

MEDIA RELEASE

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE IN BLACKPOOL TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE THEY NEED FOR THE FUTURE

March 2006, London, *Life Routes*, a national programme to help young people develop essential life skills relaunched at a major conference in London.

Life Routes is managed by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) and funded by Nokia as part of their global Make a Connection programme committed to promoting positive youth development at a grass roots level.

Blackpool one of the *Life Routes* pilot areas was supported by the programme to help young people develop the skills essential for living and achieving in today's society, in particular develop their own identities as well as negotiation and decision-making skills. David Lund, Director of children's Services at Blackpool Council, said: "This is a very welcome addition to our existing programmes as it recognises the importance of raising self-esteem and social responsibility, as well as the practical skills needed to engage in society successfully."

Cllr Taylor hopes that this is just the beginning: "The enthusiasm for the activities shown by the young people involved in the pilot has been very encouraging and it is hoped that, eventually all young people in Blackpool will be able to engage in the Make a Connection activities at youth clubs, Sure Starts and other centres and work towards gaining a nationally recognised ASDAN award."

What young people in Blackpool have said about the *Life Routes* programme:

'I have enjoyed making things and finding out things I didn't know before. I now have a better understanding about the effects of drugs. The activities make you challenge yourself and I didn't think I could do some of the things I have done.'
Abergale, aged 12

'I have learnt how to make a healthy meal and I have designed and produced an information leaflet. I have done some of the challenges at home with my mum. I like the idea that you can pick your own challenges.'
Daniel, aged 12

'I like doing it, it's interesting and better than being bored at home.'
Crystal, aged 16

Working within schools and communities, *Life Routes* aims to help young people develop the skills and confidence they need to achieve the five outcomes for children which have been laid out in the Government's Every Child Matter's strategy. This project focuses on self-confidence and responsibility; problem solving and communication; team work and respect for others.

Claire Wright, a Community Support Worker at the Talbot and Brunswick Sure Start Scheme in Blackpool says:

“We have been running the Life Routes programme for 9 weeks now and I have seen the group grow in confidence and develop their working-together skills. Allowing the young people to choose their own challenges has developed their sense of responsibility and given them ownership of their own learning. There is a real excitement and enthusiasm for the activities and I believe this resource will prepare the group for bigger challenges ahead.”

The conference will mark the launch of a new *Life Routes* resource for those working with young people most in need of guidance in a range of out of school settings. It offers practical ideas for working with 13 to 16-year-olds to help them develop the skills essential for living and achieving in today's society. The resource builds on the success of the Make a Connection schools programme, which has helped over 27,000 children and trained over 1000 teachers in the UK since its launch.

“All young people need to learn skills to help them negotiate and manage everyday challenges,” explained Sophie Wood, Project Manager at NCB. “This is especially true for young people with behavioural or emotional difficulties and those who have experienced traumatic events in their lives and are less resilient as a result.”

Mark Squires, Head of Communications at Nokia UK, added: “In the high pressure world we live in, we can sometimes overlook the need for young people to be given the self-confidence and life skills to face the day-to-day physical and emotional pressures that are a normal part of growing up. Life Routes is about helping them to maximise their potential and connect in richer ways with others.”

Prior to the launch, pilot *Life Routes* programmes have been running in five community areas – Blackpool, Croydon, Hackney, Gateshead and Lincoln – with initial feedback from young people and youth workers extremely positive. Five more areas have signed up to the project for 2006.

-ENDS-

For more information about this release or to arrange an interview with someone from the Life Routes project based in Blackpool please contact:

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Notes for editors:

- 1) Life Routes is a project to promote the learning of life skills in schools and community settings. The project is managed by the National Children's Bureau and funded by Nokia.
- 2) Life Routes aims to help young people achieve the five national outcomes outlined in the government's Every Child Matters strategy. These are to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being.
- 3) Nokia funds Life Routes in the UK as part of the global Make A Connection programme. The programme aims to help young people learn and apply personal, social and academic skills to real life through practice in working with others, making decisions, exercising good judgement, solving problems and setting and achieving goals.
- 4) NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. As an umbrella body for the children's sector in England and Northern Ireland, we provide essential information on policy, research and best practice for our members and other partners. For more information visit www.ncb.org.uk
- 5) Nokia is a Gold member of NCB's Corporate Partner Programme. For more information about how NCB works in partnership with the business community email corporatepartner@ncb.org.uk