

Young Men's Identity Residential 2015

Aims

- *Explore concepts of Identity*
- *Explore Belief Systems*
- *Break Internalised Stereotypes*
- *Promote Positive Sense of Self*
- *Increase Equality of Opportunity*
- *Have a greater awareness about "Stop and search" procedures.*

Outcomes

- *Increased Confidence*
- *Recognise and Take Opportunities*
- *Improved Body Language*
- *Recognition of Responsibility*
- *Thinking Out of the Box*
- *Create a "Stop and Search" DVD aimed at young people enabling them to know their rights and also improving relationships between Manchester police and the wider community.*

Context

The young men come from an inner city area of Manchester affected by high levels of poverty, deprivation, territorial and gang affiliation and crime. Compared to young men from more affluent areas there is potential to believe their opportunities are limited without ongoing intervention to create a positive sense of self and increase ability to make positive choices. One aspect of this is the partnership work with Routes2Success and Elevation7 which consists of intensive workshops encouraging participants to develop resilience and the skills needed to meet the outcomes of the project.

Actions

To meet the outcomes of the project we will undertake activities both at the Powerhouse and on a residential. The young men will engage in informal education through workshops, peer mentoring, and personal development and will be encouraged to take ownership of the project both developmental and financial.

The experiences they have will be shared with other young people both formally through peer mentoring and informally through debates and discussion.

The Identity residential was undertaken to reinforce Identity work done previously at Powerhouse and supported by Routes2Success part of the Black Training and Enterprise Group. The aim was to develop the workshops and give young men experiential learning on how they see themselves, remove potentially internalised stereotypes and raise aspirations and attainment by developing a more positive sense of self. One of the groups

The first activity was a visit to Thameside prison in Plumstead where we planned to meet with gang affiliated young men in the youth wing. Unfortunately there was an incident in the unit as we arrived although it was thought that if we waited we would still get to meet with prisoners. However shortly after there was another incident and we were informed that the situation inside was now a High level security risk and we would have to rearrange. As we waited two prison vans arrived and the young men were visibly nervous as the passengers were banging loudly inside the vehicle. Shortly afterwards an ambulance arrived and the young men began to speculate as to what had happened. We were met by a supervising warden who explained that the Unit was relatively new and they had had a lot of issues due to their lack of awareness with regard to gang affiliation and postcodes within the London Boroughs. The young men engaged well and had a discussion about their own environment with staff at Thameside learning about the reality of Joint Enterprise and the extent that courts use this with young men from gang affiliated communities. The young men admitted feeling apprehensive although they all knew people involved in criminal activity and saw those they knew very differently from the ones they had been going to meet.

The following day we visited a Youth Offending Centre in Croydon that worked with gang members and young people on probation, they were surprised at the restrictions placed on those who had escaped custodial sentences. They also learned that as from July this year being caught with a knife twice automatically results in a 4 month custodial sentence. Young men in the group admitted knowing people that carry a knife constantly as a way to defend themselves rather than as a weapon to harm someone with some stating that they also had on occasion. They heard how difficult it can be once you've been in the custodial system to move on which often results in repeat offending.

We then went to the London Borough of Haringey to meet up with Ken Hinds, the chairman of Haringey stop and search monitoring group. He won a Safer Communities award in 2010 for his voluntary work in the criminal justice system and also for his work in tackling local gang violence.

We told him that we wanted to create our own stop and search video as “Stop and Search” amongst young ethnic boys especially young black males was a big problem in Greater Manchester. Young people were having lots of negative experiences with police and we wanted to create a video that could be used as an educative tool for police training and also helping to bridge the gaps of understanding of individual right, proper procedures and conduct of both police and young people.

Opportunities arise unexpectedly to raise aspiration and one such occasion was when we stopped for lunch at a Caribbean restaurant. Though seemingly small the difference between the restaurant in Croydon and the takeaways they are used too was huge and allowed us to have a discussion about why the food shops at home stay as they are and don't aspire to anything more. 'Staying in your lane' and 'jealousy' were some of the possible reasons and neither was viewed as valid even though the young men understood that this seems to be inherent in many parts of our community.

To counteract the previous activities we went into central London to visit Tokio Marine a Re-insuring Company based a 20 Fenchurch Street in central London. One of the Role models at Routes2Success is a loss adjuster for the organisation and was able to talk about his own journey and achievements to the young men. At the age of 29 he was educated up to PhD level in Mathematics and coming from similar backgrounds to the young men was able to relate well to them. The young men also had to do a presentation for Routes2Success role models in the Boardroom to persuade them to fund the identity and Stop and Search projects. Although they had delivered the presentation previously in Hideaway the experience of delivering in such professional surroundings was very different with all reporting they were more nervous. This was designed to take them out of their comfort zones and really encourage them to understand the choices they have as the black owned businesses they are generally used too are small and locally based.

The Role Models from Routes2Success delivered workshops to the group on taking opportunities when they're presented and also had one to ones with those who requested them. This is something that will continue via email and phone calls as long as the young men find it are beneficial.

Testimonials

I found the residential really good because it took me and my friends out of our comfort zones and I think this is really good for people like us as young Black men as we don't get the opportunity to be pushed which may be why we don't achieve as much and we can feel as though we're not as important as other people and this kind of thing shows us that we are equal and can achieve as much as those who are privileged or live in more affluent areas. The sessions we did a Powerhouse before the resi kind of made me start thinking more and prepared me for the stuff we did in London. Akemia has shown us that we have a lot more real life skills coming from an area like Moss Side and London gives us another view of how we can put them to use and achieve big things if we apply ourselves. All the identity work that we do like the workshops with Tony, the presentations in front of really high achieving people, even though it was intimidating it all helps us to improve our confidence all round really and just improve our persona, character building it was really good and I hope we can do many more in the future. It showed us that we're not stuck inside a box, we might feel like we are stuck living in Moss Side and being a

young Black male and we might think we can't achieve as much but Kem constantly makes us aim higher and Tony's workshops help us see that we can achieve what we want, we can break that box and break stereotypes. It's really good and I really do hope there's more to come in the future.

The residential made the entire group engage and become friends because we shared similar experiences. Being in London gave us a chance to see corporate businesses that are Black owned and let us know that we can do more than society thinks we can or even wants us to achieve. We were a mixed age group but we could all relate and it gave us all a more positive insight into ourselves making us more confident about who we are. The workshops in Powerhouse and on the residential taught me a lot about who I am and my identity and I will use that to peer mentor other young people in Moss Side.

Shiloh and Baais (age 15)

Akemia Minott – Youth Worker

Outcomes

Since coming back one of the young men has finished his personal training Business plan and has made a promotional video and another has changed his football agent as he decided things weren't moving fast enough.

The relationships between the young men have become a lot stronger and more supportive with friendships being formed that weren't there before.

Since doing the residential and with the help of ODD arts and Routes2Success role models we have created our own stop and search video "REACT" This can be viewed using the following link:

https://youtu.be/w7l_oEsTO3c

We are now working with Manchester police so they can use the video as a learning tool for local police and future police officers especially young cadets. We have already had a preview/focus group event at "Hideaway" for young people to get their opinions of the video. We will work with R2S role models to think of a ways to further spread the word and advertise our video. We would like to do assemblies in schools and workshops at community centres also inviting local police down to further interact with young people in ways they have not done so before.

We would like to now create leaflets and design t-shirts with the "REACT" logo so people will start spreading our important messages.