



*"I think here I have been given the tools to help deal with my stress like the yoga and self care"*

## **PROVIDING SAFE SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO MOVE FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING.**

Young people faced increased stress during the pandemic so in response KORI in collaboration with The Ubele Initiative and Efficacy Eva developed the Blooming Minds pilot project, focussed on 14-17 year olds, specifically referred for support from across London. The aim of the project is to strengthen their foundations by providing needed interventions, wellness techniques, new friendships and recuperative respite trips to new spaces.

Their learning and development was facilitated through youth work, creative facilitation, drama therapy, wellness learning and gaining togetherness through sharing new experiences; A day trip to Liverpool and a three day residential in Kent.

- Increased wellness
- Decreased isolation
- Opportunity readiness
- Increased social-mobility

All of the group had vulnerabilities in their backgrounds affecting their progress including: special needs, attending CAHMS, refugees and social services support. The young people were from predominantly black or minority ethnic backgrounds. They were referred by parents, siblings and from KORI's partnerships with Haringey Community Gold, Global Generation, Justforkidslaw.org, Church Lane Family Well-Being Centre and Assisted Homes CIC.

The referral process involved connecting with parents and the referral organisations to better understand the needs of each young person registered. The issues identified included low self-esteem, anxiety, isolation from peers, global delay, autism, English development, victims of sexual incidents, suicide attempts.

Each young person's situation was considered individually. The programme manager in KORI created a theory of change for each young person, identifying the interventions needed.

### **DESIRED OUTCOMES**





## INTERVENTIONS INCLUDED

- Supporting parents to work with school to implement Educational Health Care Plan review findings
- Matching 4 young people with wellbeing mentors
- Referring mother and daughter for counselling to IAPT at the Whittington Health NHS Trust
- Supporting 2 young people with their college applications
- Finding work experience for young person with autism
- Providing language development for 2 young people

## 2 CASE STUDIES

**1. 17-year-old, interested in mapping areas, natural environments, building friendships and new experiences. Impacted by Isolation - no friendships. Adverse to writing. High coping autism.**

**Approach** Discussions with parent and youth group to fully understand the young persons needs. Matching with an industry mentor who works in environmental development. Invitation to work preparation at Mott Macdonald's engineering company. Full preparation for all trips. Engaging in workshops through pair and group work. Consistent follow up with parent throughout the project.

**2. 14-year-old, high emotional intelligence, articulate, leadership qualities. Home and sexual incident impacting mental health. Low interest in school, low trust of others, low self-esteem.**

**Discussions** with carers to fully understand the young persons needs and what has been done to support her. Matching with a well-being mentor for up to 18 months. Supporting the sister who is the main carer, to implement interventions in school. Encouraging leadership and speaking out in workshops. Consistent follow up with carers throughout the project.

## FACILITATORS

**The KORl team of facilitators have worked extensively with vulnerable young people and have a range of relevant lived experiences.**

**Odiri Ighamre** | Supervision and management

**Laurie Fitzgerald** | Youth worker, community artist, wellness facilitator

**Zikko Archer** | Youth worker, community artist

**Jordan James** | Detached Youth worker

**Dr Sireita Mullings** | Visual Sociologist, community artist



90% of Young people strongly agreed that time out of the city was important. Stating:

- *“Taking time out helps me to recuperate”*
- *“It helps me to find out how I am truly feeling about my stresses”*
- *“It means I get to find a new perspective on things”*

## ACTIVITIES

1. Evaluation of needs and theory of change created for all young people.
2. Mentoring match for those that needed it.
3. Signposting to other services according to need.
4. On-going sharing of outcomes on social media and with partners, parents and carers.
5. Workshop one – teaching wellness techniques and connecting the group.
6. Liverpool Trip – Visiting slavery museum, China Town and meeting Fire Fit Community youth organisation to understand their work.
7. Workshop 2 - Visual Communication - developing individual and group communication.
8. Residential in Kent 3 days: drama therapy, yoga, art, cooking, wilderness skills and relaxing.
9. One to ones.
10. Closing meal.

Hosted in a space belonging to Global Generation in Kings Cross, we began the project with 12 young people who attended the first meet up workshop on the 12th of February. The sole purpose of this workshop, led by youth leader Laurie Fitzgerald, was to introduce the group to each other and begin to give them techniques to help diffuse the anxiety many of them were struggling with. They shared that they were stressed by these areas of their lives:

*Exams, money, gaming, appearance, health, relationships, safety, language, culture, communication with parents, career, school, friends, public transport, school work, myself, unemployment, mental health, new school, cancer.*



*“The residential has been great but the time here is not forever - my stresses are still waiting for me at home”*



100% of Young People strongly agreed that over this project they had developed new friendships they would take with them outside of the project. This was because:

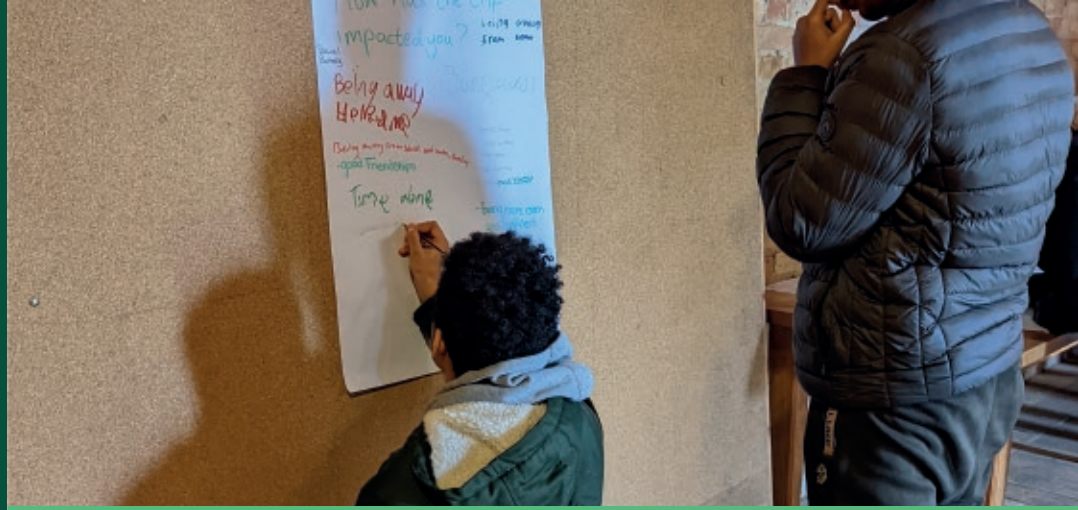
- *“The 24/7 time spent on the residential means I can really get to know people”*
- *“The different meet ups and trips of the project has given me time to deepen the friendships “*
- *“I hit that breaking point when the image I came with when meeting strangers eventually dropped and I could just be myself”*

On the 16th of February three youth workers travelled with the group to Liverpool. The journey allowed time for conversation. They were excited by the trip, keen to see another part of the country and to hear a new accent. The morning was spent in the slavery museum in Merseyside, a trip that triggered important conversations about Black History being part of world history. After a long lunch the group visited the Fire Fit Youth community in Toxteth. They shared the history of Toxteth and its multicultural community. Two of their young leaders shared their personal challenges into leadership roles. The group really started to build friendships on this trip, chatting non-stop all the way back to London.

On the 19th of March the group eagerly came together for another workshop, this time led by Visual Sociologist, Dr Sireita Mullings. The group had now grown to 14. In the workshop they sourced and shared images from their phone that expressed their identity, and they took photos that visually translated the issues they cared about such as structural racism, creativity and acceptance.

On the 25th to the 27th the group travelled to The Quadrangle in Shoreham. After a short walk through the countryside they were greeted by a prepared fire. There the leaders asked them to create a community agreement for the trip whilst they roasted marshmallows. They were also divided into cooking groups to provide meals for each other over the three-day trip. The cooking activity enabled great conversations and lots of jokes.

The first full day began with a long hike into the country, a new shared experience that gave them time to build their relationships through exercise and relaxation. Later in the day a yoga practitioner arrived to deliver a session. For 90% of the group it was the first time they had experienced yoga. They were taught mindfulness techniques such as how to do a body scan and extend their breathing to combat anxiety.



*"In London my stress was just building and building - this project gave me a chance to recharge my battery"*

Their time together was threaded with games led by the youth leaders that enabled the group to get to know each other on a deeper level. They also had free time to relax in the space, play music and take naps.

The residential was a great success, by the last day the young people reflected on their strengths and weaknesses together and shared their goals, reflecting on any barriers.

### **How have the trips impacted you?**

- Allowed me to recharge my social battery
- Being away from school and family has been really nice
- Given me happiness and left me feeling fresh
- Given me time alone to think
- Helped me be more calm and confident
- Stress free, time to reflect, time alone, self awareness, confidence boost
- Made new friendships, taking time to slow down, deeper appreciation on the small things
- Stress management
- Realising problems back home and how nice it is being away
- A break from stress
- Being away from home

### **Favourite Part of the residential trip?**

- Sitting in the sun, Being in the big barn, Girls slumber party
- Hiking!
- Cooking together
- Being in the Barn
- Yoga
- The Sun and dancing - Hiking and music
- Sleeping
- Having hot showers
- Dancing at the girl's sleep-over
- Marshmallows on the fire
- Going to the village shop
- All of the activities
- Bedtime
- Making friends

The pilot project's closing activity was a shared meal at Nando's. The young people spoke out all through the project about the need for the project to continue. The project has impacted them positively but it is clear that to carry out and implement all needed interventions a longer project is needed. This group can now play a full part in developing the project and supporting new young people.

Going forward KORl would hope to build the present group to twenty-five young people and take them through a full year providing two more city trips, two more countryside residentials, four workshops and continued interventions, signposting, mentoring matching and one to ones.

"I have a mentor now that is helping me think things through, that is a good thing trust me"

