'.

Working with key people to establish trust was really important. The former mayor and artist walked the streets together to connect with the community.

The project succeeded in achieving its objectives but a longer project might have been of even greater benefit.

The photo album is now permanently in the community centre. The Coordinator aims to update it with the community, 'building on our history' and the exhibition continues to draw people in.

## Figures

- The project cost £7,500
- 118 people attended the events
- Some of the work was challenging for some library users, but Transported wanted to take this risk

## Developments

- The project was short - only 6 days - and much more could have been achieved with a longer duration.
- The Eastern European community didn't engage with the project as much as the team had hoped. Similar projects might concentrate more on ways of breaking down barriers for this audience.
- Residents have asked for a photography club to be set up at the centre. An art studio at a nearby centre, which is due to be demolished, may also be incorporated into Fenside.
- Paul Floyd Blake (the artist) has been commissioned by Transported to record objects with meaning as new portraits for the community.

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## Find out more

Explore the gallery of unveiling:

<http://www.transportedart.com/gallery/on-your-doorstep-fenside-community-centre-portrait-unveiling/>