

Targeted Intervention

Programme Report 2024



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A word from our Frontline Director

Over the past two years, the Targeted Intervention Programme has equipped us with the sources and partnerships to find and support some of the most vulnerable young people in Tower Hamlets and equip them to live safer lives. We have dug deep into the harms posed to our young community through violence, exploitation, poverty, poor mental health and the ever-changing demands of our society. We can proudly say that we have engaged 341 young people on bespoke intervention plans designed to prevent, divert, and remove harm.

A fruitful longterm partnership stretching back to 2017 with the ASB team and the police facilitated the referral pathways and information sharing necessary for us to access some of the most vulnerable members of our young community. In the process, our Frontline Team had to work relentlessly to engage those stuck in harm and deeper levels of criminality.

The team did not just face the challenges of young people not wanting to change, but also those who feel they cannot change for fear of reprisals to themselves or their loved ones. The team set out to build trust with the untrusting and faced conflict and personal tolls in achieving these aims.

The TIP funding provided resources to have frontline staff out in the community, estates, homes, street corners, and schools to directly engage with those at the deep end of harm. The partnerships with the ASB team and police have been a key part of the success of the programme.

The young communities we have worked with have not just progressed into the work and education which often gets seen as the key indicator to progression, but we have seen members of our young communities stop carrying weapons, become peer influencers and community leaders, and most importantly, build the resilience to stay safe in their communities.



Koyes Ali



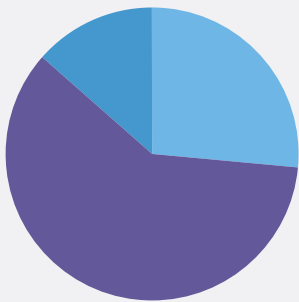
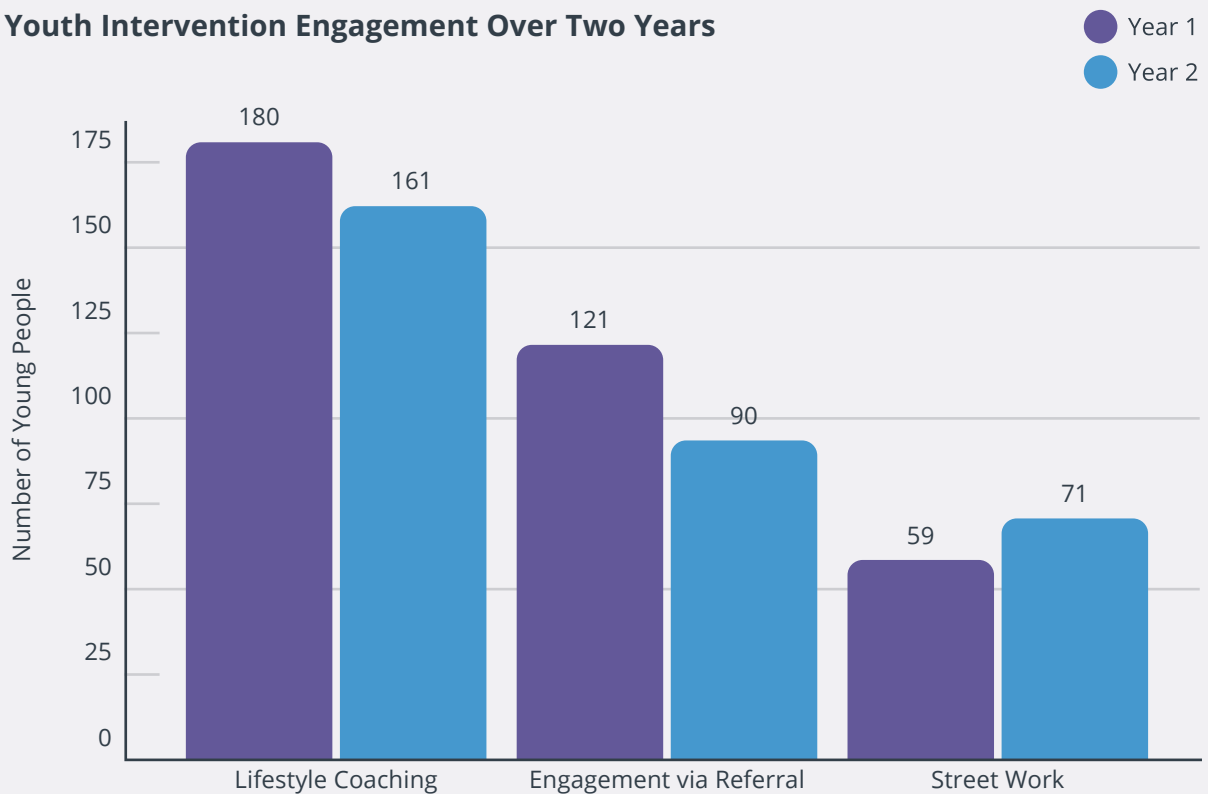
About the programme

In collaboration with LBTH Council, from February 2022 - July 2024 Streets of Growth has sought to find and equip vulnerable young people in targeted areas to reduce harm and transform their lifestyles. Functioning across six sites with varying levels of serious youth violence, drug distribution, child criminal and sexual exploitation, and child poverty, the programme has successfully engaged 341 young people on bespoke intervention plans.

These plans begin by fostering a relationship for change in a true contextual safeguarding model. Staff have engaged young people at community level, in their schools, amongst their peers, and in our creative space. Establishing these relationships has required relentless engagement to build trust over months. These relationships are then leveraged to engage young people in our unique Bridging Model which addresses potential harms related to environment, lifestyle, education and employment.

Our programmes are designed to be bespoke to the needs of our young community, providing them with the tools necessary to be independent and safe from harm beyond our provision.

Youth Intervention Engagement Over Two Years



The majority of the young people engaged on the programme were aged 16-19 (59.8%), whilst 26.7% were 12-15, and 13.5% from a slightly older cohort at 20+. Streets of Growth work with young people aged 15-25, making our offer unique in the transitional support we provide into adulthood.

● 13.5% - 20+ ● 26.7% - 12-15 ● 59.8% - 16-19

Boys Engaged

205

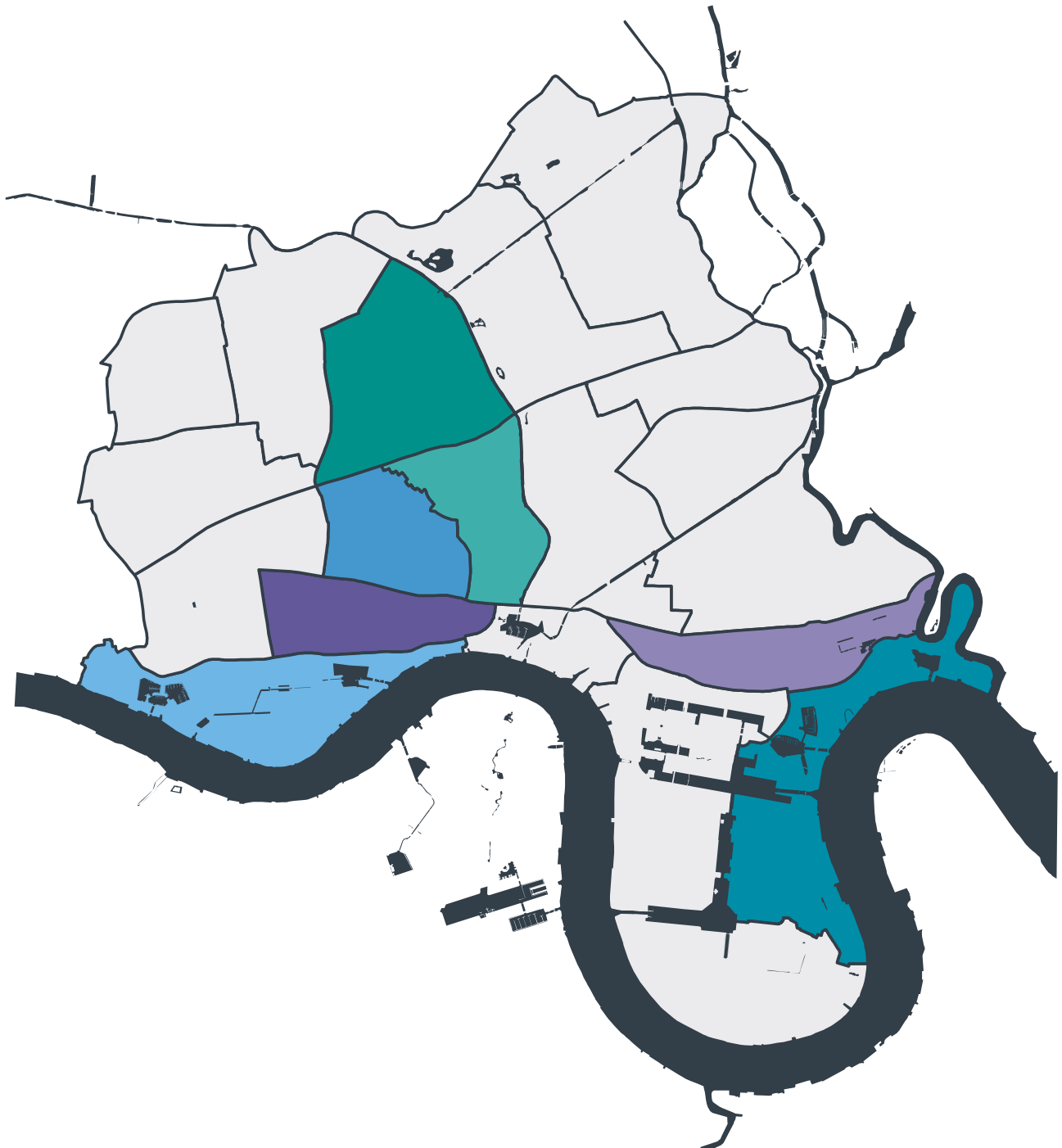
Girls Engaged

136

15+ Hours
of Intervention

73%

Engagement at Street Level



- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 47 - Bethnal Green | 27 - Limehouse |
| 13 - Berner | 14 - Poplar |
| 52 - Collingwood | 41 - Shadwell |
| 15 - Cranbrook | 31 - Stepney Green |
| 64 - Globe Town | |

Targeted Intervention: Streetwork Overview



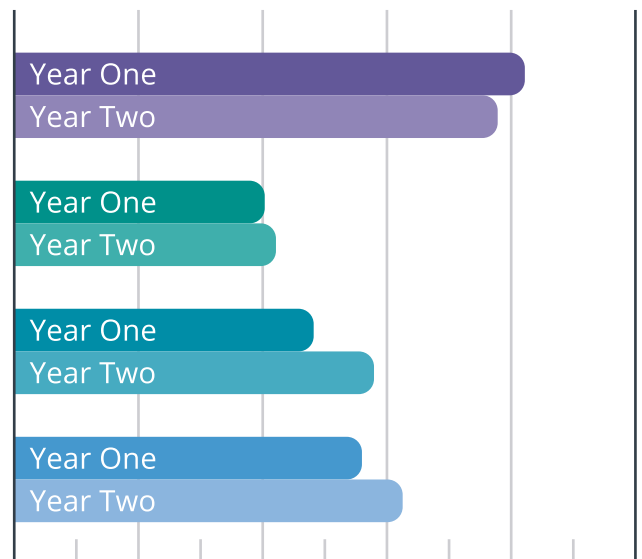
Across the Targeted Intervention Programme, our dedicated team have carried out work at street level to build relationships with some of the most high risk and typically hard to reach young people in our borough.

These efforts have engaged 130 young people with our service. Alongside introducing young people to our service, this is a bedrock of ongoing support particularly in times of hardship or potential relapse.

Supported Career Pathways

55%

55% of the young people engaged entered employment, education and/or training. Of these, 83 entered education, and 104 entered employment over the two year period.



0 50 100

- Received Accreditation
- Entered Education
- Entered Employment
- Assigned a Mentor

Cost to YOU the Tax Payer

The average yearly cost of keeping one person in a UK prison.

£51,724

The average yearly cost of placing a child in a youth detention center in the UK.

£119,000

The estimated cost of knife crime to the UK economy every year.

1 Billion

Our Targeted Intervention Model

Cost for Streets of Growth to provide Targeted Intervention for one young person per year.

£4,500

161 'in-risk' young people targeted and re-engaged for one year.

161

None of these young people entered the criminal justice system.

0

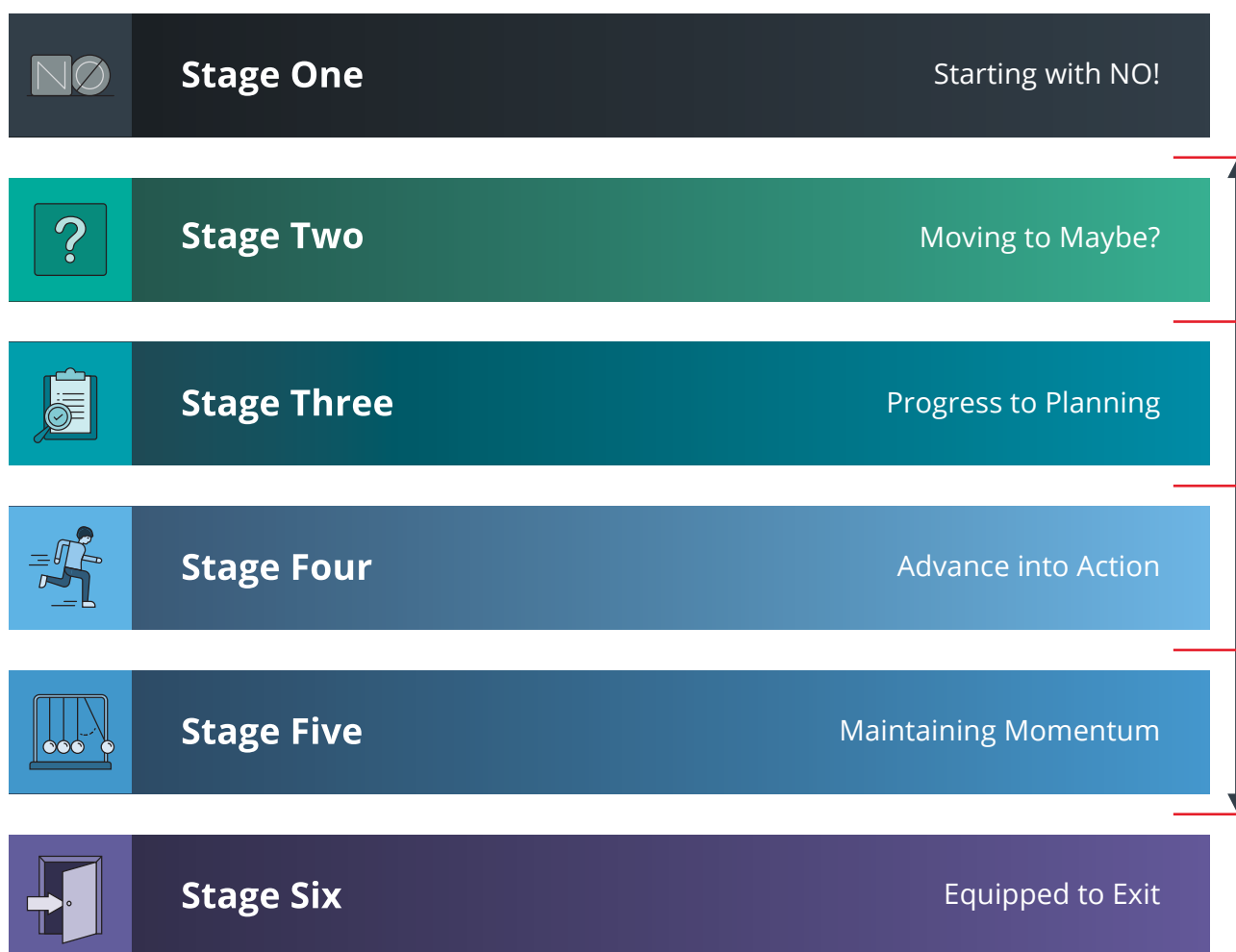
1-3 Years

Our Robust Intervention Period

Starting with 'NO!'

Our Starting with 'NO' framework for intervention recognises the level of readiness of each young person on their change journey with our service. It equips staff to assess what stage the young person is at, and what potential interventions are required to move things along.

Many of the young people we work with start with 'NO!'. They tell staff they do not need our help, that they are comfortable with whatever harm they are involved in, and are not willing to engage in change. At this point, we do not give up, but instead begin work to understand why the young person is telling us 'NO!', mapping the potential factors in this through continued targeted street work in their communities. The following section outlines the programmes we have ran throughout the T.I.P. and how they relate to our Starting with 'NO!' framework.



Key: ↔ Recovery — Relapse

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Throughout the TIP contract we have relentlessly outreached young people who are disengaged from traditional support services for a number of reasons. In our efforts to build trust with them and their communities, our team begin by trying to understand the reasons why they are saying 'NO! We do this by asking questions like, who are their peers? Where are they hanging out? What are their living conditions? And most importantly, 'how do I make myself relevant'? Such constant self reflection is key to our approach in reaching out to young people who have refused the support of other professionals or feel let down by other services?.

The 130 young people we have engaged through this method across two years were introduced to our service through thousands of hours of street work during 119 visits to targeted areas.

Through the legacy of our relationship with LBTH Council we have been able to create multi-generational relationships for change in areas like Shadwell. These historic relationships mean that 'elders' in the community legitimise our practice and make establishing relationships with the younger generation significantly easier since they vouch for our previous work, creating a ripple effect for change.



Number of sessions held in a school environment

71 Sessions

Moving to Maybe

When young people start to consider 'maybe' engaging in a change process with us, we transition to targeted street work. Having mapped their local area, this is when the in-depth engagement begins. We relentlessly pursue a relationship for change at this stage with the aim of assessing a young person's need and producing a bespoke intervention plan tailored to them. We also begin to introduce 'taster' sessions at our space to introduce young people to the skills needed to be in employment and education in a environment tailored to provide relapse coaching to ensure continued engagement.

This process has received significant support through our relationships with local partners such as the schools across the key areas of the programme. We have run 71 sessions with multiple young people in their school setting, in many cases ensuring that they do not get excluded and continue to engage in their education.



If i had a problem and didn't have anyone else to go to i'd go to her... I can trust people here. She's actually trying to help me.



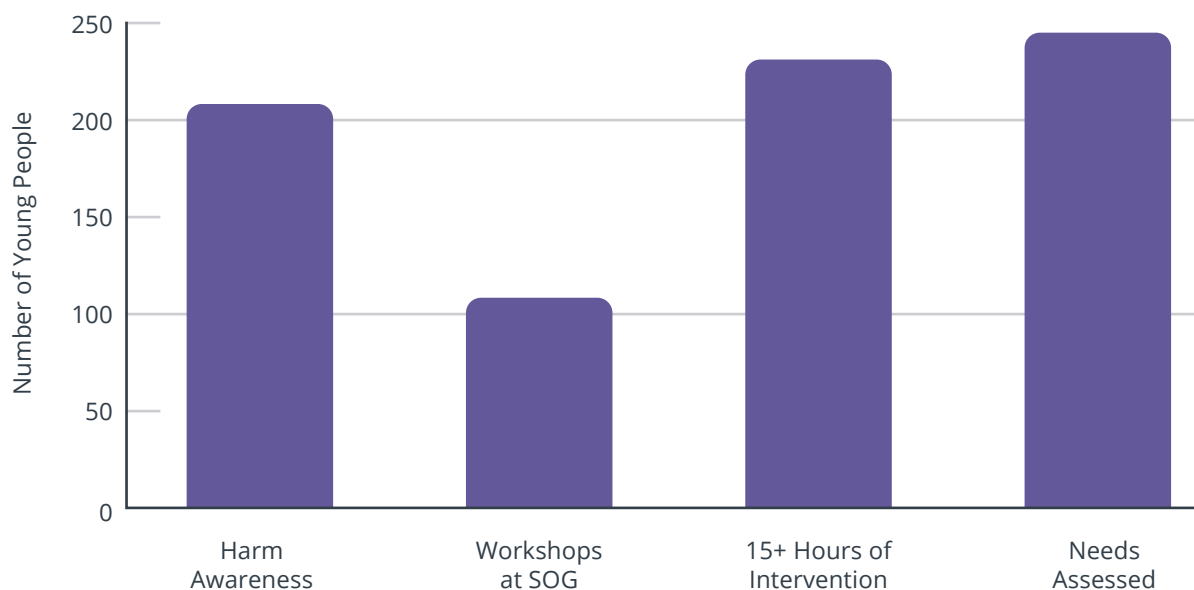
Progress to Planning

At the planning stage young people have begun to establish visions that represent tangible pathways for change. Alongside their Intervention Coach, our Employability team, and our professional mentors, they begin to plan how their vision can be realised. In the TIP project, this has included engagement in social action programmes to positively give back to their communities, partnership with the People Speak to engage on the key subjects impacting their environments, and insight days with employers hosted at our creative space.

Across two years, we have hosted 202 harm awareness workshops on issues such as positive relationships, first responder training for stab wounds, rights-based workshops on Stop and Search procedures, and forums of discussion with local police officers. We have also self-funded career mentors from across a diverse range of industries. In year one, 55 young people availed of this service, growing to 64 in year two.

Alongside this, young people have engaged in the types of employability fairs typically reserved for university-level students. Taking place in our creative space, young people were able to meet with potential employers to explore opportunities and what it could take for them to secure them, whilst gaining insight into industries that may have seemed unattainable until now.

Insert Heading Title





Advancing to Action

As young people begin to action their change, they have already built the resilience needed to change how they belong in their local communities. They have left their comfort zones whilst being supported by their Intervention Coach, at this stage however, they begin to do things for themselves independently. Partnerships with organisations like Berkeley Homes have seen young people progress to paid apprenticeships at this stage of their change journey, whilst for others it has been about navigating their way away from harm and potential entry into the criminal justice system. Alongside this, SOG identified a gap in the provision of bespoke aspirational career advice amongst some young people, particularly those who had recently left school. As a result, we funded and created a mentoring programme that engaging young people with a professional partner from an industry of their choosing. **To date, 55 young people from the TIP are engaged on this service.**

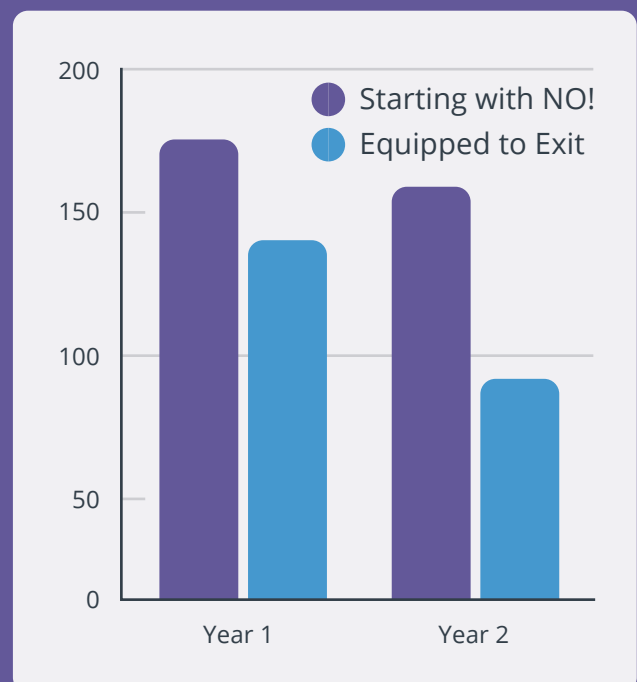
Through the TIP some of our young people were given the opportunity to work on a film about their experiences. *If Only* is inspired by the real lives of our young people, and those advancing into action on their change journey were involved in creating the script and directing the cinematic representation of life as a young adult in Tower Hamlets. The film forms part of a toolkit for Streets of Growth to teach more young people about criminal and sexual exploitation in the borough and how to avoid it/the importance of receiving support.

Equipped to Exit

When young people come from our programme they are ready to independently continue their change journey without our support. As displayed in the images below, these young people become leaders in their community, and have progressed from 'NO!' to speaking in front of Home Office staff and even the Princess of Wales. 136 of the young people engaged on this programme were equipped to exit. As a grassroots organisation, some of our staff have come through our model to employment at the organisation.

In this TIP funding year, one of the young people we engaged progressed to become a member of our Youth Support staff. Jamee had left prison and was looking to turn his life around and give back to his community. Having previously worked with him, we re-engaged him through the TIP programme in the Stepney Green area. He volunteered with us at community events before being offered a trainee role on our team. Although Jamee has extensive 'lived experience' of the issues some young people face growing up in our borough, this has been combined with training in our Starting with 'NO!' model. Jamee exemplifies what we expect from young people as they approach the end of their change journey. He has been able to critically reflect on his experiences and understand the factors that led to some of the decisions he took growing up. In doing so, he has been able to guide other young people through these same decision making processes.

Having completed his time as a Support Worker with us, we are proud to say that Jamee has gone on to work for a partner organisation in the borough and continues to give back to his community by positively engaging at risk young people.



Relapse

A core component of our model is the fact that relapse is a possibility at every step. When young people relapse into harm we re-engage them relentlessly so they do not stray from their change journey. However, it is often not as simple as considering the choices our young people are making.

Criminal and sexual exploitation are all too often the driving forces behind the harm our young people are subjected to, yet we continue to frame these as a 'lifestyle choice' across the borough, particularly for those over 18.

For example, one young person engaged through the TIP was trafficked internationally this year due to street 'debts' accumulated in Tower Hamlets. This young person (19 years old) was kidnapped and forced to travel overseas as a mule for Class A drugs. Streets of Growth brought this to the attention of the police, adult social care, and the Home Office, but no one was willing to perceive the young person's victimhood and provide support. We were left to support the family (and the young person from afar) alone. Indeed a member of our team contacted the police before the young person had arrived at the airport with his 'handler', pleading for them to intervene.

Since the young person had an ongoing investigation into another matter, they were deemed a fugitive and support was not provided. This young man has complex learning needs and is a recognised victim of modern slavery, yet the continued victim-perpetrator culture in our statutory services meant that he has endured untold trauma. Thanks to the tireless work of our team over 12 months, he was finally returned to the UK. However, threats to his life meant that his family had to be moved from the borough. Again, Streets of Growth were unable to foster partnership with any statutory bodies to help facilitate this, and were left to do it alone.

9 Weapons were handed to our team during the programme



Challenges

Despite the successes of the TIP contract, challenges remain, both for young people growing up in Tower Hamlets, and for our team.

Although we have fostered many meaningful partnerships throughout the project, others have been less consistent. Our team continue to struggle to have some of our young people identified as victims of exploitation within the drugs trade despite the fact that these children have been groomed, coerced, and forced into crime. In the previous example, one of our young people was trafficked internationally for a debt due to police drug seizures. However, when staff asked police to intervene they were told that the young man is considered a fugitive. Despite multiple conversations with the police into his kidnapping and trafficking abroad, and evidence that this continues unabated in our borough, police would not launch an investigation.

These coerced actions continue to be seen as rational choices despite the increased use of modern slavery legislation. Although progress has been made on this, when harm reaches the levels of organised crime, “our partnerships fall short”. Instead, I can tell I wrote this section when I was angry about this! Despite reaching out to all relevant statutory services for support, Streets of Growth supported this young man and his family alone throughout his trafficking to return him home safely. Although this is an extreme case, it is symptomatic of ongoing issues with the failure to initiate multi-agency in high risk situations.

These concerns grow once a young person reaches 18. Despite some cases where harms and risk have significantly increased, all services drop away and Streets of Growth are left to provide solo support. Our system continues to have a threshold for vulnerable young people that dictates that, if under 18 they should be protected, if over 18 they become someone society needs to be protected from. This is despite many of these young people being diagnosed with complex needs and having experienced years of traumatic abuse.

All of the achievements of this funding period have come despite our incredibly stretched resources. At a minimum, Streets of Growth needs the capacity to deploy two Intervention Coaches in each of the risk areas of this contract to achieve greater sustained generational change in our communities. This is currently impossible on our budget. Such generational changes also require longer term funding. Our model takes the view that if a young person starts with NO! then it will take roughly 3 years to support them through a change process, yet funding continues to be restricted to 12 month periods.

Lifestyle?

Serious concerns continue with the exploitation of our young people in Tower Hamlets. Many of the those we work with have been through severe victimising events, such as debt bondage, forced labour, cuckooing and human trafficking.

Despite this, the grooming these young people have been subjected to means they do not frame these events as victimising and do not self-identify as victims. This has serious consequences for the safeguarding of our children. For instance, when arrested for possession of drugs, they are asked by police if they have been forced to be involved in crime. However, this approach is naive. In many cases they are either too frightened to say “yes”, or have been convinced that their involvement is voluntary by elders in the community through a prolonged period of grooming. The seizure of drugs from these young people is also exacerbating the cycle of criminality, as they are held in further debt and forced to commit more crimes to pay these off.

After building a relationship for change with these young people, our team eventually hear from them of the force and coercion they are subjected to, and in some cases we have used the National Referral Mechanism to prevent them from entering the criminal justice system.

However, stronger relationships between the police and our service could bring significant change in these areas. Whilst we understand that the police must continue to pursue criminal lines of enquiry for drugs in our borough, this could operate alongside increased referrals to our service to better understand the young person behind ‘no comment’ interviews, and address the root causes of their continued involvement in crime.

Although there are ongoing issues, we have seen remarkable change in how we address sexual exploitation as professionals in the borough. A similar approach is needed for victims of criminal exploitation. We cannot arrest our way out of this problem and Streets of Growth calls for more collaborative working, and less reliance upon the victim- perpetrator divide when addressing the complex needs of these young people.



"They would still make me do it, but they would pay me to make it seem like it's voluntary, that i'm doing it out my own free will... I kept telling them look I don't wanna do this... they would come outta the blue and say, 'hold this' and I would say 'nah'. They'd say 'well you have to anyway. We're telling you. It's not a thing where you have a choice'"



Environment

Although addressing environmental concerns is a key aspect of our Bridging Model, in many cases these are beyond the control of young people, and beyond the capacity of our team. We continue to work with young people who are perceived as at harm because they are constantly 'hanging about' in their estates. Whilst we work with these young people to help them make the correct choices and stay safe in their context, in many cases they are 'hanging about' because they have no where else to go.

A number of our young people are living in overcrowded homes without their own space to do simple things like finish their homework. We have been to home visits with as many as 8 residents in a 2 bedroom flat. These conditions combined with the prevalence of black economies in our deprived communities put our young people at unnecessary risk. Although we are now a contextual safeguarding borough, in practice the contexts our young people are growing up in make safeguarding extremely difficult.



"Poverty becomes the main issue... I would see other people in my school with money to actually eat and what not. Coming in with new designer clothes, new coats what not. In my head I would be thinking, how comes I can't have that?"



Education & Employment

There have been positive examples of progression over the course of this contract when it comes to school exclusions. For instance, we have partnered with Central Foundation Girls' School to work alongside their safeguarding lead to prevent exclusion and increase mainstream reintroduction. 'The House' is a provision inside the school for pupils struggling to maintain a full timetable. Our team have supported 14 girls allocated here to complete their GCSEs this summer, despite fears that this would be impossible upon initial referral.

This partnership is a true representation of the potential of contextual safeguarding. Our Intervention Coaches built relationships with these pupils by running creative arts classes in The House, before this support transitioned to their home and community. Through this, Streets of Growth were able to feedback to the school the reasons why these young people were struggling in class. By addressing these concerns and providing additional support through professional mentors and GCSE tuition, the pupils are now hopefully awaiting their GCSE results.

Through increased provision, this contextual safeguarding approach could be expanded to other schools across the borough.

However, less encouragingly there are continued concerns with the high levels of unassessed special educational needs and disabilities amongst our young people. Frequently, these are also the young people most susceptible to exploitation, but again their behaviour has consistently been labelled as delinquent rather than as a symptom of potential unaddressed needs

The lack of access to the regeneration projects permeating their communities also fuels the black economy in Tower Hamlets. Our young people are not being offered enough career pathways, whilst opportunities to make money illegally are right outside their door.



"As i got older, I started seeing a lot more drug dealing and stuff going on and then, once I was about to finish year 11, someone came up to me and offered me to make money with him".





Abdul's Story

Background:

When Abdul (not his real name) first came in contact with our services he had suffered significant personal loss. His mother had passed away, then his grandmother and grandfather passed shortly after. All of this happened in the course of a year, and was further complicated by his father's ongoing health conditions. Abdul had assumed responsibility for the care of his father and his younger sister, a role he had grown accustomed to at this time his teenage years providing care and support for his mother. Throughout this, Abdul received minimal support for his own grief.

These issues came at a crucial time in Abdul's education, and took a toll on his capacity to perform in school. His grades and behaviour suffered, resulting in him being excluded from school having performed poorly in his exams. Abdul began seeking belonging elsewhere, socialising with older peers on his estate who coerced him into holding drugs for them. Abdul recalls being convinced by these peers that he was the man of the house now, and due to his poor academic achievements, this was his only option. Eventually Abdul was arrested and charged with possession of Class A drugs with intent to supply.

Intervention:

Streets of Growth staff were already aware of Abdul through our previous work on his estate, which gave us a degree of credibility when trying to establish a relationship with him. In time Abdul revealed the extent of his struggles with his mental health, and that he was being criminally exploited, although this is not how he framed it at the time.

Streets of Growth have worked with Abdul to help him reframe his experiences and recognise his own vulnerability. In time, he took part in harm reduction workshops on criminal exploitation. This is where Abdul was able to identify that he was being groomed and exploited. He shared that he was not aware that this was happening, that he thought these people were trustworthy adults, looking out for him after his mother's passing. This disclosure enabled us to initiate the NRM (National Referral Mechanism). Through this, he has been identified as a victim of modern slavery, which will be taken into account in the criminal justice system's response to his charges.

Family Support:

Alongside 1:1 interventions across 12 months, staff have also sought to build a relationship with his family. This helped inform our understanding of Abdul's mental wellbeing with details of family histories of poor mental health. His father also revealed that their relationship had become strained since his mother's passing. We helped his father to perceive the grief Abdul was experiencing and to contextualise the shift in his behaviour. Through these sessions their relationship began to improve, and there has been a huge shift in how they communicate with one another.

Abdul Now:

Since Abdul's engagement with Streets of Growth, he has participated in multiple intervention sessions, social action programs, pre-employability workshops, and work experiences. Abdul has a positive attitude to change, and has grown more confident and resilient. He has found a passion for driving and has passed his theory and practical test. With support from one of our professional mentors, Abdul successfully completed a youth enterprise programme with a local organisation and won £ 300 to start his business in chauffeuring.

While he works on building his business, Abdul is actively applying for apprenticeships and taking part in our pre-employability workshops to continue to upskill himself. Abdul is continuing to work towards making his home a safe space for his dad and his sister, whilst understanding that he must have time for himself in the midst of his responsibilities. Abdul can recognise healthy friendships and has managed to sever ties with those who were exploiting him.

We are continuing our ongoing support for Abdul as he has told us he is not yet ready. However, Abdul has shown significant progress through the support of Streets of Growth, overcoming numerous challenges and making strides towards a positive future. Continued support and intervention are essential to maintain this path and ensure long-term success and wellbeing for him and his family.



Streets of Growth

In summary, it should be clear that Streets of Growth's team continue to go above and beyond to serve the young people of Tower Hamlets. Throughout this TIP funding period our team have strived to ensure that no young person is left behind in our community. This includes those young people often labelled as offenders, often excluded, and often not considered a part of our community.

Our young people inspire us everyday to do more, but our efforts continue to be somewhat constrained. We are firm in our belief that we offer revolutionary intervention practices in our community, but we cannot do it alone.

Too often we hear that we do not have the solutions to the issues our young Londoners face growing up here. Whether this is serious youth violence, CCE, CSE, or county lines. However, solutions are being provided everyday by the tireless efforts of our frontline staff. Consistently we see our young people defy the odds and not only change, but become changemakers in their communities. Our trusted adult model facilitates this, but systemic change is needed in how our approach is funded to ensure we can grow our practice, and support the young people of Tower Hamlets to grow with us.



Streets of Growth

Hayloft Point,
6 Middlesex Street
London, E1 7EX
United Kingdom

Contact:

0207 515 7356
mail@streetsofgrowth.org
referrals@streetsofgrowth.org
streetsofgrowth.org

