



**Lives Not Knives  
AGM Report  
YEF Programme**

## 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 Youth Hub and Summer Programme.
- **Educate** - To use workshops, Roadshows, one-to-one mentoring and group mentoring to educate 9-18 year olds in schools and PRUs as the instruments to inform young people 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 training, offering mentorship and relationships advice, preparing them for work, and supporting successful engagement in education, apprenticeships or employment.

### Overview of the YEF programme

The LNK & YEF 1-1 mentoring programme comes under LNK Educate and forms the principal component of LNK's preventative work. The intended outcomes of the programme are two-fold: to develop a "whole school approach" to reducing school exclusions as part of an early intervention, in order to consequently reduce the numbers of those involved in youth crime and violence.

As part of this programme LNK have 8 youth workers based throughout 10 schools in the borough of Croydon. 5 of these are Primary schools and 5 are Secondary's, and the vast majority of schools have one male and one female mentor in order to cater to a variety of needs. The programme is focused around prevention, so all young people aged 9-14 at the participating school will benefit from the lessons and be in contention to be selected for 1-1 mentoring, at the discretion of the school teaching staff and the LNK team. The lessons are delivered by the teachers over a number of lessons and will serve to educate and raise awareness of the issues surrounding knife crime. The pack features 6 video interviews with different people relating to knife crime, including:

- Sister of a fatal stabbing victim
- A mother whose son is in prison for stabbing another young boy to death
- Trauma Surgeon
- Junior Barrister
- Police Officer
- Victim of stabbing

Each of these videos will cover different aspects about knife crime, such as: its psychological impact on family and friends, the legal concepts behind sentencing, medical facts, as well as details about police powers to stop and search. They will also expose a

variety of myths surrounding these subjects, and will also come alongside suggested teaching plans and activities that can be used to maximise pupil participation.

Once the teachers are trained, feel confident, and have delivered the resources, they will be asked to identify approximately 20 young people who they feel would benefit from 1-1 mentoring sessions with LNK mentors. The young people who work closely with our mentors are those who are deemed to be 'at risk' of being excluded and are typically displaying poor attendance levels and / or limited educational progress. Sometimes the young person is also already known to be working with external support agencies, have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, or are showing signs of anger, withdrawal, trauma or abuse. We do however appreciate that the context behind each young person is different and not all of these criteria will necessarily apply.

Our mentors will then deliver an introductory workshop to this group of young people to provide them with a background to LNK, as well as additional knife crime information, case studies and personal anecdotes. The mentors will then introduce themselves to the young people that have been identified by the teaching staff 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 long and short term goals, ambitions, and issues, with the aim of motivating them to 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 in 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 if they require further support or want to talk to someone 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. After six weeks, each mentor will take these notes and use them to write a more detailed document, a case study. This will continue every six weeks for entire year long mentoring relationship - until the end of the programme when a larger case study will be compiled which covers the entire year. These case studies are used to offer a greater insight into the young person, their: problems, emotions, behaviours, personality, interests, home and social life, targets and goals, and progress over the allocated time period. Similarly these notes and case studies will highlight how the mentor is supporting and guiding the young person to improve their behaviour, resolve issues in and outside of school, and fulfil their potential.

## How teachers refer and reasons for referral

The referral process for 1-1 mentoring often involves a level of collaboration from the school's teaching staff and the LNK mentors. Where possible we like to have our mentors sit in on the Teacher Resource pack sessions and use this time as an opportunity to make an initial assessment of the young people in the class. From these the mentors typically compile a list of any young people they believe may benefit from additional support, before comparing this with the teacher and DSL staff at the school (who have access to more background information) to determine the final list of 20. However due to the threat of COVID a number of schools mentioned that they would prefer for LNK staff to avoid coming in unless for the 1-1 sessions, so in a few of the schools the lists created were completed solely by the teachers and support staff based at the school fulltime.

The reasons why some young people are referred for 1-1 mentoring however varies significantly. In accordance with the programme outcomes, we prioritise working with young people who are deemed to be 'at risk' of exclusion or expulsion so we can help them to remain in mainstream education - this could however relate to a number of factors, such as behaviour, attendance, attitude, attainment, or not fulfilling their potential in any (or all) of these aspects of school life. As well as this young people may be referred because of their personality traits, such as being aggressive, confrontational, immature, or feeling a need to impress, which could potentially make them vulnerable to exploitation and making the wrong life choices in the future.

We also put significant weight onto the background history of the young person and their family - for example if they are known to be working with external support agencies, have SEN or disabilities, or are showing signs of anger, withdrawal, trauma or abuse. This can also relate specifically to how the young person behaved in the LNK Teacher Resource Pack sessions, for example their reaction to the lessons and activities, what knowledge they already had about knife crime, or even any stories or experiences that they opened up about which could be a cause for concern. As mentioned earlier, however, we appreciate that the context behind each young person is different and not all of these criteria will necessarily apply.

## The need for the programme

- In London the demand for youth support networks has significantly increased given the **46% cut** on overall spending on youth services since 2011. In this time the capital has lost over **100** youth centres, a fall of almost half, along with 560 youth workers losing their jobs at these sites.<sup>1</sup>
- With schools having less resources to deal with a growing number of young people with complex needs, there has also been a notable increase in exclusions and expulsions in London. The consequences of removing young people from mainstream education can be hugely detrimental on their life chances and prospects. This is highlighted in a report from SEDEC, which states that at least **60%** of the UK's prison population were excluded from school. The report also found that excluded pupils are often from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds, including being **four times** more likely to grow up in poverty, **twice** as likely to be living in care, and **seven times** more likely to have a special educational need as other children.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the children most likely to be excluded are often, in fact, those who need the most support.
- With less people and resources being dedicated to keeping young people occupied and in mainstream education, an increasing number of young people are being drawn to commit anti-social behaviour and crime. There were **67** fatal stabbings in London alone in 2019, as the capital witnessed its highest recorded knife crime incidents for decades. Knife related deaths also amounted to over half of the homicides committed in the capital that year- and clearly stands as the principal issue regarding youth violence.
- Croydon also has its own specific problems in London. It has the largest under 18 population of any London borough, standing at over 94,000, and there are consequently many young people who need support to overcome obstacles in their lives. Croydon also ranks as one of London's **most deprived** districts for education

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/mar/22/number-of-london-youth-clubs-nearly-halved-since-2011-riots-report-finds>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/behaviour-and-exclusion/>

and training as well as for crime. The area also has the **worst** record for knife crime in schools out of any London borough, with **89** knife crime offences in school premises between 2015-2018, over 30 more than any other borough.

### 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.

## COVID-19 and its impact on delivery and time schedule

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on LNK's ability to plan, deliver, and subsequently begin our 1-1 mentoring programme in the 10 Croydon schools we were funded to work in. The pandemic is unprecedented in terms of scale and the effects it has had not only on LNK, but on society in general, are complex and wide-ranging. However, through improvising and adapting our methods in accordance with Government and individual school policies and guidelines, we have managed to overcome a number of obstacles and move the process along significantly in each of the 10 schools, and even begin 1-1 mentoring vulnerable young people in 9 of the 10. For the purposes of clarity I will detail chronologically the impact of COVID on the programme.

Although we had signed up four schools to the programme prior to the onset of COVID, the fact that schools were closed to the majority of pupils (besides vulnerable children and children of key workers) from late March made it significantly more difficult to sign up the remaining six. Some teachers had to move to virtual lessons, some became ill and had to take sick leave, others had to begin working from home for their or their families safety, and some had to remain on site to continue educating the children of critical workers. The culmination of these and other factors left schooling staff with a number of things to manage and consequently communicating and liaising with many of the schools became very difficult, especially given that LNK staff were largely not allowed to come onto the physical school premises. Many were understandably overwhelmed with the logistics of running the school during lockdown, became unresponsive to calls and emails, and did not want the added pressure of, on top of this, signing up to an external agency's mentoring programme (despite many being interested in the concept of it). After sending vast numbers of emails and persistently calling school offices over a few months, however, we were able to sign up the six remaining schools to fill the 10 spaces.

Even once we had signed up the 10 schools, moving the programme along similarly required persistence and adaptation. I had to coordinate a number of meetings on Zoom, and eventually completed the Teacher Training itself in three schools on Zoom also. Doing the training over Zoom assisted in speeding up the process and helping me keep to the deadlines constraints I set myself, but it was also made necessary due to some school policies, as some did not have a space big enough to complete the training whilst adhering to social distancing guidelines. Although doing the Teacher Training over Zoom allowed us to speed up the process in a number of schools we now mentor in, objectively it is a less effective way of doing the training, as it is more difficult to engage the teachers (sometimes up to 90 of them were in one Zoom call) and they were often appeared less confident to ask me or my colleagues questions compared to the sessions that we completed in person. It would also require the teachers attending the training to watch the videos prior to the training (because watching over Zoom led to time delay and the videos lagging) which could have meant that some teachers were not fully focused on some or all of the content, despite us insisting on the importance of digesting and taking notes on the resources prior to the training. Overall, however, it was a compromise we needed to make to simultaneously follow some school's policies and keep progressing the programme so that we could begin the 1-1 mentoring as soon as we could - acknowledging the likelihood that many of the young people referred to us may have struggled or even had their problems exacerbated over the lockdown period.

Among the schools that signed up there were also a number of factors that affected the speed of the delivery of resources and the date from which we could begin 1-1 mentoring. In a couple of Primary schools we work in, my liaison at the school became unresponsive due becoming sick themselves or having to cover a senior member of Teaching Staff who had to go on sick leave. Furthermore many of the schools were concerned about the young

people missing a lot of content in their curriculum due to the enforced closure in the majority of schools from March - September. This meant that many schools were reluctant to incorporate the LNK sessions into the days at the beginning of term, especially given that the children had been off school for such an extended period and were felt to require a bit of time to settle back in before covering such a sensitive topic. As a result of these factors a number of schools pushed back the start of the programme slightly until after the October half term, so that they had time to organise themselves slightly in what was (understandably) a very hectic half term.

Overall however it has been a balancing act between trying to get the process started in the different schools. Each of the schools have slightly different policies relating to COVID and their view towards external agencies in light of this. Whilst some have been happy for the mentors to deliver the teacher training, sit in on the Teacher Resource Pack sessions, assist with completing the referral forms, and be on the school site regularly, others have been explicit in asking for our staff to only come into the school for the introductory workshop and to begin the 1-1 sessions. The Principal of the one school we have not yet begun mentoring in, for example, decided to suspend any external agencies coming in to the school in alignment with the time period designated by the second lockdown, after initially being reluctant to let LNK staff come in to complete the introductory workshop in late October. We have also had to adapt and reshuffle the timetable of a number of mentors due to some school's having limits on the number of external agents that can be on the school premises at one time. While we would always prefer for LNK staff to be involved as much as possible throughout the process of setting up the programme, as mentioned earlier, this was not always possible at some schools and compromises had to be made with regard to this.

To conclude the schools with the strictest and most rigid policies regarding COVID and external agencies have been the ones in which moving the programme along has been particularly difficult. Fortunately, however, as a team we have adapted to each school's needs and guidelines where possible and necessary and have been able to begin our work with vulnerable young people in the vast majority of cases. In order to ensure safe practice LNK have also had to complete a number of risk assessments and Health Declaration Forms at the majority of the schools we operate in, as well as create our own safety guidelines and policies regarding COVID (**see below**).

## Working safely during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 we, like every employer, have created practical considerations, measures and guidelines for our employees to follow so that they are able to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. These have been created in line with government suggestions and not only with our staff in mind, but also the young people and other members of school staff that we work with. We hope that it gives you the confidence that our mentoring programme can be introduced early in the upcoming academic year.

- **Risk assessment** - Before we begin working in the schools we will first carry out a risk assessment. This will directly examine the risks associated with coronavirus transmission in each specific setting, so we can tailor our response to it and ensure measures are put in place to control for those risks for our staff and the young people. For this we will work alongside staff at the school, who are more familiar with the layout of the school, to assess and manage risks to ensure safe practice.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - All of our staff will be provided with government recommended provisions, such as face masks and gloves. Depending on the size of the room, we will also consider the need for a screen or barrier to separate the mentor from the mentee.
- **Hygiene** - We will provide our staff with hand sanitizer so they can wash their hands thoroughly after each encounter with a young person. They will also be given the products to frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly.
- **Social Distancing** - Our staff will follow, where possible, Public Health England guidelines on social distancing and maintain a 2 metre distance from others, including on the journey to and from the school. They will also use floor tape in the meeting room to mark this distance and to ensure that it is maintained.
- **Prevention** - Mentors will not attend work or the school they are mentoring in if they show any symptoms of COVID-19, such as a fever, long-lasting cough, loss of taste or smell, or difficulty breathing. This also stands if one of the members of their household displays symptoms of COVID-19. If either of these scenarios occur, they will instead self-isolate for two weeks at home, after which they will have an additional week long break before returning to the school.
- **Greetings** - Employees will not be allowed to greet with physical contact (such as handshakes or hugs) while interacting with colleagues or the young people they are working with.
- **Virtual meetings** - We will also ensure our employees are equipped to shift in-person meetings to virtual meetings if they are necessary to ensure safe practice. Our staff will complete this in our office, and all of these conversations will be recorded for safeguarding purposes.



## Other additions and changes made to the programme

### Lesson 6 - Dan Whitlam (Victim of stabbing) video

We added an additional lesson to the Teacher Resource Pack which features an interview with Dan Whitlam, an actor who was stabbed with a screwdriver in Islington in a 'random' attack when he was 16. In this video he talks about the trauma he suffered as a result of being stabbed, the physical injuries he suffered, how he recovered, and uses his story to highlight that knife crime is an issue that can affect anyone and that it does not exclusively impact those who are gang affiliated.

We created this video initially for one school to use instead of the 5th lesson, which is an interview with Dunia - the mother of an assailant. This lesson had to be replaced because of the personal association that a number of students and staff at the school had to the case (the victim's siblings still attend the school and the victim's mother continues to work there), and to avoid triggering any past emotions or trauma when the lessons were being delivered to students.

Dan got in contact with us via Instagram by sharing a spoken word performance he had done, in which he poetically detailed his emotions and reaction to being stabbed, and asked if there was any way he could support us as a charity. We took him up on this offer and worked with him to create specific lesson objectives and activities relating to his story, before inviting him down to the unit to film and interview him. We subsequently edited this interview down into a shorter, educational video. This is now uploaded to the Teacher Resources part of the website and has been used by the school in question, and we have invited all of the other schools to use this lesson also. We are hoping to continue this relationship with Dan as he has recently applied for Arts Council funding to turn his story into a theatre performance or play - and he has noted LNK down as one of the organisations he has worked with on his funding sheet.

### Website

We also used time over the first lockdown to create a new, modern and informative website. This has benefitted the programme as we have been able to make information relating to LNK and the mentoring programme more accessible for young people, parents, and teaching staff, so that all of these groups can get a background as to why a child may have been referred and garner a greater understanding of what we do as a charity.

The new website has also enabled us to create a Teacher Resources area - which is locked and only accessible to the staff in the 10 schools we do 1-1 mentoring in. Each teacher has to create their own account with a specific username and password that I can then approve to give them access. This section of the website has more information about the programme, all of the lesson videos and downloadable lesson plans, access to resources such as the referral forms, downloadable information sheets for parents and the young people, as well as all of our policies relating to GDPR and Safeguarding. This has all been done for the convenience of the staff at the schools and has helped us to move the programme along during the lockdown period.

### Parent Pack

We have also begun creating a 'Parent Pack' that offers more detailed information concerning the key signs that parents and carers should look out for which could suggest gang affiliation or participation in criminal activity. This has been created by one of our

youth workers, Jack, but he took time to speak to a number of the other LNK staff to get their thoughts and make it as detailed, complete, and useful as possible. I made the decision to create this pack after speaking to the teachers at one of the training sessions we completed, as many highlighted that the parents of many of the young people we were doing 1-1s with were often unsure or even oblivious to the potential warning signs they should be looking out for in their children. I am currently in the process of editing and refining this document, and it will be uploaded to the Teacher Resources part of the website in December.

## **Resources**

I have also created a number of additional resources for both the mentors and the parents of the young people who will be participating in the programme. For the mentors, this includes documents outlining the specific targets of the 1-1 sessions, as well as templates for the case notes and case studies along with annotated examples that they can refer to when they write their own. This came alongside an in-house workshop that we did on case notes, and we did this to ensure that all of the youth workers were aware of the importance of keeping to deadlines with their notes and maintaining a high standard with them. Two of our graduate volunteers also used their knowledge of sociology and psychology to create activity sheets that the mentors could use in the 1-1 sessions. These cover a number of topics including the young person's passions, ambitions, self-esteem, family life and relationships, and these sheets and others have all been consolidated into one large, labelled folder that the youth workers can refer to if they need worksheets concerning specific topics.

I also created a number of information sheets for the young people referred to LNK and their parents and carers. In these documents I outline the purposes of the 1-1 sessions, why the young person may have been referred, the outcomes we are trying to achieve, as well as context to what LNK does and the different facets that the charity has. I felt these resources were necessary to provide parents with all of the information they made need so that they could consent to the 1-1s, and to help them understand that being referred was not a negative thing or an 'attack' on their parenting methods or style.

## **Training**

To ensure that all of our youth workers were prepared to go into schools and work with vulnerable young people, we also ensured that they all completed a number of training sessions and qualifications. This included receiving qualifications in Youth Mental Health to become a designated Mental Health First Aider, as well as in Sexual Health. We have subsequently used the resources that they have passed on to us in the 1-1 sessions, and have maintained these relationships so that we can speak to them if any of our staff have questions regarding how they should approach or manage a young person's concerns or anxieties.

This came in addition to getting all staff to complete training in: Safeguarding Level 2, and Prevent. A large number also are designated First Aiders.

School	Number of Teachers Trained	Number of young people the resources have been delivered to	Number of young people referred for 1-1 mentoring	Mentors based at the school
Oasis Academy Ryelands Primary School	6	120 From Y5-6	26	Paul Bogle, Jack Price, Nicole Brierley
Oasis Academy Shirley Park Secondary School	12	Approximately 900 From Y7-11	23	Raymond Amoah
Oasis Academy Arena Secondary School	8	Approximately 540 From Y7-9	18	Stephen Ampadu
Thomas More Catholic School	Approximately 30 (done online over Zoom).	Approximately 750 From Y7-11	21	Ellie Williamson, Jack Price
Meridian High School	Approximately 30 (done online over Zoom).	Approximately 30 From R2L class (where all mentees came from), planning whole school delivery currently	20	Keeleigh Bright, Stephen Ampadu
Fairchildes Primary School	8	Approximately 60 From Y6	18	Keeleigh Bright, Stephen Ampadu
Kensington Avenue Primary School	8	Approximately 180 From Y5-6	19	Raymond Amoah, Ellie Williamson
Oasis Shirley Park Primary School	18	Approximately 210 From Y5-6	13	Nicole Brierley, Jack Price
Oasis Academy Byron Primary School	3	Approximately 60 From Y5-6	12 (and to begin work with 8 more in December).	Keeleigh Bright, Ellie Williamson
Harris City Academy Crystal Palace Secondary School	Approximately 90 (done online over Zoom).	Approximately 900 From Y7-11	Have delayed start due to a external agent policy introduced because of second lockdown.	Raymond Amoah
<b>TOTALS:</b>	Approximately 213	Approximately 3750 (so far).	170 (so far).	

## Example Case Studies from mentors

### 1. CB - 6 week Case Study (Keeleigh Bright).

CB was referred to LNK's mentoring programme because her attendance was below school average, early intervention service was refused by her parents and she was at risk of exclusion.

This case study will cover the following dates: 29/09/20, 06/10/20, 13/10/20, 20/10/20, 04/11/20 (not in school), and 11/11/20.

CB is in year 8 and is currently in a Ready2Learn class in which specified students, who are at risk of exclusion, are in a smaller class which is more tailored to their difficulties. When I first met CB she was in this class from 10 until 2 and then went home. Since October half term, she has been still coming in at 10, but then going into her mainstream lessons after lunch (for 2 lessons). CB does not have SEN and seems to get on well with her work when she understands what is expected of her. CB told me her attendance was bad in year 7 but she feels like it has improved greatly, she has only missed 1 of 6 sessions with me. CB's behaviour can be very up and down. When she is with me she is usually calm but enthusiastic and chatty, but when an incident has happened I have heard her shouting at teachers and being unable to calm down for quite a while. CB has told me that her behaviour can be up and down at home too. She is very helpful to her nan and her sister and helping to look after her nieces, but she also can argue with her sisters and mum.

CB has a very bubbly and talkative personality, she is always kind and polite to me and asks about how I am too. CB is very self-aware which I can tell as in our first session she told me "she is already doing better than last year." CB can bounce between sounding very mature to then sounding immature as she gets annoyed about things in school that some would see as insignificant and would get a teacher to deal with it, such as a boy calling her names quite a few times in a lesson. CB has a boyfriend (a fellow student) which she likes spending time with and sometimes goes out with him and his nan. She likes Art, Maths and English and takes a lot of pride in her appearance (spending an hour or so in the morning doing her hair and sticking on false eyelashes) but dislikes the appearance of her lips. CB has a large family of 4 sisters (who all live with her and her mum) and her dad who's house she goes to in school holidays or sometimes at the weekends, but always has the ability to call or FaceTime him. Therefore, I feel CB's school wanted her to receive support as she is a very kind person and very smart and funny, but sometimes makes poor decisions which could make her go down the wrong path. For example, CB is only in year 8 and has her nose pierced and used to wear very big eyelashes at the start of our sessions. CB seems to be someone that likes to test boundaries and does not really fear the consequences. Meridian High saw CB's potential and wanted a mentor to encourage this out of her and to make better choices. Therefore, long term goals for me and CB to work on are, not letting others anger you/affect you so much, trying to realise that school rules are not worth breaking (spending more time in detention/isolation than you do in normal lessons is only going to hinder your progress) and to give her the confidence to make good choices outside of school.

Just before my first session with CB, the DSL at Meridian High told me about her concerns for CB. She said she was worried that CB may be at risk of exploitation by older boys as she looks older than her age, I took this into consideration and this steered my plans for sessions (which I will speak about later). My first session with CB was more memorable than some of my other first sessions. This is because we laughed quite a lot because we had things to relate on. I also used to get in trouble at school due to me not wanting to take my nose piercing out, which mirrors the issues that she has in school. However, when the laughing stopped and we were more serious, I explained how much of my life was wasted being in trouble for my nose piercing and how it isn't worth it as you're only missing out on education (which she does actually enjoy). We spoke about how she feels "she is already doing better than last year" which I said I'm proud of and we can work together to keep this going. She told me about who is in her family and her favourite subjects at school (all of which I explained in the first paragraph). CB was very bubbly and talkative with me straight away, as well as being extremely polite. I knew CB would be one of the young people I could relate with due to my same issues in school and how mature I thought I was at a young age, and this would work in my favour when I am forming a relationship with CB. CB had told me that her behaviour in school was much better than in year 7 and she is kind to her friends and "teachers that [she] likes" but can sometimes be rude to the boys in her class because they annoy her. I believe this is typical of teenagers and overall she is a very good person and most people around her see this.

After the DSL at CB's school told me of her concerns, I spoke to a young people's sexual health expert and she gave me some resources which I could look at with CB which shows what is right/wrong at what age and what grooming looks like. This helped me plan future sessions in which we looked at confidence, self-esteem, grooming, the 'perfect' relationship etc. This showed me that CB is very aware and very smart, she knew what was acceptable and what wasn't, which gave me confidence that she would make good choices when it comes to her relationships outside of school. Over our sessions, our contact remained as good as the first session, CB has always been open and enthusiastic with me. She has always been pretty open with me but as each sessions goes on, I get to know her more and more and our relationship develops. CB would usually set her own targets without much prompting. Targets we usually set are along the lines of, trying not to argue with sisters/mum and trying not to react when the boys in your class annoy you, instead tell a teacher so you avoid getting into trouble. Other targets we spoke of was to try to listen to teachers in terms of her appearance. In our 2<sup>nd</sup> session CB had changed her nose piercing to a smaller stud (which she is allowed in school) and stopped wearing false eyelashes. This made me very happy that she has proved she really does want to improve and she has listened to my guidance. CB has always been excited to tell me about her rewards, good work and good behaviour which I always congratulate and encourage. When CB receives a reward, she tells me she cannot wait to FaceTime her dad and tell him. CB reacts well to rewards and tells me this motivates her to continue the good behaviour.

CB is also a very good friend, which sometimes lands her in trouble. CB has told me that her best friend in school was being called "fat" at school, and she confronted them on behalf of her friend, as she did not like to see her upset. This caused a physical conflict and CB was disappointed that she was in trouble as she had been doing so well on her report. If she did not pass this report she would be excluded, which upset her a lot. CB

also has been struggling with the move back to her mainstream classes as there is a boy in them who she clashes with as he annoys her by “taking pictures” of her and saying her “name over and over again.” She sometimes shouts at him, or refuses to enter a class due to this. This is the same pupil who was removed from the Ready2Learn class and CB was very glad about this and did not argue with anyone much when he was no longer present. The school does know about this issue and is looking into it, but this is something I would like to work on with CB as I want her to be able to deal with this appropriately so the correct person is in trouble. However, I believe the support CB has received already, has benefitted the young person greatly as she is improving herself so much, but with the support of a mentor she has confirmation that she is making good choices and reassurance that her hard work is noticed and appreciated.

Therefore, over our 6 sessions, I feel like CB has developed her already changing attitude even further. CB was already ready to make a change in her behaviour, but I feel the process has been easier with the support of a mentor. Her ability to follow instructions and to see the consequences of her actions have definitely improved. However, she still needs to work on knowing how to express her anger better and not reacting when people are purposely trying to irritate her. CB definitely benefits from my support as she then has someone to talk to about her struggles or improvements and feel reassured that it is all worth it. My focus for the coming months will be to continue making CB feel confident enough to make good decisions, and cope better with conflict.

## **2. IA - 6 week Case Study (Stephen Ampadu).**

IA was referred to me because he was at risk of exclusion and had very low attendance. He is a year 8 student who has no special educational needs. Early Intervention Service was offered to him but he did not take it.

I had 6 full sessions with IA. When first meeting him, he was very quiet and was reluctant to speak. I explained why I was here and what I was trying to accomplish with him and after he started to speak. IA said ‘I feel so angry at school. Students always try to fight with me so of course I’m going to retaliate’. I asked him where he felt that the anger came from and he openly said it was when his father left home. it caused a strain on his and his mother’s relationship which caused him to lash out in school. IA wants his and his mother’s relationship to go back to the way it used to be. I told him that we will work on his anger and his problem solving to help with that. He was thankful. He was excluded from the school in year 7 and went to a centre but was given another chance and restarted Meridian High in year 8. He was happy to be given a second chance and knew he had to change his behaviour in order to stay. IA doesn’t know how to avoid confrontation. He feels like he has to respond to anyone that makes a comment about him, makes fun of him or tries to hit him. In his own words, he said ‘I am not a victim so no one can take me for one’. This mentality is what causes him to always retaliate which is often not the best option as it leads him to getting into trouble.

In our second session, I went to pick up IA from class and he was in tears with his fists clenched tightly. I took him into the office and gave him a few minutes before asking him what was wrong. He told me that he had been accused of public indecency. A girl said that he rubbed a tube that they were making in class all over his private parts before giving it to her. He said that the teacher's in the class at the time didn't even ask him if it was true, and instead loudly confronted him in front of the class and told him that he could be arrested for such behaviour. This really wound IA up. I think that I got to the class at the right time to be able to intervene otherwise IA could have acted out of anger and done something that he would later regret. I spent the whole session calming him down to a point where I could speak to him. Once he was relaxed, I explained to him that he will have a chance to tell his side of the story. He was adamant that he was going to have the girl beaten up for making up such lies. He did not want to be associated with such behaviour at all. I told him that doing that would not look good on his part and would not resolve the issue. I explained that if he had nothing to hide then he needed to calm himself down and talk to the teachers and explain himself properly. Talking out of anger won't allow him to get his message across. He agreed and thanked me for listening to him. I walked him back to class and he sat down quietly. In our next session, IA came in a very happy mood. He thanked me for the advice I gave him in the last session. I asked him how it went and he told me that after school, the teachers called him into the office and asked them to tell him what happened. He told his side of the story and how that day went. They compared both statements and saw that the girl wasn't telling the truth. They apologised for wrongly accusing him and that was the end of the matter. IA said that if he didn't manage to calm himself down and speak to the teachers the way he did, then he would not have been able to get his point across which wouldn't have helped his case. From there IA told me that he never wanted to be put in a situation like that again and said he is going to make a conscious effort to behave in class.

I saw a change in his attitude after this. He told me that he wants to focus on writing music as that distracts him from everything and gives him something to do. He also is really interested in Property development. I told him that I will help him to structure his songs when writing them and we will also look at property development videos to get a better understanding of how it works. We spent sessions writing lyrics, listening to instrumentals and also watching videos on YouTube about properties. IA started to be rewarded for his good behaviour and always told me about it when I would see him. He told me that he started to play football again to give him something more to focus on. He went back to his old team called Elite Development and missed playing football. He stopped due to losing interest when he started hanging with the wrong crowds. He said he's been training hard to get back to full fitness but is enjoying every second of it.

We set targets around keeping up his good behaviour, researching about properties and also looking for new instrumentals he can write music too. All these things allowed IA to stop messing about because had something to focus on which was beneficial for him. He would tell me when he had not had the best of weeks and would seem down about it. I told him that it happens but the main thing is that you are honest with yourself and you pick yourself right back up and make sure you keep improving.

I feel that IA really used our sessions as a way of checking in on his progress and seeing where he could improve with his behaviour. I think that at the start he had a lot of anger within him and didn't really have someone to talk too about it. I can see a huge change in IA from our first session to now. He is very focus driven and wants to be the best version of himself possible. He would always try to set his own targets and want to do better than he did in the previous weeks. He is very strong minded and really wants to make an effort in everything he does. My long-term goal with IA is to make sure that he is able to control his anger and to remain focused so that he can achieve at the highest level. I believe that we are on track for him to do this and by the end of this programme there will be huge, noticeable change in IA.