



## What is 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.

## About the YEF programme

This programme will involve 8 of LNK's mentors working with young people in 10 primary and secondary schools throughout the Croydon borough. They will begin by delivering resource packs to the teachers at the schools, before the teachers then deliver these to their pupils themselves. After this point the teachers will select up to 20 young people who they believe will benefit from having a mentor who they will work with weekly on a one-to-one basis. Once all of these components are combined this will inform a whole school approach to educating and supporting young people as well as to reducing school exclusions.

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.

Together the mentor and mentee will discuss goals for the future and set both short and long term goals to improve their behaviour and performance in school and beyond. The mentor will then regularly evaluate the progress of the mentee, whilst helping them to

discuss their problems or concerns. The mentor will then use their knowledge to identify the young person's ambitions and help them set targets, whilst also outlining the steps they should take so they can be achieved.

Although the mentor will meet with the young person once a week in school, the mentee will also be able to contact the mentor outside of this time if they would like to - in accordance with our Safeguarding policy.

## Need

### National:

40,000 knife crime offences were committed in the UK in 2018, and the national knife crime epidemic has now reached an all-time high.



Due to public service cuts and there being 20,000 less police than in 2010, more emphasis has fallen on youth support networks such as LNK to guide susceptible young people into education and employment and away from gang culture.

With regard to school exclusions, the statistics also highlight the importance of early intervention to keep young people in mainstream education. This is identified by the 'Institute for Public Policy Research', which claims that over 50% of students expelled from school have been diagnosed with some form of mental illness. Along similar lines a report from SedEC states that at least 50% of the United Kingdom's prison population were expelled from school, which also shows the long term benefits of providing young people with structure and keeping them in the mainstream education environment.

### Local:

While London remains the principal area suffering from the knife crime problem, Croydon has its own specific issues.

This is evident through Croydon having the largest under 18 population of any London borough, standing at over 94,000. In addition to this, Croydon ranks as one of the city's most deprived districts for education, training and crime, and has the worst record for knife crime in schools out of any London borough.



Many of those referred to us are born into socioeconomic disadvantage and have already suffered significant trauma in their lives. It is therefore clear that there are many young people in London who need tailored support and guidance, and reiterates the need for organisations like LNK within our community.

## All of Our Programmes

**MENTORING:** This programme, funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), centres around our youth workers going into local schools and working on a one-to-one basis with young people who have been identified as potentially needing support. Together they talk through the mentee's problems, set targets for the future and then create a plan to achieve them. Often these goals involve supporting the young person with fulltime education, apprenticeships or employment, and our track record demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy to help young people get on the right path and reach their potential.

**ROADSHOWS:** We also have our staff go into primary and secondary schools to deliver workshops. These serve to highlight the consequences of getting involved in knife and gang culture by using real life case studies and the experiences of our youth workers, and we currently reach over 10,000 young people a year through these means.

**YOUTH HUB:** We open up our unit in Centrale Shopping Centre to young people from the local area so they can socialise, use our facilities and have fun in a safe space. Our staff keep the office open until 18:30 and host a range of activities involving art, the PS4, computers, board games or table tennis tables, and are also available to offer mentoring and support if necessary.

**SUMMER PROGRAMME:** We host a six-week summer programme for young people in the community. This involves taking groups of young people out for activities, including: 5-a-side football, bowling, cinema, Oxygen trampoline park, and many more. We also provide them with food and a safe environment in which they can make friends and have fun, whilst also being observed and supported by our youth workers.

**COMMUNITY GIVE BACK:** At LNK we host a number of events as a way of giving back to the community. These include several fundraisers such as football matches, as well as events such as FIFA tournaments and specific activities for Women's Day and Black History month.

**YOUTH AMBASSADOR:** LNK ambassador programme works with young people in the community who are passionate about reducing knife and gang violence. These young people become incorporated in the LNK set up and play a helpful role in spreading our message and supporting our events.

## Further questions?

If you still have questions about LNK, the work we do, our policies, or would simply like to talk to a member of our staff, please feel free to call our office on: 02086818244 or email us via: [info@livesnotknives.org](mailto:info@livesnotknives.org)