



**Lives Not Knives  
AGM Report  
Summer  
Programme and  
Youth Hub**

## What is 'Summer Programme' and 'Youth Hub'

LNK's Summer programme is a free six-week programme for young people aged between 13-17 who live in Croydon and attend different schools across the borough. A lot of the young people who attend the programme come from single parent households and low income families, and many may not get the opportunity to socialise with others their own age, go on day trips, or be consistently fed three meals a day during this six week period. During the programme the LNK Unit provides a safe hub for young people to come and make friends, and we also have activities throughout the six weeks i.e. 5-a-side football, day trips to Brighton, Museums and indoor games, as well as providing hot meals and drinks.

Youth Hub is held at the LNK Unit on Mondays and Fridays. LNK staff keep the Unit open until 18:30 for young people in the community to: meet friends in a safe space, play board games, play PlayStation, receive sexual health advice from C-Card practitioners and CV and employment advice from mentors, as well any other mental health support from our mentors who are all qualified in Mental Health First Aid.

By supporting young people and providing a space for them to enjoy themselves, we aim to deter those most disadvantaged in our community from becoming involved in crime and, instead, convert their energy into something positive. In doing so we can support young people to overcome obstacles, set an example for others, and become an asset to society - benefiting not only them, but the entire community.

## How did COVID-19 affect the delivery of the Programme and our methods to improve health and safety on the unit

We were determined to not allow Covid-19 to stop us from continuing our work with vulnerable young people but we did have to change how we deliver our programme. Staff working areas were changed to follow the 2m guidelines, staff had to also follow the Covid-19 Unit rules regarding facemasks, all staff had to have temperature checked (anything 37.5c or above means that staff member will be sent home and need to self-isolate), and the Unit was cleaned on the hour every hour (which involved disinfecting all work surfaces and emptying all bins). We also set guidelines in place that young people

will be greeted at the entrance temperature checked and have to use hand sanitiser, and a mask would be provided if they do not have one.

We are very fortunate that the Unit is a large space and even with social distancing we were still able to have up to 15 young people in the Unit along with our members of staff.

Covid-19 had a significant impact on the kind of activities we could do during the summer but a bigger part on our half-term programme.

During the summer we had trips to the British and Science Museum, 5-a-side football, ice rinks and day trips to Brighton. All young people signed up to the planned trips via our website, or a couple days before in person with a parent/guardian. They stayed within their bubble during the outings, and face masks were worn and hand sanitizer provided.

Due to the government restrictions that were implemented over half-term there was less to do, and there was also reduced amount of people in a bubble. This led to us holding more unit days filled with fizzy drink pong, FIFA tournaments, Unit Olympics and a Black History Month event with the 'Justice for Black Lives' Movement

### Sign-ups during Summer Programme and over Half-term

Even with impact of COVID-19 we still had a significant engagement with young people throughout the summer, half-term, and also through youth hub. Please see the tables below for more details.

#### Summer Programme

Online Sign Ups	On the day Sign ups	Male	Female
30	19	36	13

#### Half-term

Online Sign ups	On the day sign ups	Male	Female
8	18	15	11

## Youth Hub

Online sign ups	On the day sign ups	Male	Female
11	28	25	14

### Example Case Studies from mentors

I would also like to show the importance of the youth mentors and the summer programme in providing a safe space for the young people and introducing them to new experiences. By providing support and guidance, our mentors were able to get young people to open up comfortably and in their own time. Many young people do not have a person they open up to or even have a space to go to in which they feel safe, so it was important that we provided the space and the support for the young person.

Please see below for a case study written by an LNK mentor on a young person who came throughout the six week programme.

#### Case study: SM (by Jack Price).

SM and his carer had walked past the unit, saw the space, activities and the young people and had asked what it is what we do. We explained that we have our Summer Programme currently running and along with the encouragement of Sam's carer, who said how good it is, SM was excited to attend. One of his first questions was whether there would be young people attending of his age; we reassured him we would have plenty of activities, snacks, food, and friends to make.

SM, from the beginning of the programme to the end, was a bundle of energy. SM always had a smile on his face, had immaculate manners, was outgoing and surprisingly sociable for an 11- year old. When SM first attended, he was immediately drawn to the table tennis and PlayStation.

He also liked to take part in activities where other people were involved and playing. Whilst SM was considerate of other people, sharing, and ensuring everyone had a fair turn, he also enjoyed doing the things that he liked to do, for example he would ask to play FIFA (his favourite game on the PlayStation), after some of the other young people played a different game.

One of SM main concerns was whether other young people his age would come, and he was incredibly pleased when he discovered that he already knew one of the boys who attended the youth club. The other young person he knew began to attend less but by that point he had a strong rapport with the youth workers, to which he was no longer as concerned about the other young person. SM came with us to trips to the park as he loved football. Once again, he participated in all the activities.

He was a little bit disheartened that not everyone wanted to play football, and it was at that point I explained to him about accommodating to everyone, and that not everyone will want to do the things you do, so we try to get everyone involved by playing activities where everyone can join in. He understood this and quickly cheered up as Sam much preferred playing with other people as opposed to on his own.

When we arranged other trips out - to London, SM was reluctant to come and said he would much prefer to stay inside the youth club. The main reasons for this were that; he was often apprehensive to immerse himself in situations he has not been in before, his friends were at the unit and he wanted to play PlayStation as he does not have one at his house. When we came back and said what we done he had shown interest in coming the next time. SM seeks reassurance and is much more confident when he knows what he is doing.

SM had been very talkative throughout the course of the programme, making us aware of the things he likes, what he doesn't like, his interests, some of his fears, what is on his mind, this made it easy to get to know SM and build a strong rapport. All of which was for much of the time organic, for example we would be on the escalator and he had told me he used to fear the elevators.

SM has a very innocent, pure, and optimistic perspective of many things. He had made a point on several occasions to "play our hardest" at table tennis as he liked a challenge, whilst he was annoyed at his losses, he would never give up. SM is also a young person who seeks attention and assurance, often from those that he has a high regard for. On many occasions SM would ask youth workers to look at a new skill he had learnt or let them know what the score was on a game he was playing. On several occasions SM had mentioned he doesn't have many social interactions at home. The youth workers would ensure that SM was greeted with a big smile upon arrival, they would provide reassurance spur and praise SM.

As mentioned, SM was open and honest and we were made aware that he would be moving to a different home, with a different carer. This caused uncertainty in SM, and it was visible that it had been on his mind and he was not too pleased. This was mainly because he was unsure about what it meant for him; with what school he would be attending and if he would still be able to come to the youth club, which he said he hoped he could. Whilst at the youth club SM often indulged in snacks and sweets as opposed to cooked food - we quickly learnt his favourites were prawn cocktail crisps and Kit-Kats. Whilst we encouraged him to eat the meals we provided, he said he was not hungry or did not like some of the food.

We did not want to force SM into eating, and instead provided a suitable number of snacks. SM was given pocket money and was very happy about this, whilst he had regular spending habits (slush puppies, Fantas and chocolates) he was also responsible and knew how much he had, and how he would spend it. We would have frequent conversations about how he wanted to save his money for his own PlayStation. I suggested ways he could still treat himself throughout the day but implement a saving strategy to make his goal achievable. He was very receptive to this and as weeks went on, he had told me how much he had saved. SM for that reason was drawn to the PlayStation throughout the programme, whilst I encouraged him to play other games, I never stopped him from playing on the console, and he too enjoyed playing other things. I also tried to help him realise there are other things that he can do - I didn't want to give off the impression that having a console was a necessity, I told him I barely play mine. I asked him if he draws, and he said he does but he doesn't have a computer to find an image to draw. In which I told him that we would print some pictures off for him, and if he ever needed anything i.e. pencils etc just to ask - to which he was very appreciative of. SM was shocked at offers like these, us checking on him throughout the course of the day and said that we were very kind and caring. He made a reference to me reminding him of his PE teacher.

Halfway through the second week, SM had not attended for consecutive days which was unusual. When he came back, he had a new carer. The main thing was that SM was still able to attend which was amazing because this was something he was worried about. His new carer would drop him off a little bit later and pick him up on time, which SM was not too happy about. As time went on, SM was noticeably less energetic, a little bit more reserved and seemed to be preoccupied with his own thoughts. SM still engaged in activities the same way and was still himself but just seemed more wrapped up in his thoughts. It also became noticeable that SM

would wear the same outfit on consecutive days. It is not our position to infer why these or other patterns of behaviour are apparent, but it is worth noting that SM mentioned his current living situation as being very uncertain and quite busy.

SM was uncertain about the school he would be going to because he was not sure about the security of where he would be staying. He also mentioned that he much preferred his previous carer who he had referred to as “aunty”. Unfortunately, he was no longer able to stay with her, as he explained there was not enough space. I would ask SM if he was okay and he would say he was fine, but there was one day in particular that I was certain there was something wrong and that he was seeking to confide in someone but wasn’t sure if he was able to. I reassured him that we could speak, and I could tell that he was thinking about something. He immediately began to tell me what was troubling him. He said that he really did not like the little girl that he lives with. We were aware that they have fought in the past, because on one occasion his new carer asked us to keep an eye on his finger as he had hurt it fighting the girl earlier on in the day. He explained to me that she was very unpleasant. He told me that he made several attempts to try and nicely play with her or even question her behaviour, asking her to reflect on whether or not she was nice to him, despite him being nice to her; in which she would tell Sam that she knows she is being rude or horrible. He also told me that the “grown ups don’t really care”, he has voiced his concerns to them and told them what he doesn’t like but he said that they “don’t listen”.

He went on to say that is what he likes about us, because we listen and care. SM also told me that he is not able to socialise with the other children in the house as they are on different floors. From the beginning of the programme SM has wanted friends and that is very apparent in his behaviour. He often asks to play with other people and enjoys general conversations, i.e. “favourite football teams”. I opened this dialogue with SM and tried to alleviate his stresses. I asked him to take part in an activity with me where we list what makes me happy and what makes me not happy. The things he wrote that made him happy were “LNK, chocolate, table tennis, PlayStation and football”, at first he told me he didn’t want to write what doesn’t make him happy, as he was scared of the girls reaction if she found it. I assured him that we can keep it here. He went onto write that the little girl made him unhappy and the other concerns he had. SM mentioned that he would get his mobile phone. I asked him if he is in contact with his social worker to voice his concerns with them. He said that they have only spoke once, but now that he has his phone, he will be able to contact them more.

After this initial conversation where SM began to tell us more sensitive information; regarding his concerns for his living situations, and his relationship with his parents (one that lacks frequent contact), we learnt more about SM. On one occasion SM asked me to accompany him to the shop, I went and I asked SM if he would try some of the food we had delivered, that way he could save his money on snacks and spend them on a box of chocolates for his family, also trying to promote the idea of good general health, and that he would grow to be a big strong boy. He agreed to this compromise with a smile on his face, almost accepting a challenge to try something new. Whilst I had prepared the food, some of the youth workers spoke to SM, whereby he mentioned discreetly and in an unphased manner that he was able to “not eat food” for a long period, in fact he stated that “he could go for a week without eating”. We tried to ensure that SM was eating frequently and encouraged him to eat the cooked food as opposed to the snacks. SM has flourished from the Summer Programme.

He has opened up and his bright personality has shone through, we have been able to see how much of a kind, funny, polite and considerate young man he is. Whilst even his family situation has not been the best, he has always had them in mind, there was one instance where he had saved his money to buy a box of chocolate for his house to share. Although it did not take him long, SM was initially shy, whereas now he engages in games, activities, and conversations with everyone here. It took him longer to open up about his concerns and worries but now that a strong rapport has been built between the youth workers and SM, he is able to communicate with us how he feels. He is also receptive to our suggestions to help better the way he feels and listens to us. SM has been a pleasure to have and we have welcomed him to come to our Youth Hub on Mondays and Fridays. He was happy to hear that we are going to be open later those days.