

Lewisham's Trauma-informed, Violence Reduction Weapon Programme

Launched in March 2018, our programme explores the causes of violence from a trauma-informed perspective.

Grounded in academic research, the programme combines mindfulness, positive affirmations and breathing techniques with relevant knowledge and insight; our trauma-informed approach reduces the focus on injuries, weapons and harms to minimise the re-traumatisation of the participants.

The programme has received significant interest from a number of London boroughs and MOPAC; in 2019, MP Edward Argar visited Lewisham to learn more about our programme and London South Bank University began programme evaluation.

Who Will Benefit?

Young people aged between 14 and 18 years old who:

- Are already engaged with the Youth Justice system
- Have previous convictions for weapon offences, violence and/or assaults.

Programme Delivery:

One-to-one sessions between the young person and the group facilitators form the initial contact, to support building a trusted relationship.

Two facilitators (and an additional floating staff member from the home YOS) deliver 12 sessions over an 8-week programme as follows:

- **Transition** – Introductions and setting group boundaries
- **Stress** – Impact on mind, body and decision making
- **Unconscious Bias** – How this manifests and how to challenge it
- **Peer on Peer Abuse** – Triggers, solutions and Contextual Safeguarding.
- **Power, Influence and Social Media** – Exploring online harms, risks, impact on mental health and harmful sexual behaviour.
- **Legacy** – Setting motivational goals and plans for the future

Additional elements of the programme include:

- **Breathing exercises and rituals** at the start and end of each session, to support stress/anxiety reduction.
- **Positive affirmations** to promote confidence and raise self-esteem
- **Mindfulness** to aid ability to be focused and 'present in the moment'
- **Plant Care:** each participant is given a plant to name and take responsibility for over the life of the course.

Programme Outcomes:

- A reduction in both the number and gravity of violent offences
- Growth in resilience, confidence and emotional intelligence
- Sharing of skills with professionals, parents, young people and communities
- Qualification awarded to each participant

"Lewisham YOS is an example of a borough that has developed a joined-up approach to tackling youth offending, seeing it through a public health prism"

Charlie Taylor – YJB, CYP Now, June 2019