



**Lives Not Knives
LNK Educate
AGM Report 2021**

Lives Not Knives

Lives Not Knives (LNK) is an innovative, youth-led charity that works to prevent knife crime, serious youth violence and anti-social behaviour by **engaging, educating** and **empowering** young people who have been affected by socio-economic factors and supporting them to improve their future prospects.

Mission Statement

- **Engage** - To successfully engage as many young people as possible through: school Roadshows, workshops, referrals from schools & PRUs, and to further develop these relationships through the LNK Engage programmes: namely our weekly Youth Hub and our Summer Programme that runs throughout the summer holidays.
- **Educate** - To use a combination of workshops and Roadshows, 1-1 and group mentoring, and our in-house LNK Engage programmes to educate 9-18 year about the effects of knife crime, in order to discourage them from engaging in anti-social activities - particularly serious youth violence.
- **Empower** - To empower young people and the wider community towards a more positive future by delivering teacher training, offering mentoring and relationships advice, preparing young people for work, and supporting successful engagement in education, apprenticeships or employment.

How does the Programme work?

The LNK Educate programme is focused around prevention and it is dual-pronged, meaning there is both a "universal" and "targeted" element. Therefore whilst all young people aged between 9-14 at the participating school will benefit from up to 6 educational lessons on the dangers of knife, a limited number will also be referred for 1-1 mentoring - at the discretion of the school teaching staff and the LNK team.

LNK's team is comprised of 7 youth workers who are based in 9 schools in the borough of Croydon. 4 of these are Primary schools and 5 are Secondary's, with each school having between 1 and 3 mentors based there on a weekly basis depending on the perceived level of need. In addition, LNK also work in a number of areas in the borough of Croydon to make our work as far-reaching and wide-ranging as possible. These areas include: South Norwood, Thornton Heath, Coulsdon, New Addington and Purley.

After the schools have agreed to partner with LNK for the academic year, the first step in the programme is beginning the process that is required for the "universal" element. This involves the Project Manager and Lead Youth Worker going into the schools and completing a teacher training session with all of the school staff who will be tasked with delivering the resources to the relevant year groups. In this session LNK staff: play each of the videos and discuss their aims and objectives, talk through the respective fact sheets and activities that we suggest, highlight how to identify and then signpost a young person who is "at risk", and finally answer any questions that the teachers may have.

Once the teachers feel comfortable and confident with the content in the curriculum, the lessons are then delivered by the teachers in a way that aligns with the school timetable. These lessons serve to educate and raise awareness of the issues surrounding knife crime, and help to foster a "whole school approach" to reducing exclusions and knife crime by

increasing awareness amongst the students at the school, as well as the staff. The pack features 6 video interviews with different people relating to knife crime, including:

- Lesson 1: Interview with Sophie, the sister of a fatal stabbing victim
- Lesson 2: Interview with Kayha, a Junior Criminal Barrister
- Lesson 3: Interview with Jeff, a Trauma Surgeon at a London hospital
- Lesson 4: Interview with Orett, a Police Officer for the Metropolitan Police Service
- Lesson 5: Interview with Dunia, a mother whose son is in prison for stabbing another young boy to death
- Lesson 6: Interview with Dan, a victim of a stabbing attack

Each of these videos talks about knife crime through a slightly different lens and thus highlights a variety of different topics, such as: the psychological impact of losing someone to knife crime, the legal concepts behind sentencing, medical facts, as well as details about police powers to stop and search and what rights people are entitled to. They also serve to dispel a number of myths surrounding these subjects, and each video is accompanied by a curriculum with suggested teaching plans and activities that can be used to maximise pupil participation and engagement.

Once the teachers are trained to deliver the resources, LNK staff can then begin their work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to collaboratively identify between 8-24 young people (based on the number of mentors based there) in the relevant year groups who they feel, based on a variety of criteria (which will be discussed later), would benefit most from 1-1 mentoring sessions with our qualified mentors.

After the mentees have been selected and parental consent has been obtained, they will then be allocated to a mentor. Each of our mentors has different life experiences and skills, but in the vast majority of schools we aim to have both a male and female mentor present at the school to cater to a variety of different needs.

The mentors will then come into the school to deliver an introductory workshop to the group of young people who have been referred for mentoring. This provides the mentors with an opportunity to introduce themselves to their mentees before their first session, offer a background on LNK, clarify what the sessions will involve, and reiterate their intended outcomes over the year. After this has been completed, the mentors can then begin their 1-1 sessions and undertake an initial assessment.

The mentors will then carry out 1:1 sessions on a weekly basis within the school environment and in accordance with the school timetable. In this time they will discuss the young person's background, long and short term goals, ambitions, and issues, with the aim of motivating them to overcome any obstacles that may be in their way so they can fulfil their potential and improve their prospects. The mentor will then regularly evaluate the progress of the mentee, and help them to resolve issues both inside and outside of school. In addition to these weekly meetings in school, the mentees are also able to attend drop-in sessions at the LNK unit or attend our Youth Hub if they require further support or want to talk to someone after school or during the school holidays - in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

From the first session at the school each youth worker will be writing weekly 1-1 notes on every mentee that they work with. At 3 distinct periods throughout the year, each mentor will take these notes and use them to write a more detailed document, a case study. These case studies are used to offer a greater insight into the young person, including

their: problems, emotions, behaviours, personality, interests, home and social life, targets and goals, and progress over the allocated time period.

These notes and case studies serve to highlight how the mentor is supporting and guiding the young person to improve their behaviour and performance, resolve issues in and outside of school, and subsequently take steps to fulfil their potential. The first case study is due in December before the Christmas break, and will provide an initial assessment on each mentee alongside a plan of how they aim to support them over the year. The second is due in March and will make an evaluation on the progress the young person has made, whilst the final case study is due at the end of the academic year which will provide a summary of their progress over the year.

After each case study interval is reached the Project Manager will then edit and summarise each case study, before meeting with the liaison at each of the 9 schools. In this meeting the Project Manager will then feedback on each young person so that the school is updated on the work we are doing, and to also create a partnership and multi-agency approach to supporting each of our mentees.

By the end of the school year, we then have an exit strategy in place to formally bring the mentoring relationships to an end.

1-1 Mentoring sessions will consist of:

- Reflecting and evaluating the achievement of goals set at the previous session
- Reviewing upcoming challenges
- Recommending new strategies and approaches to overcome adversity
- Encouraging the mentee to express themselves and talk about their concerns or anxieties
- Supporting the mentee to pursue their ambitions and guiding them to take proactive steps to achieve them
- Signposting the mentee to other external support if necessary

Outcomes

The Schools all adopt a whole school approach to reducing school exclusions.

All pupils understand the negative impact of violence and crime on their own life and society as a whole.

MECHANISMS OF CHANGE:

- Young people are better able to understand and spot the warning signs of escalating distress and anger.
- The mentee better understands their 'purpose' and ambitions, and has a greater awareness of the opportunities that exist and how they can achieve their goals.
- The mentee becomes more confident and independent in themselves and consequently has a greater sense of belonging.
- The young person enjoys the feeling of being in greater control.
- They have learned to trust an adult (Mentor and teachers) and become better at expressing their feelings or concerns.

OUTCOMES

- The young person has changed their behaviour; they are less angry and have alternative strategies to deal with conflict or sadness, as well as an ability to avoid situations which will result in themselves getting excluded.
- The young person has increased confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness, and has developed strategies to overcome setbacks and obstacles, set targets, and subsequently realise and develop their potential.
- They stay within mainstream school, surrounded by a positive peer network and an environment where crime and violence are not the norm and, consequently, do not get drawn into crime/violence.

Update on the YEF Programme

The YEF-funded, LNK Educate programme is back up and running for the start of the 2021-2022 academic year, and it again forms the principal component of both LNK's preventative and outreach work.

Over the last year we, as an organisation, were confronted with a number of stumbling blocks in what was a uniquely challenging period not only for us, but the entire planet.

The spread of COVID-19 and its subsequent fallout was an unprecedented obstacle that hindered both the planning and delivery of the LNK Educate programme, with: staff and pupil absences, ever-changing COVID regulations, whole school closures, and furlough, all components in delaying, restricting, and then breaking up our youth worker's working relationships with their mentees. This happened most notably with the lockdown that was enforced between January and March 2021, as our mentors were temporarily placed on furlough as schools were forced to close due to a government ruling.

In this 3 month period LNK's management team continued working both from home and at the LNK unit, whilst stringently following government guidelines. During this time we worked on improving or adapting a number of our resources, including refining our Parent Pack. The idea for this pack was suggested by many of the teachers who we trained last year, who highlighted how they felt that many of the parents were unaware of the 'warning signs' of gang affiliation and how to effectively safeguard their children. We therefore wanted to make this resource as informative as possible in terms of increasing awareness among parents about gangs and knife crime, and to also give them some strategies and resources so that they could have conversations with their children on these subjects and guide them accordingly.

In addition, during this period also organised 'Progress Meetings' via Zoom with the relevant staff at the schools we were partnered with. In these meetings our Project Manager provided feedback on how the mentees were developing in the mentoring relationships up to that point, and also sought to get the school's perspective on how each mentee had progressed and where there was still room for improvement. At points throughout this lockdown, a few of the mentors were also brought off furlough temporarily to meet with some of their mentees via Zoom who were struggling during the lockdown period, as some of the parents had contacted the school and requested our support.

Ahead of the March restart we also signed up and begun the process of setting up in an additional secondary school, Harris Purley, who we partnered with for the remainder of the academic year. The school had a surplus of female mentors but only one male staff member in the same role, so to cater for this need we placed one of our male mentors at

the school for two days each week. Many of the young people on his case load were among those deemed to be at highest risk of involvement in criminal activity - and we were able to support the vast majority of these young people to avoid exclusion and remain at the school for the remainder of the year.

In preparation for the March restart, management also booked in for all LNK staff to take part in specialised Domestic Violence training, given the context that over the preceding year young people had spent far greater periods at home due to COVID-19, as well as the events regarding Sarah Everard's murder and the increased awareness about keeping women and young people safe. In addition, management also organised for LNK staff to take part in a number of online workshops with other professionals in the youth work sector so that they could ask them questions and share best practice. Among these, we had a meeting with representatives from both The Prince's Trust and Care2Listen, who also shared their resources with us so that the mentors could incorporate some of their techniques and strategies into their own 1-1 sessions. These sessions helped to equip all of our mentors with the tools to engage, educate and empower their mentees, and also ensure that the remaining time and sessions they had with their mentees were as effective as possible.

As the end of the academic year drew to an end, management also worked with representatives of the NatCen team to complete a LOGIC model to chart the methodology and intended outcomes that underlie our work. Furthermore many of our team, and a number of staff and pupils at the schools we were working in, completed interviews to allow the NatCen researchers to get a greater insight into the programme as part of their evaluation on the effectiveness of LNK Educate.

To formally bring the mentoring relationships to an end at the end of the academic year, we also set about creating an exit strategy with each of the young people we had worked with over the year. For this we firstly created a quantitative survey that each mentee could complete which would highlight how they benefitted from the mentoring relationship. In addition each of the mentees received a handwritten postcard from their mentor, as well as a certificate from LNK congratulating them on completing the mentoring programme. We also prepared a letter to our mentee's parents that alerted them to our other services such as Youth Hub and our Summer Programme, and provided them with a copy of our Parent Pack so that the parents could effectively safeguard their child and identify any warning signs of gang affiliation.

Despite the number of challenges we were confronted with over this year, as a team we were able to adapt, improvise, and subsequently overcome the setbacks and complications and continue our targeted work with over 170 of Croydon's most vulnerable young people. In so doing each of our youth workers were able to achieve some remarkable results with the young people that they worked alongside, particularly given that they took place at a time in which the circumstances of disadvantaged young people across the country were exacerbated. The impact of our work was both comprehensive and diverse, and our staff were able to tailor their sessions to support young people from a whole host of different backgrounds and circumstances and achieve tangible progress, as documented eloquently in hundreds of case studies - a few of which are included at the conclusion of this report.

As a result of our successes over the year, we were successful in our NatCen evaluation and funded again by YEF to continue the LNK Educate programme into the next academic year - the only difference this time being that we were moving from a 'feasibility study' into a formal 'pilot project'.

Throughout the summer holidays our staff also helped to plan and deliver our LNK Engage programme, which in addition to giving Croydon's young people access to free activities and warm meal, also functioned as a continuation of our LNK Educate mentoring programme. This was possible as some of the young people we had been mentoring joined us for our Summer Programme for its four week duration, and this allowed us to broaden and bolster our support through working closely with some of the families of our mentees.

As a team we garnered a lot of experience from delivering the programme last year and managed to cultivate strong relationships with the staff in each of the schools we partnered with. As a result of these partnerships we were asked to continue our LNK Educate programme in 8 of the 9 schools we were working with - with one primary school deciding to drop out of the programme due to the Y6s leaving the school, and there being a perceived lack of need with the remaining year groups.

Whilst conducting 1-1 sessions in such a demanding and turbulent year was a challenge, our mentors also benefitted from these circumstances in terms of refining their mentoring skills and getting valuable experience supporting a huge variety of young people, who all had very different needs and came from unique circumstances. As we went on to restart the programme for the 2021-2022 academic year, we were lucky to continue some of these relationships - whilst also adding a large number of new mentees who we will be supporting over the year. Our mentors also became very adept with paperwork over this period, and the final case studies that were completed on each mentee were at an exceptionally high standard. We have therefore used this experience to guide our preparation for the upcoming academic year, where we will again be operating with 7 youth workers - two of which were hired in October and have undertaken training ahead of the restart. As a result we have been able to continue working in 9 Croydon schools, and vary the amount of staff allocated at each school between 1-3 depending on the level of need.

Our collective experience from delivering the programme last year has also guided some of the additional things we have added to our armoury to make our programme this year even more effective. However despite some additions and changes from last year (which will be discussed later), the intended outcomes of the programme have remained consistent and are two-fold: namely to collaborate with school staff to develop a "whole school approach" to reducing school exclusions, and to consequently reduce the numbers of those most "at risk" of becoming involved in youth crime and violence.

At the time of writing we have set up and begun our 1-1 work in 7 of the 9 schools, with the remaining 2 part of a Federation of schools that require a data clearance from the Federation before they can release the data about the mentees to LNK. We are however liaising with staff at both of these schools and the Federation to secure this data clearance as soon as possible.

How teachers refer and reasons for referral

The referral process for 1-1 mentoring fundamentally involves collaboration from the school's teaching staff and the LNK mentors. This has only been made more necessary this year given that we reduced each youth worker's caseload to a maximum of 8 in each school, so there were consequently a limited number of spaces on the programme.

The process of prioritising which young people will be selected for the programme varies between each school. Where possible we like to have our mentors sit in on the Teacher Resource pack sessions and observe the young people in the class to get an insight into which young people may benefit from mentoring support. From these the mentors typically compile a list of any young people believe may benefit from additional support, before comparing this with the Heads of Year and DSL staff at the school (who have access to more background information) to determine the final list. However due to COVID and the regulations around external agencies coming into the school, this has largely not been possible. Therefore in a few of the schools the lists that were created were completed solely by the teachers and support staff based at the school fulltime, whilst doing so based on a set of criteria provided by the LNK Project Manager. Ahead of the 2021-2022 programme, we also added a "tick box" to the referral form which has a number of different criteria that the teachers can complete - which will then give our mentors the best possible insight on the young person's background and the areas they need support with ahead of their first session.

The reasons why some young people are referred for 1-1 mentoring however varies significantly. Although we are called "Lives Not Knives" and much of our work concerns reducing knife crime and anti-social behaviour, knife crime as an issue encompasses so many other societal problems that means that referrals are not simply limited to concerns about gang affiliation or knife carrying. Instead we welcome referrals based on a number of other factors and concerns, such as their family background, peer influences, their mental health, and their attitude towards themselves and their future. We appreciate that the context behind each young person is different, and as such we welcome mentees with different needs and tailor our support accordingly.

The need for the programme

Although focus has been drawn to the events concerning COVID-19, the knife crime epidemic has continued to plight communities throughout London and England before coronavirus, and even throughout the pandemic.

This is reflected by the fact that knife crime hit a record high in England and Wales before coronavirus hit, as in the year up to March 2020 police recorded over 46,000 knife crime offences, and across the country more than a third of murders involved a knife. This reflected a 6% increase on the previous 12 months, and was 51% higher than when comparable recording began in 2011.¹

Even during the COVID-19 lockdown period, a number of police forces throughout many parts of the UK recorded rises in knife crime and youth violence. This was grimly highlighted by the fact that despite a government enforced nationwide lockdown 27 people (17 of whom teenagers) were stabbed to death in London alone in the first four months of 2021, with this a 28% increase on the previous year. The influence of gangs has also become even more pervasive in this period, as in 2020 the number of "children in need" assessments that identified gangs as a factor increased by 34%.²

Furthermore the impact of COVID meant that many vulnerable and disadvantaged young people had their mental health issues exacerbated as a result of being locked down in unsafe or unstable households, and being unable to interact with their peers or even

¹ [Knife crime hit record high before coronavirus lockdown, figures show | The Independent | The Independent](#)

² [Characteristics of children in need, Reporting Year 2020 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

attend school and extracurricular activities. This is highlighted in a report that revealed 30% of 17 and 18 year olds said they were worried "most of the time"³, and comes against a bigger context of a decline in Children's well-being, as the Children's Society and Good Childhood Report 2021 found that 7% of 10-15 year olds (over 300,000 children) in the UK are not happy with their lives, and 1 in 9 are unhappy with their school experience. Ten years ago, the estimated number was roughly half - at 173,000.⁴

UK Youth also detailed in their report that, as a result of COVID, "young people are more vulnerable to issues such as poverty and domestic violence, and they are more likely to be exposed to negative and risky activities such as gang activity. Moreover, young people are experiencing challenges in accessing safe and reliable employment and are suffering from the financial consequences of this...We have witnessed a rise in Anti-Social Behaviour,[and] seen more cases of Child Sexual Exploitation and gangs targeting young people".⁵

Over the last decade there has also been a dramatic decrease in the amount of funding for youth services and preventative work targeted at disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, as "instead, local authorities are choosing, or are being required, to divert spending on this age group away from universal or targeted youth services"⁶.

Analysis by the YMCA youth charity also found that local authority expenditure on youth services dropped from £1.4bn in 2010-11 to just under £429m in 2018-19, resulting in the loss of 750 youth centres and more than 4,500 youth workers.⁷ This process has only been exacerbated by the impact of COVID, as even 17% of the remaining youth organisations face closure as a result of COVID-19, while 88% anticipate reducing services for young people.⁸

The reduction in youth services also has a clear correlation with an increase in knife crime. The All-Party Parliamentary group revealed data from more than 100 councils showing cuts to youth services of up to 91%, whilst also highlighting how the areas with the largest spending cuts have suffered bigger increases in knife crime.⁹ The latest available statistics for knife crime cases in schools also shows that Croydon has the worst record of any London borough. Metropolitan Police figures show that Croydon had 89 knife crime offences in school premises between 2015-18, over 30 more than any other borough. This comes alongside a broader trend, as figures show that there was a 15% increase in knife crime in school premises between 2015-18.¹⁰

It is against this context that LNK is working to provide weekly 1-1 mentoring support to over 150 of Croydon's most vulnerable young people, and reach even so many more through our LNK Educate and LNK Engage programmes. Despite the challenges we have encountered over the last couple of years we remain as determined as ever to prevent young people being removed from mainstream education and to deter them from involvement in gang activity and crime. Whilst there is a long road ahead to patch up the damage done by austerity and exacerbated by COVID-19, we remember that - as

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56029030>

⁴ <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/impact-of-covid-19-on-young-people>

⁵ [UK-Youth-Fund-Report_1.pdf \(ukyouth.org\)](#)

⁶ [Youth services 'suffer £1bn funding cut in less than a decade' | CYP Now](#)

⁷ [Youth services suffer 70% funding cut in less than a decade | Young people | The Guardian](#)

⁸ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/re-thinking-local/re-thinking-local-children-and-young-people/re-thinking-local>

⁹ [APPG on Knife Crime - Young people's perspectives May 2019.pdf \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Croydon tops league for knife crimes in London schools - Eastlondonlines](#)

highlighted in a Centre for Crime and Justice studies publication - “Qualified youth workers and their colleagues across the youth sector will have vital roles to play in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.”

Changes and Additions made to the Programme

LNK prides itself on being a forward-thinking and innovative charity, and consequently we regularly look to reevaluate our work and make changes or additions to make our work even more effective. Some of the additions and changes that we have made to the programme in the last year include:

- **Replaced a school:** Given that we are often overwhelmed by the amount of schools that get in contact requesting support and there are only a limited number of spaces available, we consistently review our relationships with each of the schools we are partnered with. One of the Primary schools that we worked in last year, Fairchildes, decided to drop out of the programme for the 2021-2022 academic year as the Y6 group (which all of our mentees were in) had left to make the transition to their new secondary schools. As such, the Headteacher felt that they no longer required our services as the class that was replacing them was significantly less challenging - and they felt they had enough in-house support staff to cater to their needs. As a result they thanked us for our support over the previous year, and we then went about recruiting another school in the summer. It did not take long to sign up another school, and we quickly added another secondary school to our list of partners - namely Harris South Norwood, where we are excited to start mentoring soon!
- **Reduced mentor caseload per school:** From delivering the programme last year and speaking to our team, management also made the decision to reduce the caseload that each youth worker had in each school from a maximum of 10 to 8. This was done in order to give the mentors the opportunity to have longer sessions with each of their mentees, and to reduce the amount of paperwork they would have to complete so that they could have more time to prepare for their sessions and consequently make them more effective and valuable. As a result, each of the youth workers working in 3 schools now have a caseload of 24 young people that they mentor weekly.
- **Case study Intervals:** To reduce the volume of paperwork, management also decided to reduce the number of case studies that each of the mentors would have to complete on their mentees over the course of the year. Whilst they were previously required every 6 weeks for each young person, we found that this period was often too small to implement new strategies and also evaluate whether they had been effective or not, especially given the amount of sessions were missed due to COVID-19. Management also found that the mentors made to prioritise completing their paperwork to meet these regular deadlines over planning for their next sessions. To remedy this management decided to change the case study intervals so they would be required 3 times throughout the year for each mentee- at the beginning (just before Christmas), middle (in March) and end of the relationship (July).

- **Updated Paperwork:** In preparation for the restart of the LNK Educate programme, we updated a lot of our paperwork associated with the programme. This included: the referral forms (to add whether FSM, UPN and LNK number, and a tick box on what "warning signs" the young person is displaying. This was done to obtain as much background on the young people as we could - and thus make the form as useful as possible in giving the mentor an insight into how to tailor their support and approach the sessions. We also updated our disclosure form, so that for any disclosure that is made in the sessions the mentor can fill out this form to explain what was said, rank the level of urgency, and then email it over to the relevant Safeguarding Lead at the school. We also updated our 1-1 notes template so that they could follow up safeguarding concerns in these notes, and updated 4 different case study templates (for beginning, middle and end of the relationship) - including adding a template so the mentors can have a structure of how to write a case study for a young person they worked with last year.
- **Created a Worksheet Master copy folder:** For each mentor I created a "master copy" folder with all of the resources that they would find useful whilst mentoring over the upcoming academic year. This included all of case notes and 4 case studies templates along with examples of case studies that were written by the mentors last year. There was also information with links to where they can access other resources, as well as information about deadlines and the timeline for the year - and a weekly planner so they could organise themselves. The folder also included worksheet packs on a number of different topics like anger, anxiety, self-esteem, impulsivity, stress and managing emotions - which each have a brief and different worksheets that can be used progressively with the objective of helping the young person to resolve an issue (such as anger management).
- **Parent Pack:** The principal additional resource that we created over the last year was our Parent Pack. The idea for this pack was inspired by speaking to teachers at our training sessions and getting their views on what else they felt could be done to safeguard young people and prevent them from getting involved in criminal activities. Many of the teachers vocalised how they felt parents were often unaware of the warning signs to look out for that could suggest gang affiliation, and consequently the right support could not be put in place early enough. To remedy this our team worked together to write a comprehensive document which outlined how young people can become vulnerable to grooming and involvement in gangs, what "warning signs" parents should look out for, how they could safeguard their children and have conversations with them on topics such as these, as well as a list of organisations and other support services that they could contact if they required it. The Parent Pack has proved to be a huge success and we have uploaded it onto our website for staff at the schools we work in to download. We also regularly give it to parents who come into our unit who express concerns about their child, and also included it as part of the exit strategy for every mentee we worked with last year.
- **Other Resources:** Created qualitative questions in order to gather as much useful data as possible, created a list of qualitative questions that the mentors can ask their mentees in the 2nd-4th sessions. These questions can be asked in a

conversational way (rather than as a worksheet) but directly align with the quantitative responses the mentors will get at the end of the mentoring relationship. The mentors will therefore record their qualitative responses at the beginning of the relationship, with the mind to then compare this to the responses that they give at the end. This will allow the mentors to demonstrate their impact through a number of different measures - and they can then put this into their final case studies to evidence the progress they made over the year. A couple of our mentors also created a youth mental health handbook that the mentors can refer to if they find themselves working with a mentee who needs mental health support - and bolsters our capabilities as Youth Mental Health First Aiders. From completing online workshops with other professionals in the youth work sector we also got a number of resources, for example from "Our Place" we got a number of resources to incorporate in the sessions such as: calming techniques, values, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and self care.

Case Studies

1) CB Final Case Study -Secondary School - Keeleigh Bright

Across our 17 sessions together, I have learnt that CB is a very pleasant young lady, she is polite, kind, bubbly and outgoing. CB has always been like this and has told me she can be open and honest fast if she likes and trusts the person. There are only a few adults at her school, including me, that she can have this relationship with. CB can be very self-aware at times and will set her own targets easily, whereas at other times, CB struggles to see how her actions have played a role in a situation and she struggles to take responsibility for her actions. CB is quite mature for her age, she helps a lot at home and has older sisters who have been through traumatic things, which may have contributed to CB having to grow up fast. CB used to get involved in situations quite a lot at school, which has improved significantly, but does still struggle to control her anger and attitude at times. The main issues that we have focused on in our sessions are: reducing her detentions (by improving her behaviour), not getting into fights or arguments, and coming to school appropriately (correct uniform) and on time. These have been the main ongoing targets since I have known CB, however, more recently, we have not had to speak about her uniform or her punctuality as much at all. Our relationship is very strong, open and trusting. CB had recently said to me in one of our last few sessions, she will "tell [me] if anything happens," which reassures me that she trusts me enough to think of me when something happens and wants to tell me and hear my advice. CB views mentoring as very beneficial, which I know because she told me, "ever since I've done this I've been better in my lessons and wanting to listen, before I didn't care, before I didn't used to do anything [in lessons] or care about how anyone feels [from her actions]." CB has always been willing to participate and try her best, but she seemed demotivated and deflated at the start, almost as if she could never improve, but now I have encouraged her to look retrospectively, she notices how far she has come. CB has made a lot of progress, her behaviour was at a point where it was almost perfect, as was her attitude and uniform, although just before the end of our relationship together, CB started to get into a lot of fights. After reminding her of how far she has come, and how she feels when she is on the

right track, she was quickly encouraged to get back to how she was, and has been doing fantastically again.

Since my last case study on CB, she had worked really hard to get back on track. In the previous case study, she had been arrested for fighting and had been in a number of fights at school also. We had a lot of conversations about her goals and how she needs to get back to good behaviour to be able to reach these goals. Since then, CB's behaviour has been a lot better, she has been able to stay out of situations and even ignore people that may be irritating her, instead of reacting. She hasn't had many detentions and has not been in IE or in trouble outside of school. CB likes to get things off her chest and hear some advice, so I would listen to her then, remind her of her goals and reassure her that she can reach these if she is willing to remove herself from certain friends and certain situations, which she did seem to do. I was glad CB got over her rough patch and was able to end the year on a high note and in the position she wanted to start year 9 in. In our last session, I gave CB a certificate, postcard and parent pack, she seemed really proud of herself and on her survey, she said she felt like I had really helped her improve her attitude and her effort at school. CB was sad that it was our last session but was grateful for all the work we had done together.

The main issues CB and I have focused on in our sessions are, reducing her detentions (by improving her behaviour), not getting into fights or arguments (inside and outside of school), and coming to school appropriately (correct uniform) and on time. These have been our focus pretty much the whole time I have known CB as these are the main thing she struggles with consistently. However, since the last case study, CB and I haven't really had to talk about her uniform or punctuality as this improved and hasn't really regressed since. To encourage CB to improve her behaviour at school and reduce her detentions and other punishments, we set small and steady targets, to try and get a little less detentions every week, and finally get down to 0 a week, which CB has kept up. We also had discussions about why she was getting into trouble and would plan out how to stop this, for example, if you don't like a teacher, instead of arguing back/walking out/being rude, try to just keep your head down and focus on the work. CB thought this would be impossible at first, but has managed to do it really well. When I was trying to help CB stay out of arguments, fights and trouble, we completed a lot of activities on what was 'right' and 'wrong' and how to treat others. Some of these were worksheets which looked at what age was appropriate to do things, such as speaking to boys who have finished school, and how to treat others (it is wrong to be physical against others). I felt this was particularly important as CB is someone who can act mature for her age and get involved in "adult" situations, such as having a boyfriend and getting into fights inside and outside of school. CB did really well on these activities and made me feel confident that she does know right from wrong, however, there are situations in which CB cannot take responsibility for her actions and feels strongly that it is not at all her fault. CB has an ongoing issue with a girl in her year, they have had a physical fight, their mums have argued over the phone, and they still are continuing to argue with each other. In this situation, CB feels completely blameless and even though the girl hit her first, CB did beat her up quite badly, and does not feel any remorse about this. CB was also in a physical fight outside of school because a group of girls came to where she lives to beat up her friend, CB felt sorry for her friend who is "small" so when they attacked her, CB stepped

in. CB had to talk to the police about this, but fortunately, it isn't going any further. Again, CB feels she isn't in the wrong at all as she was defending her friend. This is still something CB struggles with, she can admit very easily when she has misbehaved and she deserves her punishment, but when it is not as black and white, or when there is another person involved who she feels is to blame, she will be very adamant that her role in the situation was very minor. Lastly, when it comes to CB and her uniform and punctuality, this used to be a big issue. CB was late a lot, had a lot of piercings and would wear long nails and false eyelashes, all of which are against the school rules. I spoke to CB about my own experiences and how I was told off for these things at school - until I realised it isn't worth the punishment, and you can wait until weekends/school holidays to enjoy the beauty things she likes to get done. CB then realised what I was saying was true, and she didn't enjoy sitting in isolation for "silly" reasons, so she stopped wearing eyelashes, nails etc. and has still continued doing this. CB is also almost always on time to school now, as she realised again that the detention wasn't worth it when she could actually get here on time, and this has been continued right up until our last session also.

CB is usually the one to feedback to me about her progress, as she is very honest and open with me and will admit if she hasn't been able to complete something, or on the other hand, will be very proud to tell me if she has achieved something. Some of CB's teachers have also told me themselves that she has been progressing well, and it has been really noticed around the school. This has been steady progress, but CB has done really well and didn't regress at all, until a few weeks ago when she was fighting a lot and even got a couple of detentions, but after our session CB realised again that she didn't want to keep being punished, she is now back on track. CB does have some issues that still persist, for example, she still cannot always take responsibility for the role she may have played in a situation, especially as she can get angry easily, which may continue to land her in trouble. However, this is very rare compared to the start of our relationship.

In conclusion, CB has definitely benefitted from mentoring as she has improved drastically since I first met her, which has been noticed by me, CB herself, and her teachers that work with her. She is able to recognise the consequences of her actions better, and weigh up whether it is worth what she wants to do. CB's attitude towards her learning has also improved since she is able to enjoy lessons and refrain from getting into altercations with her teachers. CB is a lot more pleasant to her peers as her attitude in general has improved and she has noticed that life is happier, and easier, if she avoids trouble, instead of actively seeking it. CB could benefit from further mentoring as she still cannot take responsibility for her actions when there are others involved, and can get angry easily at times which draws her to bad situations. Given that CB can appear mature for her age, this could also make her vulnerable to older people outside of school to older people, as she has already been involved in situations where older people have wanted to fight her. Also, as CB looks older than her age, she could be vulnerable when it comes to men that are older than her. In terms of advice I would like to pass on to CB's future school - I would encourage them to adopt the same strategies that a number of the staff have done at her primary school, as they worked with her really well and talked to CB in a way that allows her to explain how she feels instead of feeling attacked, which is what she needs.

2) KMP Final Case Study - Primary School - Ellie Williamson

When I first met K he was disruptive and talkative when I observed him in class, and throughout the term he has improved massively, he is much calmer, more open, and more work orientated in class and out of class. KP has been on a consistent upward trajectory since I began working with him. He has improved massively in class and in the way that he navigates his peer groups. He responds really well to the targets that I set him, which shows me that having a mentor speak to him regularly acts as motivation him to do well, as it is also clear that he enjoys a challenge. KMP is a single child who lives with his mum who is very supportive, and everything at home seems to be settled and relaxed. KMP's referral was based on a number of issues, namely being unengaged in class and also being easily influenced by his class peers to do negative things. KMP and I have established a very strong relationship over the course of the academic year, in the sessions he speaks to me about what has been bothering him as well as what he has enjoyed throughout the week. Over time he has become very comfortable, open and trusting in myself as he knows that whatever we speak about stays in the room, and that I would only speak to someone if he or someone else was at risk of harm. His behaviour and attitude are markedly different compared to the beginning, and K has only been developing and improving in these areas' each week.

For a significant period and over the last six weeks, whenever I collect K from class he is always happy and ready for our session. When we go to the office I normally begin by asking him how his week has been. When I first met K I found it hard to hold a conversation with him, he was quite withdrawn and didn't know how to express himself correctly, however he can now communicate much more expressively and maintain eye contact too. K loves to talk and will go into detail about his week has been - which highlights how our relationship has grown as he is trusting me with more information week by week. I normally ask him questions such as "how are you feeling? What have you been learning? And is there anyone bothering you?". K is very honest about how he feels and normally I can tell how he is feeling just from his body language and attitude in school. He is also honest with his progress and targets, if he feels he needs to work on something more he will make sure he brings it up in the session ask if that could be a target. This also highlights how he has developed in terms of his self-awareness, and in many ways is his own biggest critic as he is constantly looking to improve. Every week we set new targets, 2 of which are "serious" and 1 is more based around his hobbies and extracurricular activities to break it up and keep him engage in the mentoring. He always makes an effort to complete his targets and he is always eager to report back to me on his progress each week, which shows me this programme is working really effectively in terms of motivating him to be the best he can be.

In general K has improved massively over the program, and although he has had a few hiccups in terms of misbehaving with friends at lunch, he has been able to manage his emotions much more effectively and speak more expressively to me about them. I frequently also tell KMP how well he has done and praised him for the change I have seen in him, and he agreed and recognises this himself. In the sessions he is genuinely very keen to discuss what he could do better and what he is struggling on also, which also signifies his increased maturity over the time I have worked with him. He has also often speaks about how he has been finishing work early and therefore has been allowed to read in class whilst others in the class catch up - which reflects his improved work ethic. This is another thing I frequently praise him for, as he responds very well to praise and it motivates him each week to keep the same standards. Despite these improvements it is also worth noting that he still wants to develop as a person, as he has spoken to me about how he feels his targets help him and recognises that he can still improve in terms of confidence and with choosing the right time to speak in class around his peers. Overall,

the mentoring and target setting in particular has been hugely beneficial for him, and this is epitomised by the fact that he feels comfortable enough with me to speak about all aspects of his life, and not just things relating to school.

The main aspect of our sessions were focusing on his application and attitude in school and the transition from primary school to secondary school. His attitude has improved greatly from the start of the year and this is evident from the quantity and quality of the class work that he is able to complete, and his class teacher has also spoken to me directly to inform me of his progress and praise him. He is much more focused in class now, with this not only benefitting him educationally, but also his peer as he is no longer such a disruptive influence. In the latter stages of the mentoring relationship I have also been talking to KMP about his transition to secondary school, he does not seem to be phased by the move at all and, if anything, he is excited for the new start as he can make new friends. If KMP maintains his improved attitude and work ethic he will flourish at secondary school, and this is another point I have been keen to reiterate towards the end of the year. Another signifier of KMP's development in maturity is visible through the fact that in the last 2 months he has been given more independence by his mum. She now allows him to make his own way home from school to prepare him for the new independence for secondary school, and he has embraced this and he enjoys the new challenges. He has come a very long way over the year, especially given that a lot of the mentoring was broken up by lockdowns, and I am very happy and proud of the way he has grown over the last year.

In conclusion KMP has most definitely benefited from these mentoring sessions, he has made significant developments in terms of his maturity, and he has become a lot calmer in his manner and better understands himself and others around him. KMP takes comfort from knowing that he has access to someone who can support him with his problems, and he also particularly likes having someone to "impress" who recognises his achievements. KMP likes to make people aware when he is making an effort to do what he is meant to be doing, and will therefore complete the targets that have been set as he wants to make others proud of him. This has meant that the mentoring has had a huge impact, however there is still the potential that this desire to impress others could be exploited later down the line. I however feel that KMP has grown in terms of his maturity where he is now much better equipped to resist peer pressure at secondary school, and he also has a strong support network at home. KMP would certainly benefit from further mentoring next year, however we have also spoken about how he may have to apply the things we have worked on in secondary school without having anyone to guide him, so it may be useful to monitor and assess how he settles into the new environment and make a judgement then. This is the one thing I would like to pass on to his secondary school.

3) DS Final Case Study - Secondary School - Jack Price

INTRO:

DS is a young person who has grown a lot over the course of the programme, and has been one of the mentees that has seen more personal growth and development in himself, as opposed to the focus being purely on his behaviour. Upon meeting DS, he was very quiet, reserved, generally low, and withdrawn. DS has grown to be a much more confident, happier, outgoing, engaged and open young person. DS's behaviour hasn't been a concern nor has it been an issue (it is nothing that is atypical of a boy his age), but it is more DS's

personal life and wellbeing that has been an issue and cause for concern. As time has gone by, I have come to learn this about DS, and with this our mentoring relationship has grown massively and I have been able to support and mentor DS with this. DS and I have organically built a genuine, supportive, effective, open, honest, respectful and communicative mentoring relationship. DS wasn't enthusiastic at the start of the programme but now highly values the mentoring sessions and our relationship. DS has made brilliant progress with his personal development.

UPDATE SINCE LAST CASE STUDY:

Quite a lot has happened since the last case study, especially with regards to DS' personal life, his mental wellbeing and his home life. These themes, which I will explore later in this case study, have had an effect on his academic life as well as his wellbeing. With DS I was constantly learning about him as he was initially a very closed off character and struggled to open up, we then reached a point where every mentoring session he would share something new with me. With this being said the work we did was generally geared around DS' personal development and being emotionally available for him. When DS was down, tired and restless, he would typically have a bad week at school, talking back to teachers, being disengaged or withdrawn and vice versa when things are going well. I have provided a lot of support, mentally and emotionally for DS; allowing him to open up, vent, express himself, confide in me, trust in me, allow me to praise him and just generally be a supportive figure in his life. Much of the advice and support was building and affirming positivity in to his life, being real and down to earth and whilst I wouldn't make false promises (i.e., everything will change and be different, your problems will vanish), I would instil positive thoughts. For example, I would assure DS that he is able to control the things within his control and whilst there are some things out of control, he can still improve his situation but taking control over the things he can, i.e., being engaged with school, telling the relevant people at school about his problems or concerns so that they can help, opening up to me so he can feel more at ease and more. I would also work on his self-efficacy and help build his confidence, helping him believe that he can achieve many things and he is very capable.

ASSESSMENT OVERALL - COMPARISON TO WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED WORKING WITH THEM?

The main things DS and I worked on were his: levels of self-efficacy, mental/physical wellbeing, confidence and engagement. Initially our focus was at a very surface level, looking predominantly at his behaviour and his engagement within school. The main/most specific thing that came up was his low levels of engagement in lessons, impressionability to friends (getting involved in undesirable behaviours i.e., messing around and being late) and failure to complete/present homework. DS was rather quiet and blasé when speaking about these things but as time went by and DS began to open up more it was clear that these observable issues, that once had no explanation, had a much deeper cause, that was responsible for many of DS' behaviours, characteristics and traits. For example, DS would have problems engaging in class or fail to produce homework because he lacks self-confidence, this is also the same reason as to why he is easily influenced by his peers. It was then also clear that DS' general wellbeing (mental and physical), was being affected

by his home life. For example, DS would have a bad day at school because he was tired; he was tired because he had to stay up late to do chores to help his family. Over time there has been improvements in all of these areas. As mentioned above, DS' situation isn't easily "fixed" or "solved" due to it being so and is quite multi-faceted; he can't do all of the work himself, and eradicate specific things, for example he may feel more confident but he may still be tired because his home situation won't quickly change. The home situation could potentially (although hasn't been clarified yet) be named as neglect. Therefore, it would require DS' parents to improve with the care and provision they provide DS for these things to change.

However, DS has definitely seen an increase in his self-efficacy, confidence, engagement and wellbeing. This is observable through the decrease in some of the mentioned above (i.e., messing around with class mates), but also good behaviour being produced, i.e., joining after school clubs (basketball), having competitive banter with me when playing games and appearing to be happier and chirpier. Much of the support was given through mentoring advice and conversations. I did provide DS with 2 journals (as he lost the first one), to organise and sort out his timetable/planner and to make general doodles/journal entries about how he is feeling or what's in his mind (I made sure I stressed that this was completely for him to express himself, but I encouraged him to make an entry everyday regardless of how long/big it is. I would encourage DS to try and get in as many meals as possible (as he would often skip breakfast, and would only have a free lunch at school) and I would try to ensure DS had water bottles on him.

I would also help DS do his homework by allowing him to use my hotspot so that he would have internet connection to be able to do his online work (and just generally offer to help break things down/ make sense of subjects). There was one incident where DS came into school late and was put on a report for doing so. DS explained to me that the reason he was late, was because he had to stay up late to finish ironing his clothes for his siblings, which in turn resulted in him waking up late - and being late to school. I asked DS if he explained this to his teachers and he said that he hadn't. I explained to DS the importance of opening up to the relevant people, for support (i.e., someone he is comfortable with like Mr Gourlay) and spent time discussing this and DS understood. I then asked DS if he would like me to resolve this issue and get him taken off of his report, to which he agreed. This situation was one that I helped DS with but this also had a bigger un/desirable impact. I spoke to the behavioural team, asking them to please remove DS from the report, and to try and be empathetic and sensitive towards DS - and have a bit more patience and understanding (i.e., if he hasn't got the correct equipment or PE kit, to ask him about his situation as opposed to punishing him). They told me that they would address the situation. I was not impressed with their treatment and the way they dealt with this, as they phoned home, and essentially berated DS' parents. This had a big impact on the mentoring relationship and whilst DS and I still had a strong relationship, he became hesitant and reluctant to open up to me, truthfully and honestly about his situations at home. This took a few sessions to overcome. With this being said, the situation was resolved, and DS' parents did make a remark to him about doing chores, saying "Oh we can't get you to do this, otherwise you'll go and tell your mentor". Although this helped DS in some ways, this comment still didn't benefit him and his

mental wellbeing as he probably felt very torn between two parties, guilty and generally upset.

DS has made steady progress with all the work made and whilst it may not be very observable, I believe that the work we have done has had a longer lasting impact, that may not be immediately visible. DS isn't overly expressive - and I personally believe that he may have underlying SEN needs that have not yet been diagnosed. With this, he struggles to effectively express and convey his emotions, as well as articulate them. Therefore, whilst I can see the progress he has made through small cues, they may not be very visible to other people. As mentioned above we had a small hiccup in our mentoring relationship, and there could also be extraneous home incidents that could throw DS off in school. Whilst these things have happened, DS has still made very good overall progress, especially with his confidence levels and self-efficacy, which is definitely observable. As mentioned above the issues that are in DS' life are mainly out of his control so it is hard to argue whether or not they are persistent, as they are currently still in DS' life, but his reactions to the issues are less consistent. With this being said, yes, DS can still have a negative reaction to an issue in his life, which in turn results in him being misbehaved/disengaged/down.

CONCLUSION:

DS definitely benefitted from mentoring. DS was able to grow and work on developing himself, whilst working on his areas of improvement. DS was also able to vent, open up, talking about his thoughts, feeling, problems, concerns, and about himself, to someone that was attentive, emotionally available, supportive and encouraging. I definitely feel that DS needs further mentoring, for all of the reasons mentioned above. DS has lacked these things and I strongly believe that someone should be consistent in delivering them, in his life. My main concern is with DS' lack of independence and his impressionability. I do believe that DS could be vulnerable to being enticed/influenced into antisocial activities, crime and gang offences. I would never describe DS as a malicious or ill-intended character, but as mentioned above with my suspicions of his underlying SEND needs, I do believe that DS could do something, without the conscious thought/motive of doing so. DS has also mentioned in the past of his desire to make money and wanting to have more money - he initially wanted to sell clothes and sweets with his friend. My concern with this is that the main motivating factor behind the choice of making money was his friend's suggestion, and he was inclined to do whatever his friend wanted to do. The main information that the school needs to know is that mentioned above (with his areas of vulnerability), the suspicions of SEND needs, his home life, his need to continue his personal development (especially confidence and independence) and the need for a mentor in his life.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION POINT: NEGLECT

Throughout the time working with DS there have been various signs, incidents, cues, evidence and indications that DS is being neglected. All of these have been recorded, made note of and discussed with the safeguarding team. Within the school environment all of these indications were, as worrying to say, typical of a larger population in school -

specifically state schools in London, with a makeup of children from working-class, low socio-economic backgrounds. These signs ranged, and at times were present on their own, or present with another cue but would include (to name a few): lack of equipment, dirty uniform, uniform that was too small/big (when he had to borrow uniform from the school), a very lethargic demeanour, tiredness, verbal expressions of lack of food/meals, being prideful of one high value item (i.e., ensuring that a ring on his finger is seen) and having more responsibilities than typical of his age. As mentioned, all of these things were noted but it was only until DS came to our Summer Programme, that our suspicions were confirmed.

DS, his little brother 11 (A11) and little sister 10 (L10) came to the programme with DS. Within the first couple of days, we observed many cues, signs and indications that there is some form of neglect happening at home. DS, A11 and L10 would all ask for multiple servings/portions of food (a lot of the time it would be shortly after eating), they would wear the same clothes for days at a time, wearing clothes that were too small for them, being generally tired, asking to stay for longer after the club had closed and having a dependency and desire to want to be close to me. There was one incident that caused us to take immediate action, with enough evidence to say that we feel that there are signs that they are being neglected. I noticed that DS came into the unit with sliders everyday (for the first 3 days of the programme) and noticed that even when we went to the park that he didn't wear shoes that were suitable (for running and playing games). Even at school DS would either have trainers (that weren't in the best condition) as school shoes or wouldn't have PE equipment. I spoke to him and asked him if he had any trainers as we would be going to the park more. DS explicitly told me that he hasn't got any shoes. It was expected to rain the day after, and I predicted that DS would not wear shoes - it was if and when this would happen that I would immediately flag my concern for his neglect, as it would be a health and safety concern that he would get ill if he didn't have proper footwear on in the rain. My guess was right and DS wore sliders despite it raining. I predicted this and had brought in a spare pair of trainers for DS. When I offered DS the pair of trainers, he did not reject them and was very visibly happy for the pair (he was also very prideful of them; being very upset/annoyed if they had a small mark on them).

We subsequently raised the safeguarding concern with the relevant people and DS' parents agreed to help and support from social services. We also notified DS' school of these developments, and they have themselves said that they will follow up these concerns in-house when schools re-open for the next academic year.