

THE CHALLENGE

Briefing: Project Zero WF CIC & Youth Leadership in Waltham Forest

What Is Project Zero WF?

Project Zero WF is a **community interest company (CIC)** based in **Waltham Forest, London** committed to tackling **knife crime, youth violence, anti-social behaviour and exclusion through positive youth engagement**. The organisation's central aim is **to see a year with ZERO deaths of young people from knife or violent crime** — a bold, aspirational goal that drives everything they do.

Its main youth hub is **The Outset Centre** on Grange Road, Walthamstow, where a wide range of activities, programmes and services are offered to young people aged roughly **8–25**.

What They Do: Core Activities & Services

Project Zero engages young people in **positive, constructive activities** to reduce risks of violence and connect them with opportunity:

- **Early Engagement Programmes** to reach young people before problems escalate.
- **Holiday clubs, youth clubs & social activities** offering safe, fun spaces to be creative and grow.
- **PZ Youth Champions & Media Team**, supporting peer leadership and skills in media, production and communication.
- **Alternative provisions** for those excluded or struggling in traditional education or community settings.
- **Workshops and career guidance**, including careers fairs, employability skills and creative arts.

They also partner with local organisations, the council's violence-reduction partnerships and events like **Spaces4All** to create safe spaces across the borough and reach more young people.

Role in the Community & Youth Leadership

Project Zero isn't just a youth club — it plays a **leadership role in community youth services** across Waltham Forest:

- It contributes to **violence reduction strategies** and works alongside council services, police and voluntary groups as part of wider efforts to **prevent knife crime and build safer neighbourhoods**.
 - Provides a **supportive physical space** where young people feel safe, valued and able to develop skills, resilience and future pathways.
 - Encourages **youth voice and leadership** through programmes like Youth Champions and events that give young people platforms to be heard and influence services.
 - Activities focus not just on “stopping negatives” (like violence), but on **building positives** — aspirations, confidence and community cohesion.
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About the Founder: Stephen Barnabis BEM

The organisation was founded in **2019** by **Stephen Barnabis, BEM** — a **long-standing youth worker with over 30 years' experience** in engaging young people, locally and internationally.

Stephen's motivation is deeply personal: he **lost two close young relatives to violent crime**, which drove him to dedicate his life to creating alternatives for young people at risk.

In recognition of his work, Stephen has been honoured with a **British Empire Medal (BEM) in the 2025 New Year Honours list** for his services to young people and the community in Waltham Forest.

His vision for Project Zero revolves around **engagement, inclusion and employability** — giving young people creative, social and professional pathways that help them avoid harmful behaviours and build fulfilling lives.

Where to Find More Information

If you want to learn more, get involved, or connect with their work:

-  **Official website:** projectzerowf.co.uk — details on programmes, news and sign-ups.
 -  **Social media:** active channels where they share updates, activities, and young people's work.
 -  **The Outset Centre:** 2a Grange Rd, Walthamstow, London E17 8AH — community youth hub offering services and activities.
 -  Contact email and phone are often listed on the council's youth services page for referrals and bookings.
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Expanded Briefing:

Project Zero WF CIC & Youth Services in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest's Approach to Youth Services

Waltham Forest Council takes a **community-led, early intervention approach** to youth services, with a focus on **providing safe, accessible, positive spaces and opportunities** for young people across the borough. This model recognises that meaningful engagement **prevents harm before it escalates** and fosters belonging, skills development and resilience.

A key part of this approach is **active youth involvement** — **young people help shape services** so activities reflect their needs and interests. Local voluntary and community sector organisations (like Project Zero WF) deliver many of these services locally, ensuring cultural relevance and community trust.

Space4All: Safe, Youth-Friendly Spaces

The **Space4All** programme is a major part of Waltham Forest's youth offer and sits within the broader **Family Hubs** initiative. It provides **free, safe spaces for young people (typically ages 11-25)** to socialise, build relationships, take part in activities, and access support in their local area.

Space4All sessions are delivered across multiple community venues, with activities designed to **reduce isolation, support wellbeing and build confidence** — vital elements in keeping young people engaged and away from environments where knife crime and anti-social behaviour can take root.

Organisations like Project Zero WF often help deliver or connect young people to Space4All sessions, strengthening the borough-wide network of positive youth provision.

Waltham Forest Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP)

Waltham Forest's **VRP** brings together the council, the Metropolitan Police, health, education services, and community partners — including youth organisations — to tackle violence, including knife crime, through a **public health approach** rather than only a policing response.

The VRP focuses on four key strands:

1. **Curtail** violent acts at source (target enforcement and diversion).
2. **Treat** the impact of violence quickly and effectively.
3. **Support** those most at risk of violence and exploitation.
4. **Strengthen** community resilience and universal protective factors.

Young people have a **voice in each working group**, and there's a specific **Young People's Group** to test, challenge and endorse emerging actions — making the partnership more responsive to youth needs.

The VRP's strategy also sits alongside the council's **Serious Violence Duty Strategy**, which implements national legislative requirements (from the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022), reinforcing multi-agency efforts to understand and prevent serious violence.

How this Fits with Greater London Policy

At the Londonwide level, the **Greater London Authority (GLA)**, through the **Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)** and **London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)**, provides a **strategic, prevention-focused framework** that local borough partnerships like Waltham Forest's plug into:

London's VRU works across the capital to **understand why violence happens and prevent it** with a focus on early intervention, education and community engagement — emphasising positive opportunities for young people and root-cause reduction.

The **London Crime Prevention Fund** and Young Londoners Fund provide resources that boroughs can draw on to broaden youth services and diversionary activities as part of violence prevention work.

The Mayor's **Police and Crime Plan (2025–29)** sets out priorities for reducing violent crime using a **public health approach**, encouraging partnership with local councils, police and communities to reduce serious violence including knife crime.

In practice, this means **Project Zero WF and the Waltham Forest VRP align local action with city-wide priorities**: early intervention, youth engagement, community-based diversion, and multi-agency collaboration — rather than relying solely on enforcement — to keep young people safe. This connection helps direct funding, supports shared best practice, and reinforces the borough's strategy within a larger metropolitan effort to prevent violence.

Suggested Resources to Explore

You can learn more through:

- **Project Zero WF CIC – official website:** projectzerowf.co.uk
 - **Waltham Forest Council youth services pages:** Check Waltham Forest's official site for Space4All and youth engagement information.
 - **Waltham Forest Violence Reduction Partnership pages:** for strategic documents and partnership updates.
 - **Greater London Authority (GLA) – London's Violence Reduction Unit:** for citywide policy context on violence prevention.
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