



**osmani**  
TRUST

# Changing Futures

## IMPACT REPORT

2022 & 2023



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# Introduction

Changing Futures (CF) aims to empower and change the lives of marginalised/NEET young people (YP) from Tower Hamlets, who are involved in gangs, youth crime, drugs and alcohol abuse, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The project is funded by Islamic Relief UK as part of their initiative to support communities in the UK.

The objective is to change attitudes and behaviour, raise self-esteem, improve resilience, reduce involvement in gangs, crime and ASB, reduce violence committed by YP, reduce drugs and alcohol use, increase positive involvement and volunteering, and enable YP to become job ready and progress towards training and employment.

The project uses our award-winning peer mentoring model to target groups of youths in a known crime and ASB hotspot area, usually in estates. Our qualified and experienced staff, with their local knowledge, engage and mentor YP to think critically, understand the consequences of their action and behaviour, help them overcome their barriers and challenges, mediate between groups, and support them to progress into training and employment. Our staff build trusted relationships, act as positive role models, create peer leaders and inspire YP to change their lives over an 18 month period.



# Success and Highlights

**114 YP**

engaged in the programme

**67 YP volunteered**

and became peer workers

55 peer workers attended team-building exercises enhancing their skills to work as a team & bring out collective ideas

**320**

detached youth work sessions carried out in crime/ASB hotspots

**250**

one-to-one mentoring sessions delivered

**11 went into paid employment**

for 6+months, after completing the Pret Rising Stars programme

1 Peer Worker progressed and is working for UPS

1 Peer Worker progressed and is working full time for Osmani Trust

1 Peer Worker progressed to working in the security industry



## 30 peer workshops delivered

on issues facing YP i.e. gang culture, knife crime, crime and punishment, confidence and self-esteem communication and social skills, and more

**46 YP supported** with CV-making and employability skills

16 completed Security Industry Authority (SIA) course

3 Community events organised by 67 Peer Workers/Volunteers, altogether **over 1200 residents attended**

1 film made on the Stepney Peer Group

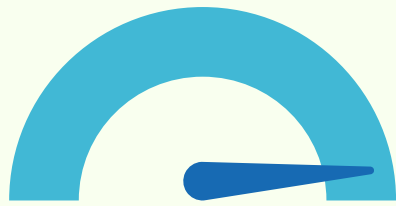
3 completed Food Hygiene Level 1 course

13 completed First Aid training

**41 YP** involved in gang-related, high-risk violence mediated on an individual basis

8 group conflict mediation conducted, **over 200 YP** involved in the conflicts

# Outputs



**114** of 120  
target achieved

No. of at-risk young people participating in Changing Futures Programme in Target Hotspot Cohort 1



**930** of 450  
target achieved

No. of at-risk young people reached and engaged in through neighbourhood events and diversionary activities and sports



**83** of 60  
target achieved

No. of at risk young people participating in informal educational workshops



**235** of 150  
target achieved

No. of young people benefitting from conflicts resolved in 25 peer/gang conflicts and tensions

# Outcomes

No. of young people reduced violence

114

Reduced involvement in gangs/peer groups that are involved in ASB, Crime etc.

114

No of YP designing, leading and participating in volunteering

67

No. young people designing, leading and participating in community events/activities

67

No of YP Improved self-esteem and resilience

114

No. of YP Reduced drug and alcohol misuse

114

No. of YP Increased job readiness

46

# Background of Peers Groups

## Peer Group 1: Stepney Peer Group (Stepney & St. Dunstan's Ward)

The Stepney Peer Group was a group made up of 61 hard to reach YP between the ages of 14–20. Around 60% were NEET and had been out of education, employment and training since leaving school and for some almost 2 years. The group was made up of mainly Bangladeshi youths as well as those from Albanian, African and Somali backgrounds. A small number of the group were perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.



## Peer Group 2: Bethnal Green Peer Group (Bethnal Green Ward)

The Bethnal Green Peer Group was a group made up of 30 hard to reach YP between the ages of 14–20. Around 45% were NEET and had been out of education, employment, and training since leaving school. The group was made up of mainly Bangladeshi youths as well as those from African and English backgrounds. A small number of the group were perpetrators and victims of fraudulent crime and robberies.



### Peer Group 3: Shadwell Peer Group (Shadwell Ward)

The Shadwell Peer Group was a group made up of 23 hard to reach YP between the ages of 14-20. Around 50% were NEET and had been out of education, employment, and training since leaving school and for almost 2 years. The group was made up of mainly Bangladeshi youths who congregated around the Shadwell ward, in high numbers. A small number of the group were perpetrators of drug-related activities, grooming, and knife crime.

The majority of YP from all 3 peer groups were living in social housing with their parents, a small proportion were from single parent families. The groups had negative role models in the family – immediate members of the family were involved in crime and drugs related activity.



# Peer Group Issues

## All 3 peer groups were involved in similar lifestyle and issues, including:

- ▶ Using Class B substances, cannabis, NOx, lean and alcohol misuse
- ▶ Around 60% from Stepney Peer Group were involved in ASB and had 2 or more ASB warnings, making the family at risk of losing their tenancy
- ▶ Around 60% from Bethnal Green Peer Group were involved in robberies and had 2 or more robbery incidents, putting the group at risk of being perpetrators and victims
- ▶ Around 50% from Shadwell Peer Group were involved in knife crime and had 2 or more violent incidents, putting the group at risk at risk of being perpetrators and victims
- ▶ Conflicts and altercations with YP from other Estates (Stepney, Shadwell, Blackwall, Globe Town, Cranbrook Estate and Cannon Street Road)
- ▶ Supplying drugs and NOx within the peer group and to local YP from the nearby schools
- ▶ Some carrying and using knives
- ▶ Some driving illegally
- ▶ Committing fraudulent activities with electrical items e.g. scooter, PlayStation

# Challenges Faced by Peer Groups

## All 3 peer groups faced similar challenges:

- History of youth crime, drug supply, and violence in their area – a hotbed for more crime and violence
- High knife crime and ASB area
- Drug misuse by YP and older youths and related crime
- Drug gangs operating in the area, grooming and recruiting YP
- Previous conflicts between/with other estates in the borough meant each peer group was the target of revenge attacks, robberies, and racially profiled
- Bethnal Green a hotspot for robberies carried out by YP from other estates e.g. Cranbrook estate & Hackney (London Fields)
- Shadwell a hotspot for drug dealing, very busy with the train stations and commuters passing through. The area is highly densely populated with lots of social housing
- Stuck in a cycle of NEET, misusing drugs, NOx, lean, alcohol, committing small crimes, some already heavily involved in the drug business, fighting YP from other estates, getting ASBO warnings, and going towards becoming hardened criminals/drug suppliers
- No support/meaningful intervention to help them move forward
- No positive role models in the family or outside
- Poor outlook and attitudes to life and work



# Our Intervention

## A) Mapping Exercise/Tool (1 month)

Using crime statistics from Tower Hamlets council and police we identified the main crime hotspots and areas for concern. We visited the areas, mapping assets and people. The main hotspot in Stepney was the Spider Park/Copley Street area where YP congregated in high numbers. In Bethnal Green it was the Middleton Green/Columbia Road area and in Shadwell it was the Bigland Street car park/Shadwell Gardens area where YP congregated in high numbers.







## **B) Relationship Building (3 months)**

In the first 3 months, we delivered 4 detached sessions a week in each area, familiarising ourselves with the YP and building trust. We used common grounds to break ice and start the discussions, such as family, friends, school background and similar experiences of growing up in Tower Hamlets and the shared challenges everyone faces.

On occasions, we brought them out of their areas, took them out for a meal and during the school holidays we invited them to use our Youth Space, in the Osmani Centre and Minerva. The safe space enabled them to open up to staff and get to know them better. We collected feedback on what YP wanted to achieve through the programme and we co-produced activities, workshops and excursions and external opportunities to help them progress from their current situation.

The initial reaction was mixed. The influential peers welcomed our programme and said it was something that was much needed in the area. However, others were much more suspicious, and it was harder to engage them on the programme at the beginning.

## **C) Medium to Long Term Engagement (14 months)**

In the next 14 months we continued delivering every week, 1 youth club session and 1 detach session with each peer group, meeting the YP on their territory. We also started a number of other interventions to further cement the relationship and work with YP to make the changes in their attitudes, behaviour and thinking.

For all 3 peer groups the delivery model was similar but there were some noticeable differences due to the nature of the group, the venue, intervention and support that was available locally.

# Youth Space/Clubs

From the onset, YP told us they wanted a safe space where they can go in the evening instead of hanging out in the street/estates/park. For the Stepney Peer Group, liaising with Swan Housing, the Changing Futures team were able to secure the Exmouth Hall, in the Exmouth Estate for a youth club. For the Bethnal Green Peer Group, liaising with Tower Hamlets Community Housing, we were able to secure the Minerva centre for a youth club. For the Shadwell Peer Group, we were able to secure the Osmani Centre for them to use as a youth club. In each venue, we started operating 1 night a week, delivering a general youth club, including boxing, cooking lessons, 1-2-1 mentoring and workshops.

The youth clubs enabled us to bring YP into a safe space and work with them more intensively, providing advice and guidance and giving them the support they needed. The 1-2-1 mentoring allowed us to identify their needs on an individual basis, allowing us to work towards realistic outputs and outcomes for each YP. We used Teen Star to understand their thinking and behaviour at the beginning and supported them to change. We worked on changing their attitudes about themselves, what they can achieve and how they can move forward in life.

The 10 workshops we delivered, were tailored to the challenges the YP faced and included Violence reduction, Consequences of violence and insight into the judicial system, Gang culture, Knife crime, Self-esteem and building confidence, Entrepreneurship and NOx Know the risks.



# Community Events

To launch the 2 new youth clubs in Exmouth and Minerva, we organised community events for YP and residents of the Exmouth Estate and Minerva Estate. The events provided 30 YP from Stepney Peer Group and 20 YP from Bethnal Green Peer Group the opportunity to volunteer and plan, organise and deliver the event. It enabled YP to learn about their strengths and weaknesses and gave them the opportunity to enhance their skills.

The Exmouth community event engaged with 66 families and over 400 residents attended the community event. The Minerva community event engaged with 70 families and over 450 residents attended the community event.

The Shadwell Peer Group supported in organising the Tower Hamlets Community Cup – an annual football tournament engaging 400 children and YP. The event provided 17 YP the opportunity to volunteer and plan, organise and deliver the event. All 3 events empowered YP, enhanced their skills set, gave them responsibility and pride in themselves.

The community events successfully showcased YP in a positive light in front of local residents and other adults, and enabled positive relationships with local residents. The YP also benefitted from the respect shown towards them by the community. This improved their self-respect and pride in their community.



# Mediation

During the 2 years, the Changing Futures team mediated in 8 large scale conflicts involving 20+ youths in Stepney, Globe Town, Shadwell, Bethnal Green & Roman Road. On each occasion, the team attended the scenes and intervened, separating the fighting groups, talking to the main leaders and providing guidance to those involved to come to a compromise and stop the violence on the spot. As part of our mediation process, a meeting was called thereafter to bring the fighting parties/parents/older siblings together, to come to a mutual understanding and stop the conflict from escalating further. Furthermore, the team mediated in 41 high risk individuals involved in conflicts.

# Increase Job readiness

The Changing Futures team were keen on providing advice and guidance to support YP to move into training and employment. During the 2 years we achieved the following:

- ▶ **46 YP were supported with CV-making and employability skills**
- ▶ **19 enrolled onto the Pret Rising Stars programme**
- ▶ **11 completed the programme and were in employment for 6+months**
- ▶ **13 completed first aid course**
- ▶ **1 YP secured employment with fast food restaurant**
- ▶ **1 YP secured employment with Osmani Trust**
- ▶ **1 YP secured employment within the security industry**
- ▶ **16 completed Security Industry Authority (SIA) course**
- ▶ **3 completed Food Hygiene course**



# Sports/Football/Boxing

In addition to the detached and youth club sessions, we also provided additional football, boxing and weightlifting sessions for the peer groups.



# Excursions & Residentials

To broaden YP's horizon and outlook on life, the team organised excursions to take YP out of their local environment. We encouraged YP to take the lead, volunteer and plan the trips. They learned about the administrative duties involved in planning an excursion such as researching, carrying out risk assessments, making travel arrangements, and overall keeping YP safe. Around 90% of the YP had not gone on any excursion or left Tower Hamlets. To build volunteer peer workers confidence, experience and to keep them engaged, we organised 2 residential trips for them. We organised 17 excursions and trips from bowling, laser tag, go karting, paint balling & restaurant visits.

# Case Studies

## Case Study 1

### **ML, a 16-year-old British Bangladeshi young person, from Stepney Ward**


ML joined our service in 2022, having been found guilty of numerous offenses including possession of a knife, ASB & assault. He was an influential member of the Stepney Peer Group, and we targeted him to become a peer worker.

While interacting with ML in our detached sessions and building a relationship with him, we came to learn that ML was groomed by older youths and was influenced into a negative lifestyle. ML was making the wrong decisions at an early stage of his life. The Changing Futures team worked on ML's skills such as timekeeping and being presentable. We encouraged him to be a peer worker and supported and guided him to take on the role and develop his skills. ML displayed a good attitude towards learning new skills and a willingness to change his life. He encouraged many of his peers around him to register and engage in the Changing Futures programme.

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“The programme helped me by providing opportunities which I would not have had access to due to my upbringing and surroundings. My mentor helped me to change my attitudes towards life and supported me to move away from negative peers and activities. I learned to think about others and developed empathy for the community and its needs. I was involved in lot of conflicts, but Changing Futures has helped me to resolve these and make me and the community safer. I can truly say the programme has changed my life.”

”



ML was given the task of helping staff with running the Exmouth Youth Club. He undertook responsibilities such as helping staff with setting up, carrying out risk assessments, motivating peers to attend, planning delivery, delivering cooking sessions, planning trips, delivering community events, and general admin duties. This allowed ML to develop a range of skills while still receiving 1-2-1 mentoring to help him continue the journey of change.

ML performed well helping the Changing Futures team meet their targets and carried on volunteering as a peer worker throughout the year to further develop himself. ML completed First aid training, and a Food Hygiene course and continued to volunteer in 2023.

Fast forward to 2024, ML is now 18, and he was offered a part-time role at the Changing Futures programme. He is working full-time at Osmani Trust, half his time on Changing Futures, and half the time on another project called Second Chance. ML is an excellent addition to the Changing Futures team as we have managed to recruit someone who understands the challenges local young people face as well as understand/know how the project is delivered. ML is one of our best success stories; from being a marginalised young person to a peer worker and then to becoming a full time staff at Osmani Trust.



## Case Study 2


### **SA, a 16-year-old British Bangladeshi young person, from Bethnal Green Ward**

SA joined our service in November 2022, having been found guilty of numerous offences including possession of a knife and drugs. He was involved in fraudulent activities, robberies and gang-related violence. He was an influential member of the Bethnal Green Peer Group, and we targeted him to become a peer worker.

While interacting with SA in our detached sessions and building a relationship with him, we came to learn that SA was groomed by older youths and was influenced into a negative lifestyle. SA was making the wrong decisions at an early stage of his life. SA at the time had a negative mindset due to his drug addiction, environment and peers. Due to his constant needs, his mental health was in bad state, and it affected his behaviour in the community and around his peers. His involvement in violence and drug addiction was also making him experience paranoia as he didn't have any safe spaces other than his home. His family relationships were strained due to his parents being against his lifestyle and drug addiction. This also affected his younger siblings at home as they were exposed to drug misuse through his behaviour.

We also supported SA to engage in Minerva Youth club in order to reduce his time towards drug misuse and ASB. Our mentoring also played a big role in order to make SA understand the risks, harm and damage that can be done through drugs misuse. SA said he was a target from local authorities and other gangs from different estates because he frequently visited the hotspot areas frequently. This led to his mindset to be negative and look for safety in the wrong places putting himself at risk.





SA was given the task of supporting staff with running the Minerva Youth Club. He undertook responsibilities such as helping staff with setting up, carrying out risk assessments, motivating peers to attend, planning delivery, delivering cooking sessions, planning trips, delivering community events, and general admin duties. This allowed SA to develop a range of skills while still receiving 1-2-1 mentoring support to help him continue the journey of change. SA displayed gratitude and gradually started developing a healthier mindset.

SA performed well helping the Changing Futures team meet their targets and continued volunteering as a peer worker throughout the year to further develop himself. SA completed the Pret Rising Stars employment programme, a six-month paid work placement. SA completed his mentoring sessions improving his confidence and self-esteem. His relationship with Changing Futures staff improved and he was breaking down barriers and opening new ones. SA's mindset and thinking was progressing and improved, he was ready to be part of the wider society and contribute positively. SA reduced his cannabis intake, thus reducing his involvement in drug misuse. SA also displayed commitments in making positive choices and shown eagerness towards finding legal work.

Fast forward to 2024, SA is now 18 and has moved onto working in the security industry and turned his back to fraudulent activities, robberies and gang-related violence.





## Case Study 3

### **NH, a 16-year-old British Bangladeshi young person, from Shadwell Ward**

NH joined our service in 2023, having been found guilty of numerous offenses including possession of Drugs & ASB warnings from local enforcement officers. He was an influential member of the Shadwell Peer Group, and we targeted him as a young person who required extra support.

While interacting with NH in our detached sessions and building a relationship with him, we came to learn that NH was groomed by older youths and was influenced into a Negative lifestyle. NH was making the wrong decisions at an early stage of his life. The Changing Futures team worked on NH's skills such as timekeeping and being presentable. We encouraged him to engage in our mentoring sessions every week to understand his needs & provide him further support & guidance and develop his skills. NH displayed a good attitude towards learning new skills, receiving constructive support & and a willingness to change his current circumstances. He encouraged many of his peers to register & engage in the Changing Futures programme.

NH was given 1-2-1 mentoring support with producing a CV, job search, applying for jobs and developing his job interview skills. Staff discussed topics like, common questions that come in interviews, body language, communication skills and self-presentation. NH Managed to secure an interview with a fast food restaurant and was offered a paid job there.

During our youth club sessions, NH undertook responsibilities such as helping staff with setting up, motivating peers to attend, planning delivery, delivering cooking sessions, planning trips, helping to deliver community events, and general admin duties. This allowed NH to develop a range of skills and he was still receiving 1-2-1 mentoring to help him continue the journey of change.

Fast forward to 2024, NH is now 18 and managed to sustain his employment. He has been promoted to the role of team leader. His attitude to life has changed, alongside abstaining from drugs and ASB-related issues.

# Gallery







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