

Project Future – A Psychological and Social Justice Approach

A community based, youth led mental health project. The Big Lottery funded project seeks to transform mental health delivery for socially excluded young men aged 16-25 involved in gangs, offending and serious youth violence in Haringey. This is a partnership project with BEH Mental Health Trust, Haringey Council, charity Mac-UK and Metropolitan Police. Underpinned by evidence based psychological models, a holistic package of care addresses multiple levels of need. Young men co-produce with staff and lead on activities that promote psychological and physical well-being.

Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust and Partners

What was the issue being addressed?

1. Setting up and maintaining a partnership project with statutory and voluntary sector.
2. Addressing the unmet emotional and physical well-being needs of young men in gangs in some of the most deprived areas in Tottenham Haringey.
3. Improving access to education, employment and training (EET) to increase opportunities to partake in mainstream society.
4. Reducing offending and increasing stability for young people in the criminal justice system decreasing the economic impact of gang related offending to society (e.g. reduced arrests, incarceration and presentation in acute services).

5. Engaging and co-producing a safe youth led service.
6. Improve environmental and social sustainability through community capacity building, increasing community resilience and social mobility.

“Right now people would be in the streets getting into trouble but here people come to do their theory, music, English, maths, do something productive instead of standing out, making trouble find them...”
– Service User.



What action was taken to overcome the issue?

1. Senior management from BEH and MAC-UK consulted with the specialist Integrated Gangs Unit at Haringey Council and Met Police to set-up this partnership project.

2. The project recognises the barriers these young men face in accessing services. The team supported them to lead on projects (e.g. boxing, music) and activities like (go karting, visiting London Dungeons) aimed at improving emotional well-being. Psychologically informed treatments are tailored to meet individual needs.

3. Project Future have co-produced initiatives to accessing education, employment and training; including CV and interview workshops; in house paid and voluntary employment opportunities as a stepping stone to external employment and training.

Relationships built with services include Springboard, DWP, Princes Trust, CONEL, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, TFL and Urban Futures. The team support young people to attend recruitment fairs, college open days and job interviews.

4. Interplay of factors at community, familial, peer and individual levels contribute to vicious cycles of offending. The Project intervenes by:

- supporting young people to maintain relationships with networks e.g. Probation
- co-producing activities,
- addressing stability like learning the tube system, driving license applications to allow them to leave Tottenham
- scaffolding relationships with positive role models and mentors.

5. Project Future was co-produced with four key young people from the core group in Tottenham. They've been instrumental in advising on and setting up every aspect of the project including the space, activities, referring and facilitating the engagement of their peers.

Risk is mitigated by keeping the space safe through static and dynamic risk assessments and building trust that offer relational security.

What was the impact?

The Centre for Mental Health provide an independent evaluation of the project. Findings showed that 133 young people are attending the project, of which 96 (72%) have sought support across multiple areas as follows:

Mental health and well-being

- 86 young people have accessed some form of mental health support (65%).
- Routine outcome measures show a significant marked reduction in mental well-being needs.

Education, Employment and Training (EET)

- 82 out of 133 young people (62%) have accessed employability support.
- 47 are currently in education, employment and training (35%);

Offending

- 71 have accessed some form of offending support (53%).
- Ranging from what drives offending behaviour - minimising them; guidance around legal aid to active case management.

Access to services

- 70 young people have accessed another service (53%), including the JobCentre, social services, sexual health, housing charities, solicitors and dentist.

Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability:

The project aims to have an impact on the local community and organisations; reducing demand on services. Every 'wounding' incident costs £9,790 per unit (Home Office Economic and Social Costs of Crime, updated 2011). Effectively engaging with young people to reduce violence could save at least £890,890, through reduction in police arrests, A&E admissions, use of prisons, criminal justice system and prevention of more serious health issues.

Systems Change and Social Action

Work across multiple levels ensures change across systems to alleviate social and health inequalities experienced by marginalised communities. Through social action work, young people are influencing change at policy meetings, meeting with commissioners, criminal justice, mental health and education systems.

Lessons learned / success factors?

Structural barriers due to social and economic deprivation, are evident - material (e.g. lack of housing, criminal records) and psychological (e.g. ongoing distrust of services, high youth violence compromising safety).

Learning:

- to engage young people at their pace building trust to feel safe
- the importance of integrated partnerships, enabling a system wide change through learning, sharing and dissemination
- youth employment has been an invaluable and challenging needing to develop tailored interventions.

Valuable lessons are drawn from a social action issue through strained relationships between young black men in Tottenham and the local police. The Future Project has taken part in scrutiny panels addressing the over-representation of young black men in the criminal justice system and have also consulted on a fast track police training programme via the Stephen Lawrence Foundation allowing their voices to be heard.

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