



MENTOR
UK

MUSLIM YOUTH INVOLVEMENT PROJECT

Evaluation Report | Ruth Joyce MBE

Muslim Youth Involvement Project

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Programme Evaluator Ruth Joyce MA OBE

Mentor UK:

Founded in 1998, Mentor UK is part of Mentor International and is a London based charity working to prevent drug related harm to children and young people within the UK.

Mentor UK seeks to:

- Influence drug misuse prevention policy
- Support good practice in drug misuse prevention
- Support drug misuse prevention research
- Increase the profile of drug misuse prevention

Right Start:

Founded in 2003, Right Start Foundation is based in Birmingham and aims to assist in the integration of ethnic minority groups, along with the youth community in particular, into the wider society.

Right Start achieves this particularly through their research and development programmes.

Programme Background:

Mentor UK submitted a proposal to the Department for Education and Skills (now DCSF) Children, Young People and Families Grant Programme in January 2007. Mentor UK were the programme originators and designed and submitted the original bid as part of their Young People Drugs Development Programme. This meant that Mentor UK held the overall lead and were the main financial managers.

The programme proposed to employ a Muslim Youth Worker within Mentor UK to work with local groups in Tower Hamlets and Birmingham to recruit, train and support a network of young Muslims aged 12-20 years.

Programme Aims:

To develop the skills, confidence and self esteem of young Muslims, providing them with the knowledge and skills required to make healthy life choices and play an active part in their local communities.

Ensure that the views of young Muslims are heard by Mentor UK, our partners and policy makers and planners responsible for developing drug and alcohol prevention services nationally.

It was also intended that the young people would develop the resources that come from the programme and lead on launching and disseminating both these and the programme findings.

The Programme Outline:

The programme to involve:

- Recruiting a Muslim Youth Worker
- Identifying two local youth/ faith based agencies to work with
- Recruiting young people
- Consulting young people
- Training young people - 6 x half day sessions over 6 weeks covering
- Group work and communication skills
- Assertiveness and confidence self esteem
- Health promotion
- Substance misuse prevention
- Community participation/ 'having your say'
- 'What matters to you' session

- Running local activities – once a month for 8 months
- Holding a national residential weekend for the trained young people from both areas to come together to develop a resource pack for other young Muslim Youth concerning how to stay healthy and have your say
- Publishing and disseminating the resource pack
- Evaluating the project.

Programme amendments:

Mentor was unable to recruit the Muslim Youth leader post and it was decided to utilise links that had already been made by Mentor International and Right Start by using existing staff of Right Start to run the programme.

This difficulty around initial recruitment was critical to the overall timing of the programme, reducing the actual delivery time (April 2007 – 2008) by at least two calendar months. Programme start up began in June 2007 and this delay meant that compromises had to be made all along the way to allow for this reduction within the financial year.

During the initial meetings between Mentor and Right Start it was also agreed that the 12-20 age range was too great, making it very difficult to meet the needs of the whole group. It was thus agreed to amend the ages to 12 – 18 when it was felt more likely to be able to meet the range of needs of the young people.

The programme was also amended by taking a group of the young people to Westminster where they met with three key politicians to discuss with them their views on drugs and drug prevention.

It was also agreed to spread the local delivery over a shorter period of time to make sure that the work was completed within the programme lifetime.

Evaluation proposal:

An external evaluator was to be appointed at the outset of the programme, in order to work with the programme manager to establish what needed to be evaluated and what data needed to be collected and from whom in order for the evaluator to have the information necessary to undertake the evaluation.

Central to the brief of the evaluator was the need to gather evaluation data directly from the young Muslim members of the programme. As part of the project plan the evaluator was to agree with the programme manager how and when the data should be collected. It is likely that data collection would include surveys in the relevant language) one -to -one interviews and focus groups with the young Muslims taking part.

Evaluation Programme:

It was agreed that there would be a range of methods used for the evaluation which would be in two parts. Part 1 (see Appendix 1) would be undertaken with participants and youth leaders during the residential weekend. Part 2 (see Appendix 2) with the management team after both the weekly course and the residential weekend had been completed.

Part 1

Questionnaire: (see Appendix 3)

28 Young People: all young people who attended the residential weekend took part and all completed the questionnaires.

Focus group (residential young people)(see Appendix 4)

Six of the 28 young people were interviewed: 14 year old girl from Birmingham; 18 year old girl from Birmingham; 18 year old boy from Birmingham; 18 year old boy from Birmingham; 14 year old boy from London; 16 year old boy from Birmingham; 12 year old boy from London.

Interviews: (residential course leaders)

Seven staff members: 3 interviewed; one from London; two from Birmingham.

Interviews with the management teams at both Mentor UK and Right Start took part.

Part 2

This part of the evaluation was intended to focus on the Advisory Group and the work that group undertook to support the programme. The Group never actually got off the ground, so apart from examining the reasons with the programme leaders, the evaluation plan did not take place as proposed.

Evaluation Results:

Young People: Questionnaire: General Feedback:

The programme was received very positively by all the 28 young people who took part. Both elements of the programme (the club based workshops and the residential weekend) were rated very highly overall and all participants clearly valued the opportunities they had been offered.

The first aim of the programme appeared to be well met with very positive outcomes, particularly regarding their self assessments of their ability to work as part of a team, raised self awareness, levels of drug knowledge and information and their overall understanding of broader drug and health promotion issues.

They identified that the programme had helped them particularly through offering information about drugs, drug use and drug users, had increased their confidence and being part of a team.

The vast majority said that the programme had helped them work well as a group member. They rated 'respecting the views of others' and 'being able to express their views more clearly' as two key skills that had been improved by the programme. They rated 'using a clear voice'; 'looking directly at the person you are talking to' and 'using positive body language' as being the key assertion skills they had been taught.

The majority said that the programme had increased their confidence, particularly by feeling better about presentation skills and by having the opportunity to practice saying what they felt.

When asked about the concept of health promotion, the majority of young people recognised that it was more about increasing knowledge and using skills to influence behaviours, rather than being told what to do and having decisions made for you.

All participants commented on the positive ways the course had influenced their choices through increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables in their diets, taking more exercise, eating less processed foods and less snacks and generally adopting a healthier lifestyle.

When asked to consider why people may use illegal drugs there were clearly ranked categories:

- Pressure from the group
- To manage stress
- Family problems
- For fun
- To look cool

There was a strongly held view that family stress and family breakdown were important in making the choice to use both legal and illegal drugs.

When asked of ways to help users stop using, there was an overwhelming response for increased advice and education via appropriate youth service provision.

This was reinforced by their responses to who a drug user could approach for advice, when the majority identified primarily youth services and secondly 'talk to Frank' – a message that has clearly got across.

The young people expressed very clear and commonly held views that there were insufficient diversionary activities and drug education and information opportunities available to them within schools and their communities. They were highly supportive of a need for the continuation of a voluntary based programme both for themselves and for other young Muslim people.

At the time of this evaluation the second aim relating to the activities that would ensure that voices of the young people being heard by key national groups had not been completed. Some of the elements had been started and the planning was in place for the rest of the activities were in place.

They identified that they would like the course to continue to benefit other young people, let more people know about the programme and to make sure that 'having fun' was kept well at the head in planning terms.

The Focus Group:

The opportunity to discuss questions with each other in a focus group produced more detailed feedback, although the positive responses were still predominant throughout.

All participants expressed the view that drug education in school were nonexistent or of poor quality. They felt they had received low level and poor quality information with little, if any, opportunity to discuss the implications of drug use in their, and the wider, community.

All participants agreed that the opportunities to meet new people and take part in new activities, especially the ones that were of a more physical outdoor nature was very good for relationship building. The outside activity programmes were by far the most popular of all the activities.

They all welcomed the knowledge based workshops, which offered both new information and cleared up a lot of misinformation they had gathered over the years. The more interactive workshops were noted as being particularly good, with the less active, more didactic workshops being the least popular.

Those that attended the event at Parliament were full of praise and really saw the value of experiencing democracy in action. They all agreed that this especially had taught them something new and was an opportunity that should be available to more young people.

The contacts and network at their Youth Clubs was clearly an important point of information for this and other opportunities and / or projects. There was a general view that their families and parents felt that things promoted via this route meant that they would be seen as worthwhile, safe and were to be trusted.

The Youth Club also played a big part in offering activities for them after school and at weekends, but they did express a need for services to be open more during holidays and to be open later in the evenings, especially as they got older.

The 'no cost' element of the programme also played a big part in their family decisions to take part.

They expressed strong views that programmes needed to make sure that if an offer or promise was made to them that it was very important that it should happen. They recognised that some of the physical activities planned did not happen due to bad weather, but made the point that a suitable alternative needed to be planned in advance to ensure that their need for exercise and fun was met more fully.

The areas where any criticism lay were in the quality and provision of the facilities, particularly the food, at the residential centre. They all said that they had been hungry throughout the weekend and that they would have welcomed better menus in which they had had some say over advising on wider food choices. They also suggested that the meal timings be altered - they would have welcomed later supper, followed by a time to socially relax with their meal companions. They recommended that more snacks be available (healthy ones as well) throughout the weekend. They also commented that the accommodation would have been improved if they had been closer together as they enjoyed the opportunities to meet which were reduced by the design of the buildings used.

The 'key messages' question proved very interesting to the Focus Group.

To Muslim leaders:

They particularly expressed their own desires to integrate more into the whole community and felt this should be made clear to Muslim leaders in particular. They also wanted Muslim leaders to actively address the issue of drug and alcohol by members of their own community and to support drug education and prevention for all Muslims, particularly activities such as this programme.

To Parents:

They wanted parents to recognise that drug prevention programmes were an important way to keep them away from drug misuse and that they needed more opportunities to socialise and integrate within and between communities. They wanted parents to encourage their children to take part in programmes such as theirs,

particularly the girls in the families. They suggested that parents needed good information and a long period of notice about what this and other programmes could achieve to ensure that they let their children join in.

Young people:

The message was clear – ‘Come along and learn about drugs - this way is fun and free and will open new doors for you and you will learn a lot about yourself and others.’

Right Start Course Leaders: (see Appendix 5)

The three leaders interviewed were very enthusiastic about all elements of the programme, both the ‘back at base’ workshops and the residential event. They had observed the reactions of the participants at both events and were both surprised and impressed by the way the young people had taken such active and responsible parts in all the activities and had developed in confidence and interpersonal skills. They described highly motivated behaviours and regular attendance which was not always the case in other activities that had been organised.

They were aware that some activities were hard for their young people to take part in, particularly those that required exploration and expression of personal feelings and experiences. It was suggested that this was based on strong cultural boundaries and particularly affected the early ice breaker activities which had a knock on effect of reducing some of the trust between participants and took time to overcome.

They had been very impressed by the impact on the young people of the opportunity for them to make a website and by their understanding of information technology. They suggested this would be useful for them to use in other areas of working with their groups.

They suggested that pitching the activities right for such a wide ranging age group was difficult, particularly as the younger members had a shorter concentration span. They were clear that short, interactive sessions were critical to maintaining the interest of all the young people regardless of age or sex. They also suggested that there needed to be ways to check the credentials of workshop leaders to make sure that they met the needs of the participants. There had clearly been at least two workshops which had not met the young people’s needs for interaction and good communication.

All three of those interviewed were concerned about the lack of balance between the genders of the participants. There appeared to be many reasons for this, but the main one was identified as concerns by the parents of the girls in particular to allow them to attend. A range of suggestions to address this were offered

which included a range of ways to get parents to come along to a programme launch, join one of the workshops and using sibling networks to engage younger members of the family.

It was suggested that the meal times, particularly the evening meal should be moved until later in the evening and be used much more to create a social event.

They felt that the young people really enjoyed and benefited from the grown up freedoms created on the residential event, where there was less heavy adult / parent control compared to their home environments.

When asked what key messages should go to Muslim leaders about this and other similar drug programmes there were clearly expressed views that Imam's and Madrassa leaders should be more welcoming and open minded to encouraging general integration into the wider community and to consider more ways to ensure girls in particular were integrated into a broader range of activities whilst maintaining the principles of Islam.

Mentor and Right Start Programme Managers: (see Appendix 6)

Both the managers were interviewed on separate occasions. It is important to be aware that this programme was only a small part of their overall roles – 30 % for one and 10% for the other.

Both shared very similar views on both the planning and the delivery of the work. They would have liked the full year to develop the work as the reduced timetable put a lot of pressure on their overall roles within their organisations.

Whilst they could see the benefits of dual site delivery, this added time and travel costs to such work which had not be accounted for originally.

They were both sure that working with a partner was a helpful way to achieve programme aims and each side had benefited from learning from each other.

They reported that the attempts to set up the Advisory Group had been fruitless and time consuming. They could identify the benefits of such a group but with the time limitations running within the programme they were not convinced that further pursuit of this was desirable or achievable.

The amendments that had been made to the programme, particularly putting the club based activities more closely over a 4 week period together had proved beneficial. It made better use of planning time, resources and also meant that the concentration of participants was more focused and the experiences more intense.

There was a clear recognition that the value of the workshops was maximised when the workshop leaders used highly interactive delivery styles and were able to communicate well with the young people.

It was also acknowledged that the activities offered needed to be well researched for reliability, of a high quality and with some excitement and risk attached to them.

The Residential Weekend was identified as being a real highlight – planning and delivery were both felt to go well and it was seen to be socially a very happy and relaxed time. It was suggested that the event could have been longer with more time allotted to physical activities and social events, balanced with the more work based activities.

Recommendations:

Programme planning:

- Continue to develop programmes in partnership with other organisations as it offers increased understanding of each other and their principles, values and practices.
- There is a clear need for voluntary non-school based events - (via religious / non government organisations) - to take place as part of drug prevention activities.
- Creating an equal gender balance of participants is important although this can be hard in Muslim communities. Early engagement of parents and older siblings via recognised and trusted local youth clubs is a useful way to achieve this.
- There is a need to develop effective ways to share the experience of this and other similar programmes with Imam's (including Mosques and Madrassa's) and seek their active support.
- Drug prevention programmes should include active and participatory citizenship/ democracy elements.
- Careful consideration should be given to whether developing and maintaining an Advisory Group for short term programmes such as this are a worthwhile way to spend vital resources.
- This and other similar programmes should identify and develop either an exit strategy or plan for sustainability.
- There is a need to develop a comprehensive communications strategy for this and other similar programmes.
- The key messages suggested by those who took part in the evaluation should be used as the basis for the communications strategy.
- It is important that the expectations held by youth leaders of young people and what they can achieve are raised – it is easy to underestimate what they are able to do and capable of .

Programme Delivery:

- There needs to be a careful balance of workshops and activities – with an emphasis on plenty of activities being fun.
- Activities need to be of a high quality and offer wide range of choices that meet the needs of both girls and boys.
- There needs to be a viable and reliable contingency plan for activities to meet changes in weather and other variable conditions.
- The opening hours for youth service should be more flexible with later evenings offered to older groups.
- Youth Services should consider how to open their premises during holiday times, a period when young people really feel the need to meet and have fun in a safe environment.
- Cost considerations need to be addressed – many families would consider it important that any events are at low or no cost to them before allowing their children to attend.
- Workshop leaders need to be of the highest quality – they need to be able to deliver interactive and relevant activities and communicate effectively with young people.
- When choosing workshop leaders it would be useful to have access to a database of quality assured active learning workshops leaders / trainers. Taking up references for possible leaders would be a good way to check on essential qualities.
- When working with Muslim young people it is important to use carefully chosen non- threatening ice breakers.
- When designing the menus and food choices for events it is important to invite the views of participants and use them in menu design, especially for residential events.
- Snacks are an important part of adolescent young people’s lives, especially after physical activity. Involvement of the young people in what they would like to have on offer is important and it is possible to do this in a healthy way, by offering such things as low fat crisps, low sugar drinks and low fat biscuits etc.
- Meal times on residential events should be seen as part of the social side of the programme and both timing and seating arrangements should reflect this.
- If the same groups of young people attend residential courses regularly, there should be a range of different premises used.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Evaluation Proposal:

Strand 1: Young People

Aims:

1. To develop the skills, confidence and self esteem of young Muslims, providing them with the knowledge and skills required to make healthy life choices and play an active part in their local communities by:
 - Exploring how the 6 week course has benefited their:
 - i. Group work and communication skills
 - ii. Assertiveness, confidence and self esteem
 - iii. Understanding of health promotion
 - iv. Understanding of substance misuse prevention
 - v. Ability to be part of community participation
2. Ensure that the views of young Muslims are heard by Mentor UK, our partners and policy makers and planners responsible for developing drug and alcohol prevention services nationally by:
 - Exploring how the whole programme has contributed to the young people feeling their voices have been heard at local and national level.

Methodology:

- a) Questionnaire for young people:
 - to be translated where necessary by Youth Worker
 - to be piloted by Youth Worker
 - feedback on pilot offered to evaluator
 - questionnaire distribution and returned to evaluator
 - postage, printing and other associated costs to be borne by Mentor UK.

The questionnaire will be undertaken with all the participating young people

- b) Focus group to be held at the weekend event:
- To invite the group to respond to a series of questions about the value of their involvement in the project and how they feel their views have been listened to and further disseminated.

The focus group will consist of up to 6 young people chosen at random from the young people who have been invited to attend the weekend. The evaluator will be present at one full day of the weekend.

- c) Interview with Project Manager at the weekend event to seek their views on the effectiveness and impact of the project and the process of delivery.
- d) A report collating and analysing the data collected from a; b; and c above.

(4 days) carries a costing of £..... not including travel and subsistence costs. Any translation costs, postage, printing shall be met by Mentor UK.

Appendix 2:

Strand 2: Overall Project and Resource Pack

Aims:

To consider how the work of the whole project has achieved the overall aims and how the systems, processes and outputs could be improved.

Methodology:

- a) Questionnaire for members of the Advisory Group
 - a paper questionnaire for each member of the advisory group
 - to be printed and disseminated by Mentor UK
 - to be forwarded by Mentor UK to evaluator
- b) An Interview with members of the Advisory Group
 - as an one hour agenda item at one of their regular meetings
- c) Interview with Mentor UK overall Project Manager
 - at Mentor UK offices
- d) Interview with Youth worker
 - before the advisory meeting where the whole group interview takes place
- e) Report
 - A report collating and analysing the data collected from all the Strand 2 work (6 days in total) - carries a cost of not including travel and subsistence costs. Any postage, printing etc costs shall be met by Mentor UK.

Appendix 3:

Young people Questionnaire:

Evaluation Questionnaire: Mentor UK

November 2007

By completing this questionnaire you will be helping the organisers to make sure that they have done their work as well as they can. This can be very helpful for reports to the people who fund the work and helps in planning if this kind of work is repeated.

Please answer all questions.

1. The project has helped me work as a group member
(please tick one of the answers)
 - Not at all
 - A little
 - A lot
2. Which skills do you think the project has helped you improve most:
(please Rank 1 - 4 with 1 as the highest)
 - Listening to others
 - Respecting the views of others
 - Expressing my views more clearly
 - Taking turns to speak
3. Which skills has the project taught you to help you be more assertive in carrying out a decision?
(you can tick more than one)
 - Using a clear, firm voice
 - Repeating your message
 - Looking directly at the person you are talking to
 - Positive body language
 - Using a serious expression
 - Looking as if you mean what you say
 - Other(please say what)
4. Did the course help you gain in confidence and if so in what ways?

5. Health promotion:

(please tick the sentence that you think best explains what you have learned)

Health Promotion is :

- about making healthy choices easy choices
- about telling people what makes them healthy
- offering information and practicing skills that help people make healthy choices
- making sure that people are prosecuted if they break the laws on alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.

6. Can you list 3 ways that you have changed your health habits since being part of this course.
7. Can you think of 5 reasons why you think young people may use illegal drugs?
8. Can you think of 3 ways that you think would help young people who were using drugs to stop using.
9. If you had a friend who was regularly using drugs and was worried about it, what would you advise them to do or who would you advise them to talk to about their concerns
10. How has the project helped you?
11. What would you like to see happen next to this work?

Thank you for completing this evaluation form.

Appendix 4:

Young People Focus Group Questions:

1. Why did you join this programme?
2. What has been the best experience of the course for you?
Why?
3. What would you change about the programme?
4. What advice would you give to:
 - a. Parents
 - b. Young people
 - c. Muslim leaders

About this programme?

5. What advice would you give the organisers if they were to run a course like this again?
6. Would you like to be involved in a programme like this in the future? If so, what topics could be included?

Appendix 5:

Residential Course Leader Questions:

1. Why did you join this programme?
2. What benefits do you think this programme offered the young people?
3. What has been the best experience of the course for you?
Why?
4. What would you change about the programme?
5. What advice would you give:
 - a) parents
 - b) young people
 - c) Muslim leadersAbout this programme?
6. What advice would you give the organisers if they were to run a course like this again?
7. Would you like to be involved in a project like this in the future?

Appendix 6:

Right Start Programme Lead:

1. What is the history of the programme set up?
2. How was the programme developed?
3. Can you describe the overall organisation of the programme?
4. Was it the right structure for the job in hand?
5. How were the aims of the programme decided on?
6. Please describe your role in detail?
7. Can you describe the role of the Advisory Group and tell me what happened to it?
8. What do you think should happen next with this programme in all the partner organisations?
9. What would you do differently if you were starting this all over again?
10. What is your biggest regret in the overall programme?
11. What are you most proud of in the whole programme?
12. What key message would you give to:
 - a. Government
 - b. Children's Commissioner
 - c. Mentor UK
 - d. Muslim leaders
 - e. Right Start Trustees
 - f. Muslim young women
 - g. Muslim young men?
13. What other comments do you wish to make?

Appendix 6:

Mentor Programme Lead:

1. How was the programme set up?
2. How was the programme developed?
3. Can you describe the overall organisation of the programme?
4. Was it the right structure for the job in hand?
5. How were the aims of the programme decided on?
6. Please describe your role in detail?
7. Can you describe the role of the Advisory Group and tell me what happened to it?
8. What do you think should happen next with this programme in all the partner organisations?
9. What would you do differently if you were starting this all over again?
10. What is your biggest regret in the overall programme?
11. What are you most proud of in the whole programme?
12. What key message would you give to:
 - a. Government
 - b. Children's Commissioner
 - c. DEF
 - d. Muslim leaders
 - e. Mentor Trustees
 - f. Muslim young women
 - g. Muslim young men?
13. What other comments do you want to make?

Bibliography:

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