



Annual Report 2007-2008

### Letter from the Founder



Welcome to our sixth year of SPARKPLUG. We've had a great year, but we believe things are now going to get even better.

Our activities continue to engage youngsters who either find it difficult to stay in mainstream education, have been through the judicial system, or simply seem to have difficulty by constantly getting into trouble with the authorities.

While there can be many reasons for these problems, we've found that many of the kids that come to us have learning difficulties, problems with reading or writing, or simply feel uncomfortable in large groups where peer pressure sometime creates problems that become difficult to avoid. We have a simple formula that uses the things we know that they like (things with motors and or wheels) to gets results in a friendly atmosphere that's strict but fair and that is orchestrated by a dedicated team of staffers and advisory members.

We know that "motors" and sports are two of the most popular activities that kids enjoy. Up until now we've made our reputation focusing on "scooters" and "motor bikes" but we feel there are more areas to explore. Riding and mechanics have been our mainstays, but what about the kid that likes to sketch (automotive design), or the one that likes to "customize" (manufacturing). We believe that our ability to expose our kids to these other areas could open their eyes to new possibilities that they would have never considered as possible for them. Using things that they like and enjoy that they perceive as fun, can not only begin the process of building confidence and self-esteem but also act as a stepping stone to take those interests into a career.

For the year to come our main concern remains to secure sufficient financial support to fund new projects and get our new building kitted-out. For those of you who may not know, we are in the final stages of the process through which Islington Council will award us substantial funds to create a new SPARKPLUG building with room to expand our activities. Although it will be shared by other groups, this is a huge positive step forward that will create a platform for future expansion as well as allow us to provide more vocational and local youth based activities. If it has wheels and/or a motor, SPARKPLUG will find activities and training to bring it into our programme.

SPARKPLUG's youth work has been and will continue to be about engaging hard to reach young people with motorbike riding, accredited courses, youth clubs, and outreach work – and then getting them into training and onto employment. Now we see another unique opportunity right on our doorstep – all the construction work on the new King's Cross, Railway Lands site - construction that will go on for the next ten years. Who will operate all that heavy equipment and drive all those vehicles – we see some of our "graduates" filling those roles. Many of these qualifications require classroom instruction in the rules of the road, vehicle safety, road awareness and driving theory...all areas that we start our kids off with from day one!

For the coming year, we will continue to work with the other youth projects in the area such as Prospex and Copenhagen Youth Project as well as the numerous schools in our area and the various agencies that refer young people to us. We also plan to polish up our image in an effort to seek new funding streams from the business and corporate community. We hope our new website – [www.thesparkplug.org](http://www.thesparkplug.org), will help along these lines.

To those of you who have worked with us, "thank you" for your help which has contributed materially and emotionally to our success. With your continued support, we pledge that this coming year will be even better.

*Martin Willis*

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## Our Mission and Strategy

SPARKPLUG is a community youth project whose goal is to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour while increasing self-esteem and employability among its members. Its initial strategy is to use motorcycles and mechanics to engage young people; however its longer term approach will be to broaden its range of activities to include exposure to all aspects of the motor industry.

Experience has shown that one of the most popular pastimes that kids are attracted to relates to “motors” – whether they are in the form of scooters, mopeds, motorcycles, go-karts or automobiles. If you can ride it or drive it, “it” holds a special fascination for the younger generation.

But their love of “bikes” and “cars” can go much further, if we open up their horizons to all aspects of the motor trade. Riding/driving is on the surface, but repairing, customizing, designing, building and even selling are all areas that we feel will offer opportunities for future development. The King’s Cross area is entering a phase of unprecedented construction. Who will *drive* all the construction vehicles and heavy equipment – we think this is another avenue in which SPARKPLUG and its members can have a role.

### Goals

- Reduce anti-social behaviour, scooter, motorbike and auto crime
- Reduce truancy from schools
- Reduce peer pressure to offend/re-offend
- Reduce isolation and exclusion, and the most important goal of all...
- ***Increase self-esteem, self-confidence, sense of achievement and employability***

### Tactics

- Provide regularly scheduled events to allow kids to use their leisure time more constructively and educationally – to help develop a sense of direction and a greater sense of self-confidence and level of achievement.
  - Riding sessions
  - Repair and customizing sessions
  - Accredited courses
  - Trips to experience various elements of the motor industry
    - Races/rallies/car and bike shows
    - Manufacturing plants and specialist organizations
      - ◆ BMW’s Mini plant, McLaren Factory, Custom car shops
    - Specialized driver training
      - ◆ Advanced driving courses
      - ◆ HGV’s
      - ◆ Specialized construction equipment
- Provide positive role models to counter peer pressure to offend
  - Past club members, Industry examples “who’ve made good”
- Invite/encourage parental involvement

## Regularly Scheduled Activities

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Regularly Scheduled Activities	Motorcycle Workshop Accredited Open College Network (OCN) Course in Mechanics 10:00 to 15:00	Regents Vocational College Afternoon and Evening Session	Motorcycle Workshop Accredited Open College Network (OCN) Course in Mechanics 10:00 to 15:00	Motorcycle Workshop Accredited Open College Network (OCN) Course in Mechanics 10:00 to 15:00 Loose Wheel Youth Club 15:30 to 18:30	Elthorne Complementary Education Course (CEC) Mechanics (non-accredited) 13:30 to 14:30	Local Riding Activities for SPARKPLUG members and other borough-wide project members 09:30 to 16:30 17:00 to 19:00

### Accredited Open College Network Course – Motorcycle Workshop

This will be our third year offering Open College Network (OCN) Courses. They run three days each week (two days funded by Islington Council and one day funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation).

This year, 22 youngsters have completed the course successfully and have received their accreditation.

Young people get referred to us by the Islington Youth Offending Service (YOS), schools and other youth provisions.

We have had setbacks though, and this year eight young people were forced to drop out due to personal and/or family problems. However, we haven't had the need to ban anyone from the premises because of bad behaviour.



Charlie Snow aged 13

**What have you enjoyed the most and why?**

*Riding - because I've never done anything like it.*

**What could be improved?**

*My confidence*

### The Regent's Vocational College<sup>1</sup> and Elthorne Complementary Education Courses



During the past year SPARKPLUG worked with both these *inclusion projects* that focused on very hard to reach young people, delivering a course of diverse mechanics and life skills.

These courses were designed to support the work done in the schools and reward the participants with the chance to get off site for some new experiences.

We have found that by being part of the school curriculum we can have a stronger impact, making young people feel more reassured because they see the end result in the near term – in this case building a working motorcycle.

We know that by using “motors” and “mechanics” as the tools, these kinds of projects can really build confidence and self-esteem among disaffected youth.

### The Loose Wheel Youth Club



Meeting Thursdays for three hours from 15:30 to 18:30 local youngsters bring their own pedal bikes, legal scooters and motorbikes to work on at our premises.

The club provides a safe haven that keeps them off the street while the staff provides knowledge and support to help them learn about mechanics while they “hang-out” in a safe environment.

The Club already has 73 club members signed up – and this is only our first year! It is a key entry point to our organization and can lead kids to participate in other elements of the programme. It's a real draw and highly regarded on the streets and give kids a real sense of belonging.

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<sup>1</sup> Regent's Vocational College is a 14-16 pupil referral unit servicing Hackney Schools offering a range of vocational courses that aim to provide a balanced education to pupils who have been unable to access mainstream provision.

### Scrambling Events

Finding ways to engage youngsters in positive activities to help them build their self-esteem, confidence and social awareness is one of the most challenging aspects of our efforts to move them into training and employment. One of the most successful methods that we have used is holding scrambling events.



Currently there are five ways young people can go riding with us:

1. They can be referred to our OCN accredited course through Islington based youth organisations, schools and the YOS.
2. They can join our Loose Wheel Youth Club.
3. They can participate as part of one of the many youth projects that hire SPARKPLUG to support their work with young people.
4. They can attend Crumbles Castle, where SPARKPLUG first started.
5. They can be specifically targeted by our staff as being a worthwhile candidate

Charlie Bryant, age19

**How long ago did you attend SPARKPLUG and what did you most enjoy?**

*I was there about two years ago for two years. I never really went to school, didn't like it, but Sparkplug was great, I was their best rider.*

*I reckon I'd be in the nick if I didn't go there back then. I'm a scaffolder now, got all my certificates.*

## Ad Hoc Activities

These activities take place throughout the year, their frequency is usually based on levels of funding available.

### **ScootAlive**

This project developed by Stephen Cutmore and Jason Newton, Islington's Road Safety Officers and is a five week course which has taken place on four of our local estates and has won several awards. The course includes:

- Week 1 - Road safety session- role play
- Week 2 - Met Police- gory pictures, helmets, safety, the causes of accidents
- Week 3 - Fire Brigade, accidents
- Week 4 - Sparkplug mechanics maintenance
- Week 5 - Drugs and alcohol, the dangers of driving under the influence



The project includes a scrambling session and then has a gap of three months during which time if any of the young people get arrested or show up on the police radar they become ineligible for future scrambling sessions or a free CBT.

ScootAlive has taken place several times at The Canonbury Youth Project<sup>2</sup>, the Elthorne Estate, and Prospex<sup>3</sup>. Police statistics have shown a reduction of auto crime in the areas when the courses have taken place.

Roger Elderton, Senior Detached Youth Worker at the Canonbury Project said:

*ScootAlive has been an excellent opportunity for the young people we work with at the Canonbury Project and New River Green. I have seen how it has motivated them to make a more positive use of their time and feel better about themselves today than they did yesterday.*

The team behind ScootAlive  
being presented with the  
LARSOA Campaign of the Quarter Award  
for the period  
April – June 2007



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<sup>2</sup> Youth projects offer a wide range of provision and activities and can often provide help and support to young people on a range of issues

<sup>3</sup> A community-based charity working to improve the lives of Young People in the Caledonian Road area of north King's Cross.

### The Summer and Easter Sessions

This was the second year that we've delivered a course in mechanics and riding. Young people sign schools or the Islington website for courses during break.

The first two days are workshop based: explaining safety issues, learning about tools and then some mechanical work on bikes and scooters – all leading riding trip.

We find that many of our youngsters who would not exposure to a regular Open College Network Course participate in this fashion.



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Mattias Dyre, age 17

#### Why did you want to come to SPARKPLUG?

*I've just arrived in the country from Africa and can't get into college till September. I want to work with my hands and learn.*

#### What have you learnt?

*How an engine works and how to speak better English.*

### The Youth Endurance Challenge

This is a competition between all the motor projects youngsters in the South East. The Challenge has sections: an 80 lap race around a motocross track, a and a mechanic's competition.

At the last Challenge SPARKPLUG won the Section and came second in the overall competition.

We try to take young people that have worked really deserve a reward.



for  
three  
trails section

Mechanic's

hard and



### Young Women's Scrambling Events



Recognizing that participation in most of our activities would normally be young men, we initiated a young women's scrambling team. Recent stories of the rise in anti-social behaviour in the female gender have shown that our expansion was warranted.

This has become the perfect vehicle to show young women, that there are other ways "to act tough." This program is perfect for young "tomboys" who always want to compete with the boys. And it is especially effective at building up young women's self esteem and confidence when actually riding with and competing with the boys!

To be honest we've found young women are a lot easier to teach, and become much better riders.

### The Wales *Residentials*<sup>4</sup>

It's a well recognized fact that by taking kids out of their regular environment and exposing them to a different world, we can give them a glimpse of an alternative lifestyle. Considering that some of our youngsters have never been outside London, we see a trip to the country as a great opportunity to stimulate change.



Our trips are legendary amongst those who have participated as we really give them a change that many have never experienced before. Imagine four days and three nights out in the middle of nowhere – camping and riding motorbikes in Mid Wales near Rhayader.

Not only do we teach young people how to ride trails, but they also learn how to fend for themselves - cooking, organizing events and even washing-up – something that most of their mothers would not believe is possible!

While this annual trip is a great and effective experience, we can only do this on a limited basis as it is quite expensive (we must take everything we need with us; the camping gear, bikes...everything), and now the rising price of petrol has added to the expense.

We know that these trips work as we have had some very problematic youngsters attend and their reactions to the event have been notable – they all want to do it again!

Last year we took the Canonbury Project<sup>5</sup> and Holloway School<sup>6</sup> Project. No one will ever forget the Wales experience.

<sup>4</sup> *Residentials* is a term that we've coined to mean trips outside of London.

<sup>5</sup> The Canonbury Project is sponsored by Islington Council and is one of several; youth projects that offer range of activities providing activities as well as help and support to young people on a range of issues.

<sup>6</sup> The Holloway School is a specialist sports college. The school works with a wide range of partners to provide an extensive range of high quality activities for students to extend their learning out of school hours.

## Achievement Awards Scheme



In this scheme, we nominate a young person who has been demonstrating real improvement in behaviour and motivation.

They are presented with a Certificate of Merit and they receive £200 to spend in support of the organization (e.g. a new helmet, gloves, etc. they purchased for SPARKPLUG)

This scheme is funded by The Jack Petchey Foundation<sup>7</sup> whose funding has also allowed us to expand our OCN accredited Motorcycle Workshop Course by an extra day each week.

This was extremely important as we have so many young people being referred to us.

Jack Cronin aged 16

**What do you like best about the accredited course?**

*Keeps me out of trouble coming here, and I learn "sum'n".*

**What could be improved?**

*More days here, for me.*

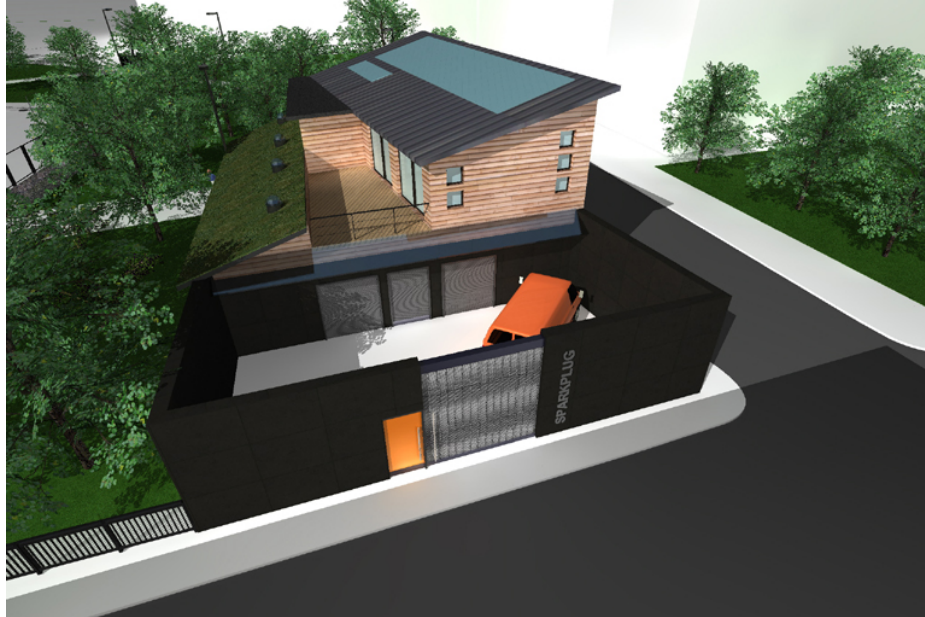
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<sup>7</sup> The Jack Petchey Foundation was established by the successful East London entrepreneur, Jack Petchey, in 1999. It is a young, progressive grant making Trust based in Ilford Essex. It is now among the largest and most influential London charitable foundations. It focuses on projects and programmes that benefit 11-25 year olds.

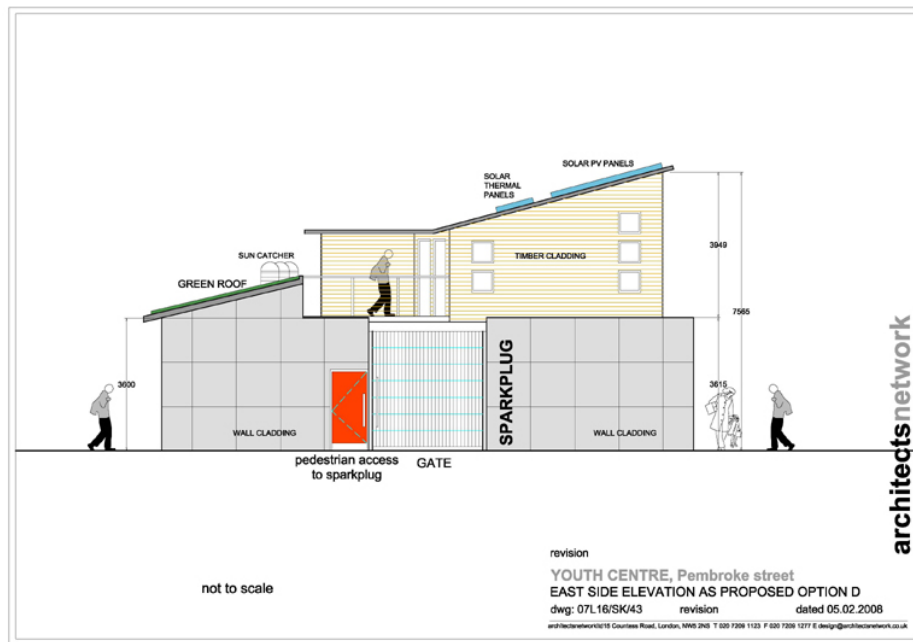
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## Our Future Home

In recognition of the unique work and success that SPARKPLUG has already achieved, we expect that Islington Council and Greenspace will be using substantial Section 106 monies for the creation of a new Community Youth Centre in Bingfield Park.



The Centre will be the new home of SPARKPLUG and will include expanded facilities that will dramatically increase its reach and effectiveness in the local community. Expected completion date for the new building, estimated to cost £560.000 is 2009.



## Our People

### The Staff (“the Sparks”)



**Martin Willis** – Martin founded SPARKPLUG in 2002 after having worked in youth provision for more than 12 years. He began his career at Crumbles Castle Adventure Playground and continues to be involved there at least one day each week.

Martin has a Level 3 Diploma in Youth Work, First Aid certification and has completed an ABC<sup>8</sup> Course in Project Management.



**Darren Askew** – Darren has completed City and Guilds Courses in Mechanics – at Levels 1, 2, and 3 as well as courses in Child Protection, a Diploma in Youth Work at Level 1, courses in Drugs Awareness and Equal Opportunities.

Darren has a broad level of experience and has worked for several other motorbike projects in London. He is a keen traveller.



**Lorraine Gibson** – Lorraine is one of our key fund raisers and handles the “books.” Lorraine lives locally and has had experience in a number of youth projects.



**Ed Daniels** -



**Ben Walker** - Ben is a local resident that has been riding with SPARKPLUG more times than he'd had hot dinners. He has always been keen to fix his own bikes and work on other people's bikes.

What Ben doesn't know about scooters, *just ain't worth know'n*. He's recently started his first course in Youth Work Level 1.



**Chelsea Freed** -

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<sup>8</sup> ABC Awards is one of the largest vocational awarding bodies in the UK with an established reputation for quality and customer service. ABC is recognised by the regulatory bodies as an awarding body whose qualifications meet the criteria applied by QCA (Qualifications Curriculum Authority)

### **The Volunteers**

Sparkplug is dedicated to take on at least four volunteers per year. It's a chance to get local young people into helping out on the project and getting them into training and work.

### **The Board of Trustees (“the Plugs”)**

**Father James Kennedy** – “Father Jim” is the Priest at the Blessed Sacrament Church and has worked in the local community for over 27 years.

**Jazmin Dervish** – Jazmin is Director of Youth Programmes for Newlon Fusion, part of the Newlon Housing Trust.

**Kathleen Fitzgerald** – Kathleen is a local resident and Head Play Worker

**Josette Punter** – Josette is a local resident and teacher.

**Julian Bowman** - Youth TV

**Stephan Schulte** – A retired television executive from the US, Stephan was one of the founders of both the Pay-TV programming Company Showtime, and the satellite-to-home television business in the States.

He has lived in King's Cross for over 10 years and in the UK for more than 17.

### **The Advisory Board**

**Adam Singer** – Adam has been involved in all aspects of communications at CEO level. He has made TV programmes, created TV channels for cable and satellite and run a telecommunications and broadband business. He has dealt extensively with government at ministerial level and with regulated businesses. He regularly writes for UK press, radio, and television, on digital issues.

**Sir Clive Sinclair** - Sir Clive has been an iconic figure in British industry for more than quarter of a century. Some of his most notable innovations in technology have been the first pocket calculator, the first pocket television, and the best-selling British computer of all time. He continues to produce a variety of innovative products from his London headquarters.

**David Bailey, CBE** – David is one of the UK's best know photographers. Born in the East End of London, he is self-taught and can be an inspiration to young kids seeking a better life. His portrait photography of the “Swinging Sixties” made him the decade's iconic chronicler and this spirit continues with his work today in photography, adverts and film.

## Funding 2007/08

SPARKPLUG is funded by various organisations and activities.

Islington Council PAYP <sup>9</sup>	£18,800
Safer Islington Partnership	12,000
Jack Petchey Foundation	11,200
Youth Opportunities Fund	9,110
ScootAlive	4,100
Elthorne/New Directions CEC	3,167
Regents Vocational College	3,040
Garfield Weston	3,000
Abbey National	2,500
Big Boost	2,350
The Islington Council Drugs & Alcohol Team	2,000
Islington Greenspace	1,400
Summer University	765

<b>Total Funds Raised in 2007-2008</b>	<b>£73,432</b>
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Our remaining funding was raised internally from our riding activities, *Residentials* and customized courses in mechanics prepared and run for some of the Islington based youth projects including:

- Barnard Park Adventure Playground
- Canonbury Youth Project
- City YMCA
- Copenhagen Youth Project
- Cornwallis Adventure Playground
- Crumbles Castle Adventure Playground
- Elthorne Estate Youth Club
- Highbury Area Detached<sup>10</sup>
- Highbury Inclusion Program
- Holloway School Project
- Islington Youth Offending Team
- King Henry's Walk
- Martin Luther King Adventure Playground
- Mayville Youth Project
- Prospex
- Rose Bowl
- Three Corners Adventure Playground
- Waterside Adventure Playground

## Ours Sponsors and Benefactors

<sup>9</sup> PAYP - Positive Activities for Young People Programme is a government programme aimed at giving vulnerable young people aged 8-19 years the opportunity to take part in a range of positive activities during the school holidays and term time.

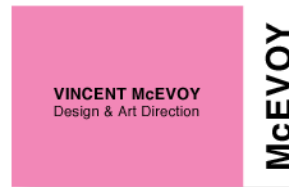
<sup>10</sup> *Detached* activities are those where we actually meet youngsters in their neighbourhoods on the streets during the evening.



Every Child Matters  
Change For Children



thebigboost



- *SPARKPLUG has been in existence for six years and has engaged over 550 young people. Its main activities are teaching young people how to ride motorcycles safely and taking young people living on the estates of Islington to the countryside to ride on designated tracks, experiencing life outside the city.*
- *SPARKPLUG runs mechanics and maintenance courses through London Open College Network; an accredited course at Level 1, 2 and 3.*
- *SPARKPLUG funding has come from a variety of local Council sources but we are now seeking a greater share from the business community via sponsorship activities. We hope you will join us in our mission.*



**The SPARKPLUG Organisation**

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