



## FREE SKATE SPRING 2017

Friday Free Skate is our Friday night program for young people aged 10 to 16 from the Douglas area of Dundee where The Factory Skatepark is based.

In this community these are areas of high levels of deprivation and one of the most prominent examples of this is lack of money to engage in sporting activities. Therefore, we run this program every Friday where 10 young people can come in and skate for free. The club works on a rotational basis to ensure everyone from the local area who wishes to take part in skating is given the opportunity.

The Friday Free Skate operates as our first point of contact for the majority of the young people we work with. The opportunity to try something new often leads to young people attending other programs, such as Homework Club or Youth Club. Therefore, it is an extremely important program as it allows young people to become part of the skatepark community. As with all our work with young people of this age we are aiming for them to develop their social skills and self-worth when they are taking part in the activities and the feedback from this term is that Friday Free Skate is doing precisely that.

Last year the target audience for Friday Free Skate was altered. Where as before

this club was aimed at young people from the local DD4 8 postcode it was becoming evident in the homework and youth clubs that our user base had shifted. Whilst the majority still come from the area surrounding The Factory Skatepark (FSP) there was a significant number who were out-with this catchment area, and as such they were unable to attend on Friday evenings at this programme. As such it was decided that the target audience for Friday Free Skate would change to anyone aged 10-16 who attended any other young programme on a weekly basis at FSP. At such, Free Skate is now more of a reward for those attending, and behaving, regularly.

This is just the latest in a number of evolutions for this club, which has had a significant impact at FSP. Young people are aware at the other clubs they attend that if they do not behave and interact in a responsible manner with others then there will not be a space that week for them at Free Skate. Thus the dynamic has changed slightly. However, Free Skate still retains its core intention, namely to help young people develop their social skills and self-worth in an active manner, and in a safe environment. Also, whilst with the youth club and homework club there is often a more formal slant to the sessions, with Free Skate the atmosphere is more

relaxed. The staff interact with the young people in the skatepark arena on an informal basis, and often in-depth conversations can rise out of nothing. The staff are there to help the young people enjoy themselves, interact with one another in a responsible manner, and help in any other way we reasonably can.

In 2016 we saw a big rise in the numbers of girls attending Free Skate and this trend has continued in 2017. More of those who are attending the homework club and youth club are consistently coming along to Free Skate and are progressing well in their chosen sport. The girls are now interacting more in the skatepark arena, a huge positive as skating can still be seen largely as a male-dominated sport. In the future there is the potential for these young people to become volunteer stewards and role models for younger girls at FSP and this is a positive start on that process.

Free Skate will continue to run every Friday evening in Dundee school term time. Coming at the end of the week it is a perfect way for young people to relax after a week of school and set themselves up for a great weekend. 2017 has started well for the youth programmes and we look forward to what the coming months will bring.