

**LIVES  
NOT  
KNIVES**

**20/21**



# CEO OPENING

Reflecting on 2019/2020, nobody could deny it has been a year like no other, with many new challenges and changes forced upon us and with little time for us to embrace them. I am pleased to say we adapted as well as we could to support the young people in our community that needed us most.

Historically our referrals have always been young people at high risk of gang involvement, carrying a knife or already known to the police for offending. Although our programmes, aims and objectives as a charity have not changed, through the pandemic up until today, 95% of young people referred are on free school meals, and 100% of young people face more than 2 of the following, live in poverty, have parents with mental health problems, parents who abuse drugs and alcohol, are in care, suffer from domestic violence or abuse, have undiagnosed mental health or special educational needs and do not enjoy school or attend classes that they don't understand/feel they achieve in.

In spite of Covid-19 we managed to, continue our work with Youth Endowment Fund and work across 10 schools in Croydon delivering LNK Educate, our in house mentoring programme that works on creating a whole school approach to tackle knife crime. We also kept a close eye on government guidelines and managed to support a number of young people from the LNK Unit, on our LNK Engage programme, providing educational and fun activities as well as warm meals, throughout the lockdowns and all school holidays.

At a time when, collectively, we have never been more aware of the need for charity and community in all of our lives, I am proud to be CEO of Lives Not Knives and have such a wonderful and supportive LNK team as well as amazing trustees.



# TRUSTEE OPENING

This report represents my first year in office as Chair of Lives not Knives (LNK), having been elected in February 2020. What a year to commence the role! I am sure we would all agree that it has been unlike any other, and hope that it will not be replicated in our lifetime. I worked with the team at LNK before becoming Chair and was honoured to be appointed. I thoroughly enjoy working with Eliza Rebeiro, CEO, and the Trustees; a group of like-minded people who are enthusiastic about the work of this charity and who ensure effective governance to drive its success.

The new Board attended training in January, delivered by Kate and hosted by Alexandra Umpleby - with thanks. Kate has extensive experience of working with Charities in both funding and management roles and provided a valuable overview of the role of a Trustee and best practice in strong governance. Shortly thereafter, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived on UK shores and restricted governance procedures and, for the safety of Trustees, the decision was taken in March to move Board meetings to online rather than in person. This was particularly unfortunate due to the new composition of the Board.

The pandemic also restricted the Charity's general operations. Several staff were furloughed, and many schools were closed. Those that remained opened faced a myriad of challenges. It continues to be a difficult time for everybody, particularly so for young people. They have experienced disruption in every facet of their lives; learning, friendships, physical activities, and access to support services, all things which can provide an escape from life's harmful influences and which were so suddenly removed. Young people have witnessed their parents, teachers and caregivers wrestle with fear and uncertainty, financial hardship, and in too many instances, illness and death. These stresses increase the risks of young people witnessing or experiencing higher levels of abuse, the ramifications of which will be evident for years to come. It is estimated that approximately 1.5m children will require new or additional mental health support as a consequence of the crisis which will have a direct effect on attitude and behaviour.

These factors heightened the teams' passion and tenacity not to allow a pandemic to stand in the way of their important work. To address the unique challenges of the pandemic required ingenuity, creativity, and resilience. They developed risk assessments, adapted their methods of delivery, and demonstrated grit and determination. New team members were recruited and trained, new schools were enrolled, teacher training resources were enhanced, and accessibility improved, technology and branding were upgraded, fundraising packs were created and distributed, disadvantaged children were supported during the summer, and a programme of events for the black lives matter movement delivered. Phenomenal achievements through the toughest of terrains and the Board would like to extend our deepest gratitude and respect to every member of the team.

The Board would also like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the former Chair, Mr. James Emtage, who resigned in February, having held the position for 4 years. James steered the Charity through some of its greatest achievements, overseeing the Achievement of record funding levels, thereby facilitating a greater penetration of our services throughout the borough of Croydon. Thanks also to two former trustees who resigned from their positions this year, Saffron Saunders and Jackie King also integral to our growth.

Finally, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our funders and partners, without whom our work would not be possible. With a commitment to long-term investment from our funders and the dedication of our team, we will continue to meet the growing needs of young people and make tangible improvements to their lives, helping to steer them onto paths to success.

Thank you.



# LIVES NOT KNIVES

LNK EDUCATE

LNK ENGAGE

COMMUNITY

ROADSHOWS

SUMMER PROGRAMME

FUNDRAISERS

A WHOLE  
SCHOOL  
APPROACH

SCHOOL  
FUNDRAISERS

YOUTH HUB

COMMUNITY  
EVENTS

1:1 MENTORING

TEACHER  
TRAINING &  
AWARENESS

KEEPING AT-RISK YOUTH  
OFF THE STREETS

COHESIVE  
COMMUNITY

LNK Educate is the principal component of the **PREVENTATIVE WORK** that we do here at LNK. We work with teachers to deliver resources to primary and secondary school students in an attempt to keep them away from youth crime and violence, as well as 1-1 mentoring students identified as being more vulnerable.

**60%**

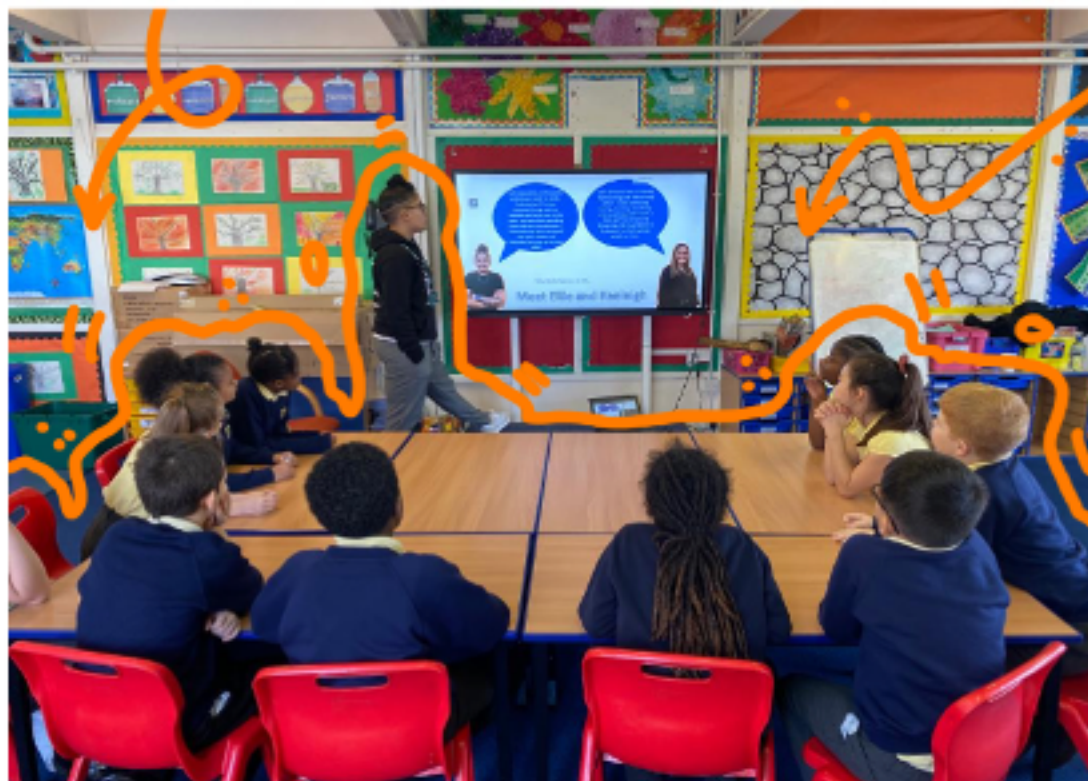
Of the U.K's prison population, were excluded from schools. Also, excluded pupils are **four times** more likely to grow up in poverty, meaning those excluded generally require the most support.

**94k**

Of Croydon's population is under-18, making it the **largest youth population** of any London borough.

**89**

Knife offences on school premises within the Croydon borough between 2015-2018 ranks the highest out of any London borough, over **30 more offences** than the next highest.



We firmly believe that **EARLY INTERVENTION IS ESSENTIAL** in protecting our next generation and improving these statistics.

Over the past year, LNK have worked with 11 schools in the Croydon borough. We have trained roughly 320 teachers, and delivered resources to over 4300 pupils. Below is a testimony from Louise, who is head of safeguarding at Oasis Academy Ryelands

“The children on the programme have definitely benefited from LNK, as they continue to break existing negative patterns that are in place. For example, I have seen an improvement amongst children who refuse to engage or come in to school at all. When working with the children that do display challenging behaviour, they seem to show a low level of empathy. One benefit of the programme is that LNK builds these levels up. Having LNK work with the school strengthens our core message and solidifies in the pupils' minds the kind of ideals and moral compass that we as a school try to build. This translates strongly in the classroom where you can see the child has made the effort to change their behaviour and approach others with more empathy. LNK's mentors reflect a similar community as the ones children are used to which is hugely impactful because they are nearer their age and so can relate to LNK's staff a lot better. They are not seen as authority as such, and so it is beneficial for working with those who have grown up with little respect for authority. When we think about the types of children we work with, they come from backgrounds where crime is an issue, so their perception of authority is often negative. This means that the messages coming from teachers are not always heard by the pupil but can be very powerful when said by an LNK mentor.

The children's knowledge of the dangers and gang and youth violence has improved. I have noticed that in previous sessions, the children joked around with the discussion on gangs whereas they now are exploring more real-life situations and wanting answers for them. Having a whole school approach has been beneficial because some children may not need direct intervention at that stage in their life, but if 6-9 months later their personal circumstances change they may need that knowledge. Two children were able to disclose their home situation since the LNK workshop, and the school were not aware about it until that session.

The delivery of resources was very useful and specialised. This allowed the teacher training to be effective as many did not have much knowledge prior to LNK, giving them confidence to tackle those issues when they rise. Having LNK staff around the school has given teachers confidence and continues that whole-school approach. I have no trouble discussing issues with them so that we produce collaborative work that is useful on both ends. All the teachers are happy because the children respond so positively when they are there.

I would love to be working with LNK in the future and it is definitely an initiative that should be in all schools. Other schools will benefit from similar provision, especially primary schools. I believe that the earlier there is intervention, then the earlier positive changes can be brought about. A lot of the children may not be directly involved in knives or gangs themselves, but a lot of them have the exposure and need the tools to avoid and prevent issues like this in the future.”

As part of LNK Engage, we run multiple programmes to provide a safe space for children aged 13-17, particularly those from single-parent or low income households, during out of school hours to keep them off the streets.

During the Summer holidays, we run a free six-week programme, providing hot meals and drinks, especially for those children from single-parent or low-income households. There are also daily activities available such as going ice skating or trips to the museum to allow these kids to socialise in a positive way with people their age. We run similar programmes over half-terms as well.

During the school term, we run our youth hub, where the LNK unit is open until 6:30pm from Monday to Friday. We provide mental health support, a place to relax and play videogames, as well as give employment advice.

Despite COVID-19 heavily reducing our capacity over the past year due to social distancing measures, we still managed 114 sign-ups to our different programmes.



# APPRENTICESHIPS AND STAFF TRAINING

To ensure that all of our youth workers are fully prepared to work with vulnerable young people in schools, we ensure that they complete a variety of training programmes. A testimony of this training is written below by Paul Bogle



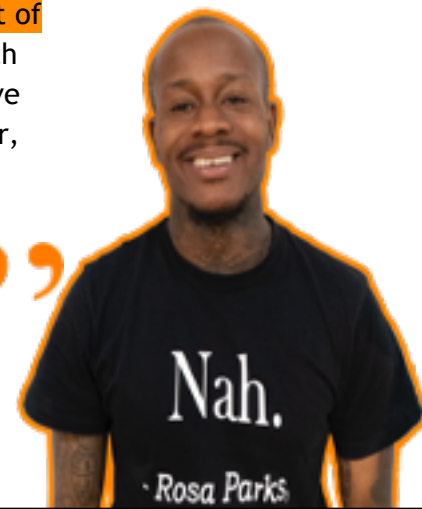
“When I started at LNK I was initially employed as the social media content creator. Since then, I have started my youth work apprenticeship, so I am now a youth worker alongside the content creating. I got into youth work after going into the office and seeing the day-to-day running of the charity, witnessing first-hand how much of an impact was being made in young people's' lives. I wanted to also contribute to making a positive impact on the youth.

When I started my apprenticeship, I undertook a variety of training. For example, I partook in sexual health training, which taught me how to have conversations with young people who are sexually active, giving them pointers on how to stay safe, equipping me with the knowledge required to advise them correctly. I was also given mental health training, which has helped me to identify if a young person is suffering from ill mental health. I have also done HR training with Monica, which has helped me to settle into the workplace environment. LNK is my first office job, so this training has shown me how to deal with any discrepancies I may have in a professional manner.

Without doing the training or the apprenticeship, I would not be fully equipped to safeguard children, and I think that I would only have about 10% of what I need to work with a young person effectively. The 90% of what I have learnt at LNK from being around experienced mentors and doing my coursework has given me these abilities. Things such as case studies and witnessing first-hand the development of a young person allows me to see the impact of my work and allows me to analyse and improve in the future. All the training has been enjoyable mainly down to the fact that we can do it as a team, so it can also act as a bonding experience. It also allows for new staff to express their opinions on sensitive matters and ask open questions, which creates a much more comfortable environment to work with them in the future as part of a team.

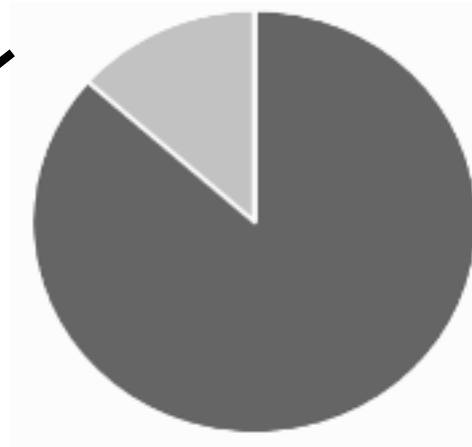
I have been at LNK for nearly 4 years now, and there is always something new to learn which allows me to constantly develop my skills, which I believe LNK have equipped me with to the best of their ability. From working here, I have been able to look at people differently, such as some friends who perhaps if they had a youth worker in their life, they would have turned out different. It is sad to think that something as small as not having an older, positive role model could make such a large impact on certain people.

And perhaps that one piece of advice they missed out on could have been the one that prevented them from making the wrong decision at a point in their life.”



# FINANCES

## INCOME



Grants - £418,965

Donations - £65,205

## COSTS



Programme Costs - £327,272

General / Admin - £16,273

Utilities - £5,592

Income increased by £23k compared to the previous year, despite heavy limitations such as not being able to host fundraisers due to COVID.


Costs have increased over £127k compared to the previous year, mainly due to the expansion of the charity by taking on more youth workers to work as mentors on the LNK Educate programme.

There has been a 43% increase in total funds from £315k to £450k, which shows that LNK continues to be in a healthy financial position.

# THANK YOU

We would like to give a huge thanks to everyone who has donated, supported, or ran some sort of fundraiser which has allowed us to deliver our work to the community successfully





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