

Introduction

Extremism In Lambeth

Extremist views and motivations are disguised in many forms. These range from friends, personal and family relationships, emotional, financial and social support. It is often very difficult for young people, especially those who are feeling anxious, isolated or unheard to detect hateful guidance, language, actions or even perceptions.

Racist and homophobic offences against older teenage males (15 to 19), in Lambeth is increasing. The National Domestic Violence Helpline reports that calls received from Lambeth residents is the third highest in London, and it is the highest ranking borough for reported 'Most Serious Violence against Women'.¹

The number of female victims of serious youth violence is slowly increasing in Lambeth. In 2016, 25% of victims of serious youth violence were female, compared to only 9% in 2012.²

Youth re-offending rates remain high with about a fifth of Lambeth's population aged 20 or under and first time entrants to the criminal justice system on the increase. Gang related violence and sexual and drug related crime remains high and is an increasing problem.

We are aware that once in the criminal justice system it is hard for individuals to get out of it, with increasingly limited opportunities without attached stigma.

Therefore they become highly vulnerable for exploitation, particularly around prolific offenders and negative peers.

Our programme is innovative and builds on similar work done with vulnerable young people in Brent. Between 2014 and 2016, we engaged 3,600 young people in Brent, working around knife crime and gang violence.

Aims of the Sessions

The programme sought to achieve the BSBT outcome of 'Fewer people holding attitudes, beliefs and feelings that oppose shared values'.

Through analysis of choices made, the programme helped identify individuals at risk of exploitation or extremism, whilst supporting those to safely speak and act against extremism.

The Big Q sought to drive home the importance to be able to 'stand up for the shared values that unite us as a country.

¹ Lambeth Council (2016), [State of the Borough 2016](#)

² Lambeth Council (2017), [Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Appendix 1: Serious Youth Violence](#)

Scenario One

Your childhood and close friend Chloe has now moved back to London and joined your school class. Your friends are now hanging out with Chloe. When speaking to her, she tells you all about her new life. She has become a vegan and will never eat meat or dairy again and starts showing you videos about animal cruelty. She tells you about a video she wants to show you of a couple who were eating chicken, ribs and drinking milkshakes and then getting badly beaten up by a group of vegans.

Do you watch the video?

Scenario Two

Chloe tells you she has more videos just like the one showing the couple getting beaten up and worse. She reminds you that she has a voice recording of you on her phone talking about things you did when you were both a bit closer. She wants you to help share and spread these videos to others via social media.

Do you share the videos?

Scenario Three

Chloe thanks you because you have shared a couple of videos. She casually mentions that people are starting to recognise you more now as you shared a couple of the videos. She then tells you about a big BBQ that is open to the community. It's going to be a massive end of year party and everyone is expected to be there. Chloe says there will be a lot of meat eaters coming to the party but she's going because her vegan friends will be there too. She asks you to join her vegan movement and go to the party with them. You realise most of your friends are hanging out with her.

Do you go to the party?

Scenario Four

You are at the BBQ and recognise quite a few people. Some are the vegans from the video you watched showing the couple getting beaten up badly. You know quite a few people at the party but they aren't really talking to you. You also notice that Chloe's vegan group are keeping themselves separate. Chloe hands you a plastic bag filled with drinks and tells you to put them out on the table for the party. You pour out drinks for some people and you go to drink one of them. Chloe quickly stops you saying the drinks are for the others and not to drink it. Her vegan friends start laughing and begin to leave the party. Chloe says let's go, let's leave now.

Do you leave?

Scenario Five

After the BBQ, some of the people who were there get sick and are admitted to hospital. There are rumours that the drinks were poisoned and the police have started to ask questions. The vegan group are all happy and praising you for putting the drinks out on the table and serving some. They want to attend another BBQ this weekend to create more havoc. Chloe will be away for the party but wants you to take her place and take her vegan friends to the BBQ. She says to you that we are all family now, that she trusts you and will protect you as long as you're part of our circle. Chloe also reminds you about the voice recording on her phone and that your friends are now her friends.

Do you lead the group?

Programme Outcomes

Participants

Over the course of the programme, 702 young people were reached across seven different schools. Of these, four were pupil referral units. The workshops at pupil referral units had significantly less pupils attending due to the challenges and special needs issues with the students. However, they received the same number of YourStory staff and resources.

"We got to learn about real-life situations"

"It taught me not to go to the extreme"

"I liked being able to express my decisions without being judged"

"I liked how we made our own decisions"

"I liked the workshop teacher's attitude"

Feedback

The students were given a basic feedback form and asked to answer the following questions:

- Do you now understand shared values?
- Do you feel more confident in sharing information with the appropriate authorities?
- Have you learnt about how extremists can influence you and your social circles?
- Do you have a sense of belonging to the wider community?
- Overall, how useful have you found this workshop in helping to understand extremism?

We used this form for a small number of sessions before BSBT supplied an additional feedback form.

