THE X-IT PROGRAMME
A modular programme aimed at young people at risk of gang membership

REVERSING THE SPIRAL
COME TO THE EDGE, LIFE SAID.
THEY SAID: WE ARE AFRAID.
COME TO THE EDGE, LIFE SAID.
THEY CAME.
IT PUSHED THEM..................
AND THEY FLEW.

Guillaume Apollinaire
# THE X-IT PROGRAMME

Interim report  
July 05

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the development and implementation of the pilot X-it Programme.

It’s purpose is to provide a reflection on the processes and the practice behind the programme; to provide a basis for evaluation and to provide a springboard for improving and changing the methodology of future gang intervention work.

Though I have quoted from other staff and young people throughout, this is purely a personal account

Young people face many inequalities and social exclusion. The X-it Programme challenges the negative self-image of participants by offering them choices, reverses the downward spiral that they find themselves trapped in, aims to teach the young people that they have value, that we as adults recognise their potential and that they can dare to follow their dreams.

2. DEFINING A GANG

The X-it Programme has been designed in order to offer a modular programme of intensive support and self-esteem building to young people who are at risk of gang membership. Lambeth currently defines a gang as being: -

“A group of young people, who identify together by name and/or territory, whose core members (as opposed to those on the periphery) are involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour”
Young People defined as 8-21 years.

I was unaware of this definition prior to starting the project and I find it problematical. I believe this definition criminalizes young people and that this categorisation could justify the belief that Lambeth has a huge “Gang problem”. Realistically, how can a group of eight year olds living in the same street playing out and chucking stones be viewed in the same way as a group of young men who can coldly murder others who get in their way?

There are clearly tiers of behaviour that gang members operate under and I have used the following criteria to identify what I mean by a “gang”

- Gangs have a clear identity linked through territory
- They identify themselves with a name
- There is a clear hierarchical structure
- The gang commits high level crime i.e. Drug dealing and Armed robbery
They use extreme violence (including murder) to achieve their means.

### 3. THE NATIONAL PICTURE

With the current government crackdown on the “yob” culture, and the increasing use of ASBOS to control, criminalize and contain young people, the predisposition of fear towards the young is increasing. The media have jumped onto the bandwagon and we are assaulted daily by front-page headlines such as:

"Fear drives one teenage boy in ten to carry a gun"

*The Times 04.07.05*

This initially looks like a horrifying statistic and was the headline on the front page of the *Times* newspaper. Accompanying this article was an emotive (and clearly staged) picture; a boy with a gun behind his back facing a woman in what appears to be a classroom. The reality of this headline is somewhat different.

The figures that were used to create the headline come from The Communities that Care: The Safer London Youth Survey and could have read:

"Even in London’s most deprived and crime ridden areas, less than one in a hundred teenage boys carry a real gun."

This use of often totally inaccurate or deliberately misleading headlines by the media to boost sales engages with the politics of fear as a powerful and negative influence and enables the passing of draconian legislation, which often targets and criminalizes the young.

There is a responsibility to maintain a balanced perspective. The reality is that young people are much more likely to be a victim of a crime than they are to be a perpetrator.

The following statistics are taken from “The MORI 2003 Youth Survey, Youth Justice Board”:

"49% mainstream pupils and 46% of excluded pupils has been the victim of any offence"

Youth Justice Board
“The penknife was the most common “potentially lethal weapon” carried by young people in 2004.”

“The Number of young people who claim to carry knives has decreased by 11%.”

“47% of excluded students and 21% of mainstream pupils admitted to carrying a ball bearing gun.”

“Most young people in both cohorts who admitted to carrying a weapon said they have not used it.”

4. GANG CULTURE IN LAMBETH

There has been much misreporting and scare mongering in the press around the gang culture in Lambeth and it’s links to Islam. Everyone has a different story, a different version, and a shroud of myths hangs like a haze over the truth. I am therefore hesitant to offer this as a factual account. The information offered below has been collected via conversations with young people who have had some involvement in the gang culture. Their comments are highlighted as quotations. It has also been pieced together from information from a number of other sources such as local youth workers and the police.

Using Lambeth’s definition of a gang has proved unhelpful when contemplating the “gang” picture in Lambeth. For the purpose of this paper I have made a distinction between the hard-core gangs and the Crews. Each would fit Lambeth’s definition. The implications of using this definition are serious. Gang members in this paper describes young people who have a serious rep, who commit armed robberies, who deal in “Class A” drugs and are known to be responsible (although generally not proven) for a number of gun related killings. There are three gangs operating in Lambeth. These are the SMS (South Man Syndicate) – Streatham & Norwood based; The PDC (Peel Dem Crew – or when producing their music The Poverty Driven Children) – based in Angell Town, Brixton and The OC – based in Myatts Field. It needs to be noted that the gangs are far from being disparate groups “but are very much interlinked with the different cliques “on road”.

There is a picture of all gangs as having a tight organisational structure. This must be challenged. Though there is a clear hierarchy within the gangs, it is continually under threat from the disputes arising out of individual member’s desire to be the “Top Man”.

Recent press reports have highlighted the increasing conversion to Islam of young gang members in South London. Add to this the inevitable headlines linking Islam to terrorism and the mythology and fear surrounding the gangs grows, enhancing their power to intimidate.
“Revealed: The rise of the Muslim Boys
Why this gang is so frighteningly different
- They use sub-machine guns in execution-style murders
- They have rumoured links with Islamic terrorists
- They force young men to convert to Islam at gunpoint
- The intimidate mosques into opening for their own prayers”
Evening Standard. 03.02.05

It appears that the Muslim link is far more complex than being suggested by the media and the police. The interest in and conversion to Islam seems to have sprung from predominantly SMS members converting whilst in prison. This has led to a number of members from the OC and the SMS adopting Islam. For some of these young people it is a real transition, for others it has provided a means of getting better conditions whilst in prison, whilst others have been forced to convert via peer pressure.

All of the gangs have Muslim affiliates but the PDC clearly state that they are “Not Muslims”.

The SMS are a well-established gang who evolved out of the 28’s (a well known South London gang in the late 80’s/90’s). The SMS “on road” credibility diminished following the arrest and subsequent jailing of a number of their members. This led to a dispersal of other gang members, many of whom have now switched their loyalty to the PDC, contributing to their current level of ascendancy.

The PDC consists of a hardcore group of about twenty-five young men who are in their late teens and early twenties. This group are the elders of the gang who recruit “Youngers” or “Sabos” (from the word sabotage – also used to describe the act of robbing). The Youngers are recruited from the age of 12 upwards and are described as “The Run-arounds”.

“They want to be big men, so lots of them are doing voluntary work, throwing themselves in the deep end and getting nicked”

The Youngers don’t make any money; they are used as foot soldiers and generally end up getting arrested.

Outside of the main gang culture there are a number of crews who consist of young people who live on the same estate or who have gone to the same school. These include The MZ Crew; The SW2 Boys; The Stockwell Park Crew etc. These groups describe themselves as “family”. They hang out together, commit street robberies, group rapes and provide a viable recruiting arena for the more established gangs.

Peer pressure clearly plays a role in the recruitment to the gangs and those members who are Muslims are targeting a number of young people, not only for gang membership but also for conversion. The pressure can be really
fierce with young people being rung on their mobiles constantly and being told to “Get down or Lay down”. The pressure is particularly put on young people who are perceived as being successful criminals.

The gangs make their ‘P’s’ (money) through a variety of means. They are not interested in street robbery (that’s “petty change” and the remit of the smaller Crews) but through armed robbery and drug dealing – predominantly Crack Cocaine and Heroin. The young people who “shot” these “Class A” drugs do not take them, but many of the heavy weed smokers, called “ghost people on road” commit crime in order to fund their weed smoking.

Due to increased police pressure, the almost blanket like coverage of CCTV cameras and their individual identities being well known in their home stamping grounds of South London, the gang’s criminal activities have moved from “on road” to “off road”; smaller towns and cities (such as Cardiff and Reading) are known as “country”. These are being targeted as they offer an unsaturated market for drug dealing (“providing a service”) and less likelihood of being caught.

The weapon of choice is a gun. Whilst few are owned, renting or borrowing one is only a matter of a quick phone call. Both the peripheral crews and the more established gang members have ready and easy access to an armoury of weapons. Replica guns can be bought openly in Brixton market and are bandied around like toys. Bulletproof vests are also popular accessories.

The gang culture which has sprung up in the more deprived estates in Lambeth offers young people a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. The term family is one used by young people to describe their affiliation to a crew or gang. For young people and in particular young black men who have become disenfranchised and actively excluded from mainstream society the gang is a viable alternative. It gives them a sense of belonging, empowerment and a means of employment.

The gangs also “look out for” their community, engendering a loyalty within their home territory. Starving? – They’ll feed you. If you are a young, single mum struggling to put trainers on your kid’s feet, the gang will provide them. Really desperate for a bit of money? Then they’ll give it to you and not ask for it back. This “Robin Hood” approach offers a good level of protection to the gangs. In return for this philanthropy local people are expected to “hold” weapons and drugs for gang members and to keep their mouths firmly shut.

Another aspect of the gangs is their link to music with a particular focus on House, Garage and Rap. Both the SMS and the PDC have music production arms, producing and marketing CDs of their albums. They are very dedicated to this and will go up to the West End selling their albums from rucksacks. They also throw a number of raves and take over venues in order to ensure that they can perform, usually accompanied by their own film crew. Robberies will also be filmed and used to promote their music. Their music is of a high
standard but due to the negative messages and associated violence they find it impossible to get a record deal.

Currently the situation seems to have quietened down with the gangs living “On past rep”, “Not a lot of action, just a lot of talk”. It appears that the mandatory five-year prison sentence for the carrying of a gun has had an impact and the carrying of real guns as opposed to replicas has decreased. The consequences of recent legislation outlawing replica guns remains to be seen but I was told:

“If you are going to get the same sentence for carrying a replica, what the hell you may as well carry a real one”

5. RATIONALE & PROCESS BEHIND THE X-IT PROGRAMME

The X-it Programme evolved from a number of factors.

• The death of Adrian Marriot who was murdered last summer had a huge impact on many young people. He was a member of the Marcus Lipton Youth Club (based on the Loughborough Estate) and was well known with many friends in Brixton. His killing led to a palpable fear amongst young people.

• An increase in anti-social behaviour and street muggings being carried out by the MZ crew on the Moorlands. This was leading to the threatened eviction of some of the families on the Moorlands. I argued that this was not a productive way forward and that I would make an attempt to address some of the issues.

• I called a meeting with the group causing mayhem on the Moorlands in order to provide them with information of what was about to happen to them. At this meeting (attended by about 20 young people) I explained the consequences of their behaviour, how the police had photographs of them that their mothers would be proud to put on their mantle pieces and asked them how their mothers would feel about being made homeless. In order to reinforce the message they were given “An idiots guide to Anti-social behaviour and what’s going to happen to you” written by the Cold Harbour Community Safety Team Officer. This meeting enabled me to make a connection with the group and the message was heard loud and clear.

• Young people were increasingly expressing their fears to youth workers, requesting support in moving away from the “on road culture”. There was also increased intelligence that Muslim gang members demanding conversion were targeting a number of young people on their mobiles. This was scaring the recipients of the calls. My role as the Brixton Town Centre Team Leader means that I receive intelligence of what is happening in the
area from a diversity of sources such as the Community Safety Team; Youth Workers; Housing agencies; Youth agencies; The Police and my main source, young people themselves.

- It was clear that something needed to be done.

- The opportunity arose when, during a community safety team meeting, I was offered £5,000 to tackle some of these issues by the Coldharbour Community Safety Team.

- I did some research on American approaches to gang prevention work and looked at what was being done in the UK and what approaches seemed to offer the most hope of success.

- I devised an outline programme and invited people who I thought might want to work in partnership to a meeting. Only the police attended.

- With the offer of a further £5,000 from the police to implement the programme I knew I was in a position to lever more money. The Government Office for London (GOL) had given £20,000 to Community Safety for gang intervention work; I manoeuvred so as to have this allocated to the X-it Programme. Further cajoling and approaches raised the total funding to £44,000. This enabled me to design a high quality programme with a built in independent evaluation process.

- The funding had short time constraints; the money needing to be spent by March 2005. As I had very little time to get the programme up and running I devised a tightly time-framed action plan, starting the programme at the end of February 05. Paying for all the elements upfront enabled the programme to run through to July 05. With In-volve continuing to work with the group it is anticipated that the programme will now be finished in December 05.

### 5.1 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

It was clear from the research that partnership approaches were the most effective in intervention programmes. The X-it Programme was devised with this in mind, enabling a range of different skills and expertise to be brought into play. As willing partners hadn’t volunteered themselves I approached the Youth Advocate Programme and In-volve to deliver different modules of the programme.

The partners on the X-it Programme are as follows: -

- **LAMBETH YOUTH & PLAY SERVICE**
  The X-it Programme sits within the Lambeth Youth & Play Service. The programme is based on the principals and ethos of youth work. A key element of this programme is to engage with young people within their own
territory. The use of youth workers already known to the young people to facilitate the first module of the programme led to its effectiveness as a relationship of trust was already in place. I was also very conscious of the need to offer a network of continual support once the programme was completed. The approach I adopted means that young people are recruited from within, nurtured and reintroduced back into their communities as supported, positive role models and leaders.

The Youth Service met the cost of the project co-ordinator, youth and peer workers and made available resources such as youth clubs and vehicles.

- **LAMBETH YAP**
The Lambeth Youth Advocate Programme (YAP) works closely with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and runs the Lambeth Intensive Supervision and Support Programme (ISSP). The YAP team provides a last ditch alternative to custody and their workers are skilled at working with more challenging young people. Being one-2-one mentors and well known within the local community, the YAP were obvious partners.

- **IN-VOLVE**
In-volve is a social care charity that has been successfully targeting community groups affected by social exclusion for over twenty years. In-volve’s service side runs service provision in many parts of the country, including the largest young person’s drug service in the country, which is in Birmingham. In-volve’s consultancy side delivers a range of products and services to DAATs and Community Safety Teams in a number of localities, focusing particularly on programmes incorporating innovative techniques that help young people develop a positive sense of identity through cognitive and emotional self-awareness, empowering them to make informed and independent decisions about their choice of life styles.

- **BRATHAY HALL**
Brathay Hall is a centre of excellence in youth development. They design innovative residential programmes for young people using powerful experiences as a backdrop for growth. Young people cultivate a positive sense of themselves and others that allows them to flourish. Brathay links research and practice to inspire deep and lasting change in young people. Their programmes are based on the following principals:

  - Bespoke experiential learning programmes
  - Agreeing objectives and outcomes
  - Blending activity and reflection
  - Applying theoretical principles
  - Helping people to understand how much can be achieved
  - Powerful implementation:
    - A combination of doing and reviewing
    - Physical and emotional safety
  - Group management skills that respect the individual
• Challenging individual and group experiences
• Variety of media including outdoor and creative
• Expert facilitation to encourage and inspire

• METROPOLITAN POLICE

The GOL money was directly aimed at gang intervention work. It had initially been targeted towards Persistent Youth Offenders (PYO’s) who would have to attend a programme as part of the juvenile justice sentencing system. It was expected that the programme would also produce a 10% reduction in gun crime. The Police and the YOT were keen that this compulsory approach was adopted. In-volve has been delivering a number of intensive programmes in Lambeth. Both their senior consultant and I argued for targeting young people at risk of gang membership rather than those who were actively engaged in the gang culture; for the programme to be voluntary, that successful programmes which change learnt behaviour are not instant quick fixes, that their benefits take longer to materialise and that the reduction in gun crime should be a long term outcome rather than a target. Our approach was adopted.

We also argued about the levels of information we were prepared to share, amicable negotiations minimised these to the names of the participants on the programme. In order to address the sharing of names with the police, all participants and their guardians were informed of this prior to the start of the programme. We particularly targeted those young people who were already well known to the police so we were providing no new information!

The police added all of the participants names to their CRIMNT system which meant that if participants were stopped on the street, police officers were alerted to their attendance on the X-it Programme and were asked to consider their attendance on the Programme as a factor in their favour.

A local police officer that has worked in the Coldharbour ward for the past 18 years also asked to volunteer as a worker on the programme. Whilst this proved initially very controversial his participation as a member of staff had a dramatic beneficial impact.

• GEL

Each Town Centre in Lambeth has attached a young person who is employed by the Community Regeneration Team. Their roles are to support young people’s participation and to assist in providing young people with a range of both formal and informal educational routes back into employment. The Brixton GEL team member took a role in supporting the programme and offered support to the peer leaders we employed.

• COMMUNITY SAFETY
The Community Safety Team played a crucial role in helping pull the partners and funding together. Both the Norwood and the Coldharbour Teams gave money to the programme. Most of the funding was fed into Community Safety and then internally transferred over to the Youth & Play Service. They were also able to feed the X-it Programme into an independent evaluation process.

5.2 TARGET GROUP

The criteria for participants in the programme were as follows:

- 18 young people (6 from each target area) aged between 14 – 17 years
- Known to the police and offending
- Known to be on the fringes of gang membership
- Young people who clearly expressed a wish to change their behaviour and lifestyle.

5.3 TARGET AREAS

An aspect of the programme was the addressing of territorial issues and the targeting of three different “Hot Spots”. Our initial piece of funding came from the Coldharbour Community Safety Team and so our two initial targets were based in the Coldharbour Ward, Brixton. The third target area was Norwood.

TARGET AREA ONE:
THE MOORLANDS ESTATE - BRIXTON

As the impetus for the creation of the X-it Programme came from the ructions the MZ crew were causing on the Moorlands they were an obvious target group. Evidence indicated that their level of offending was increasing and that many of them were heading for custodial sentences. In order to identify those young people at the heart of the group I spoke to a number of sources (Police; Community Safety Team; Youth and Play workers in the area) and drew up a list of names. A young person who I had identified as a peer leader (and who himself is a member of the MZ elders) went through the list adding and taking away names. He then approached our targets and asked them if they would like to join the programme. They all did.

TARGET AREA TWO
THE LOUGHBOROUGH ESTATE – BRIXTON

The Marcus Lipton Youth Centre provides a sanctuary for many young people living on the Loughborough Estate. Adrian Marriot was a member of the youth club and his execution just down the road scared and upset his many friends in the Youth Club. The club attracts a particularly “lively” membership many
with gang links. The Senior Youth Worker from the club agreed to participate and support the scheme.

**TARGET AREA THREE**

**NORWOOD**

The third target area was Norwood. This target area was again chosen because of the untimely shooting and killing of Solomon Martin on New Years Eve - 2004. The senior detached worker for Norwood agreed to facilitate this group and targeted the friends and relations of Solomon, who were revengeful, angry and scared.

**6. THE PROGRAMME**

It quickly became obvious once the programme was up and running that the key underlying factor impacting on the young people’s behaviour is a lack of self-esteem. They have been raised by a society, which perceives them as “the enemy”, a society that expects them to fail, and a society that fears them.

At that point we put aside the gang terminology with its inherent negative associations and changed the language. The **X-it** Programme is one which aims to provide intensive support to young people, to raise their self-esteem; to show them there are viable alternatives to the “on road culture”; to challenge their behaviour and to show that we as adults can be respectful and supportive.

**6.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE X-IT PROGRAMME**

The **X-it** Programme has been designed as a series of modules utilising the different skills of partner organisations to deliver the programme. The programme progresses from simple group work sessions which draw the young people in and which initially concentrate on the engagement, motivation and the building of relationships. When working with young people it is clear that support needs to be continuous and this was certainly an element I had under estimated. This became apparent as increasing demands were made on our time to address pastoral care issues such as court and home support.

What also became clear was the young people’s resistance to engage which came out of their previous experience of being “helped” for short periods and then abandoned. The certainty of the **X-it** Programme’s commitment to providing long-term support was essential both from the external partner agencies (**X-it; In-volve; Yap etc**) as well as from within their peer group and their community.
Saturdays out were then added to bring the groups together. The real work kicked in with the residential element: an intensive programme of challenges and self-esteem building exercises. The In-olve element tapped into and is enhancing this by having identified potential leaders and running intensive group work sessions. These bring together a number of elements including Life coaching; NLP and Gestalt therapies with real life opportunities for participants such as addressing conferences; attending photo shoots and paid employment. At the same time the YAP team is offering the young people one 2 one support and training opportunities.

The aim when designing this programme was to develop a model that can be picked up and delivered by other boroughs/agencies

**AIMS:**

- To reduce levels of weapon use and serious crime in a target group of young people identified as being at risk of progressing to more serious levels of crime
- To develop young people’s self awareness and sense of identity, empowering them towards informed decision making independent of peer and street culture
- To identify and nurture a core group of young leaders who will inform future initiatives addressing this target group

**OBJECTIVES:**

- To empower young people to make positive choices
- To increase levels of self awareness
- To develop young people’s sense of responsibility for themselves and for their actions
- To facilitate the expression of anger in a positive ways
- To develop social skills with peers and adults
- To develop self-esteem
- To experience the support and confidence that an effective team can offer
- To develop a sense of personal achievement through engaging in challenges

**6.2 THE DELIVERY TEAM**

The delivery team evolved in a number of ways. I deliberately went out and targeted staff that I felt had the qualities I wished to have in a team, whilst others slipped in through the back door via partnerships. The diverse nature of the delivery team is proving one of the programmes greatest strengths. We all
learn from one another and despite our different styles are able to work (most of the time!) effectively together. In the process of delivery the team has also undergone great change and growth, reflecting the changes in the young people. This hands-on approach has enhanced the skills of the Lambeth delivery team.

It has also provided a mechanism for bringing disparate support agencies together into a cohesive support network for both the young people and each other.

6.2.1 YOUTH WORKERS

The X-it Programme has been designed to work at a grass roots level and because of this, youth workers known to the young people played a crucial role in it’s initial stages. A degree of trust and respect was already in place and this enabled us to recruit more easily to the programme.

A youth worker took the initial lead in each of the target areas; myself on the Moorlands, the Senior Worker from Marcus Lipton on the Loughborough and the Norwood Detached Youth Worker in Norwood.

Youth Workers took the lead on the initial ten-week group work sessions and worked on the residential element.

6.2.2 YAP WORKERS

Within the original budget, payment had been allocated for a worker from the YAP team to work throughout the early stages of the programme in order to maintain a continuity of staffing. In my preliminary planning stages I had met one of the workers from the YAP who was perfect for the job and I recruited him to the team. Alongside this the YAP paid for a second worker to shadow the programme and to come on the residential.

6.2.3 POLICE OFFICER

As I mentioned earlier, a local police sergeant who wished to volunteer to work on the programme had approached me. Historically the police and youth workers have had a very tempestuous relationship and I knew it could be a bone of contention with other workers. However I felt it could be worth the risk as some of the potential gains were very worthwhile. I agreed that he could work on the programme based on the following rationale:

- He is well known in the area to young people
- He has a reputation amongst young people for being fair
- He is perceived as part of the local community
- He recognises the value of youth work and its underlying ethos

It needs also to be recognised that these characteristics are those of an individual police officer and maybe somewhat of a rarity. Because of the initial reluctance of other workers to directly work with a police officer he worked alongside me on the Moorlands.
6.2.4 PEER WORKERS
The peer workers played a critical role in the successful recruitment and motivation of the groups. The recruitment of the peer workers was somewhat random and again led to a diverse and highly variable skill level. The initial group consisted of two young men from the Moorlands and members of the MZ crew. I had worked consistently on a number of projects with both of them and both had started to do part time youth work. The third was another young man who was working in the Play Service and who had good first hand knowledge of the gang culture. These three workers were paid for by the Youth & Play service. The GEL worker was a young woman who also took on a peer worker role and enlisted the help of another young woman who worked as a millennium volunteer. Each group had a peer worker attached but the two Moorlands Peer workers took on the initiative to attend every group’s sessions.

6.2.5 SENIOR CONSULTANT IN-VOLVE
In-volve were recruited to deliver the third module of the programme and in order for the Senior Consultant to get to know the young people, she attended the residential with us. Her constant reflections of and insights into the group processes were invaluable in deepening our learning from the experiences. The ethos and underlying delivery style of the In-volve team is one I am incorporating and encouraging within the staff team.

6.2.6 BRATHAY STAFF TEAM
The Brathay staff team are experienced youth workers and specialists in the field of devising programmes that build up the confidence and self-esteem of participants. The staff are far more than just youth work practitioners, they are multi-skilled, having received training in a number of disciplines such as Art therapy; NLP and Outdoor activities.
I am integrating the Brathay philosophy into the X-it Programme.

6.3 STAFF TRAINING
When devising the programme I was acutely aware of the diversity of the staff team. It was clear that all of the staff needed a sense of ownership and a common working style. In order to achieve this staff attended two training programmes. The first, “Identity and Difference” was run by In-volve and involved two days training looking at the importance of identity and self-esteem and methods that we can use to develop these qualities in young people.

The second was a weekend training event at Brathay Hall. Here we worked together in order to identify the aims of the residential course, our working style, to work out the programme with the Brathay staff and to bond together as a team.
6.4 THE PARTICIPANTS

One of the key elements of the X-it Programme is the voluntary nature of young people’s participation. It was made very clear to all the young people that they were free to attend or not as they chose. At different times in the programme different young people participated. Being a pilot, the degree of fluidity was dynamic, allowing the appropriate levels to be ascertained. In order to analyse this I shall explain the dynamics of each of the three very different groups.

THE MOORLANDS group was clearly targeted, offending on a regular basis and needed support. We made a commitment to the group that if they were serious in making a change then we would offer whatever support we could. Because of the offending nature of the group both myself and especially the Police Officer meant we were regularly committed to attending court. This particularly involved pleas for bail to be given and getting bail conditions changed. The police officer also supported them when five of the group were arrested (after our second session) for alleged gang rape, ensuring that they were OK in the cells, and had access to legal support.

Alongside the initial seven targeted we quickly found a number of other young people who wanted to come along and participate. We allowed them to do this, but made it clear that there was no guarantee of their participation in other elements of the programme. All of our seven attended consistently and combined with the peripheral participants there was usually between 14 – 20 young people attending the group work sessions.

All seven of our original targets and five of our peripheral group are continuing to participate in the programme.

THE LOUGHBOROUGH PARK estate group encountered a number of problems to begin with. The senior worker at Marcus Lipton was under considerable pressure from college and there were problems with the group accessing the youth club. The leadership role was then adopted by one of the YAP workers who pulled the group together, recruiting two young men and three young women. This group remained stable until the residential element when one of the young men was unable to attend as he was due in court and the other was not confident enough to attend the residential without his friend.

Of the original five in this group, three are continuing to participate in the programme.

THE NORWOOD GROUP started off very successfully and recruited a number of young men who were related to or friends of Solomon Martin (who was shot and killed on New Year’s Eve). They attended the group work sessions regularly and again like the Moorlands group significant numbers of
Peripheral participants appeared. They however were not recruited successfully in time for the residential element of the programme.

It is aimed to raise further funds to run a separate residential for this group at a future date.

What I have learnt from the different levels of participation within the three groups, once individual styles have been removed from the equation, is that the consistency and level of support offered and given is a major if not decisive factor in the level of a young person’s commitment to the programme.

In the table below I have identified participants who attended more than one group work session or who fully participated in an element of the X-it Programme. I have identified them by age; gender; race; offending; those who were given additional court support and the elements of the programme that they have/are participating in.
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**Initial peripheral participants - Moorlands**

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**Key to codes:**

U/A – wished to attend but unable
6.5 GROUP WORK SESSIONS

It was planned to deliver the same sessions each week to each group. These were planned in conjunction with the peer youth workers to address a number of issues relevant to the group and were as follows:

- **IN THE BEGINNING**
  Identification of who we are, group rules being set and the identification the X-it Programme’s goals

- **WHERE WE’RE AT**
  Identification of goals and hurdles

- **FRIENDS, HATERS OR SNAKES?**
  What and who holds us back from achieving our goals

- **ALL FOR THE GREEN**
  The impact of money

- **WHY BE STRAPPED?**
  Why use weapons and the consequences of their use

- **THE REAL ISLAM**

- **KEEP IT REAL**
  What the consequences of behaviour are

- **WHAT’S BEEF?**
  Conflict resolution

- **WHAT’S REALLY GOOD**
  How to make money legally

- **OFF THE ENDZ**
  Planning for the residential

Ten group work sessions were run but due to a number of factors the session plan was not strictly followed. The prior commitments of outside organisations meant that some appropriate workshop facilitators could not be arranged within the available time. The nature of the target group also meant that a greater degree of fluidity was required in the sessions to enable responsiveness to external events.

A clear example of this was the session following the arrest of some of the Moorlands group on a gang rape allegation; this was the only subject that the group wished to discuss.
The sessions, despite their often-chaotic nature were well attended and led to a number of discussions and considerations of behaviour. The young people’s goals are clear and simple; they want a job, partner and their own home and they wish for the support that enables them to achieve this.

Alongside the group work sessions we had a couple of days out for all the participants aimed at bringing all of the young people together prior to the residential. These included a football match, bike riding and meals out.

The group work sessions laid the foundations for the residential element and for the future elements of the programme.

6.6. THE RESIDENTIAL

The residential took place in the last week of April and was planned for six days. 23 young people attended.

Following our staff-training weekend at Brathay we had identified clear aims for the X-it Programme and agreed a common working style. The key elements we identified as good practice were:

- To be punctual
- To be courteous
- To demonstrate mutual respect
- To be honest with the young people
- To be able to justify statements/actions at all times
- To use non discriminatory language
- To treat the young people as equals where possible
- To encourage the young people to stretch themselves
- To encourage them to accept challenges
- To expect participation
- To expect them to take responsibility for themselves and their actions
- To give them opportunities for, and to demonstrate our trust
- To have fun

A total of 16 young people, 7 peer educators (2 of whom self-identified themselves as peer educators when invited to take up the spare places on the residential) and 8 staff attended the residential.

On arrival the young people and staff were allocated to one of three groups, each led by two Brathay staff. There was also a course director, an independent observer and various technicians.

We stayed in Old Brathay Hall, which provided us with self-contained accommodation.
The programme ran daily from 9.00am – 9.00pm. Each group worked independently of the others, only joining up for meals and in the evenings. Different activities were planned depending on the group dynamics. A range of outdoor activities based on the principles of trust; teamwork and leadership; self-esteem building and reflection were a mainstay of the programme. These included Caving; Abseiling; High-V’s; Rope courses; Rock climbing; Kayaking and Whaling. Alongside this Art sessions were held and included painting; T-Shirt making and mask making. Although the programme appeared to be tightly structured it always retained enough mutability to allow the delivery team to take advantage of and respond to the changing mood and dynamics of the young people. An example of this was when one of the Brathay workers, on overhearing his group commenting on the beauty of the scenery and the evening, spontaneously organised a walk up the mountain at the back of Brathay.

“The magic and power of walking up the mountain at the back of Brathay on our first full day as the sun was setting. As we walked up Ollie gave us all a lesson on the natural environment. We tasted wild sorrel and garlic and saw owls. At different points as we walked up the mountain we stopped and surrounded by the immense beauty of the mountains, high up in the reddening sky, Ollie read us stories. These included part of Nelson Mandela’s inaugural speech and at the top in a stiff breeze as the sun finally set we got Dr. Zeus. J, who had been running wild like a mountain goat, running for the sheer escapism it gave him rejoined the group and it was a very emotional moment as we all sat tight together and listened and reflected on the relevance to our lives of the stories. It was a very powerful and intense moment. D told me it gave him Goosebumps and really made him think. After a period of reflection Oga found a big stick and designated himself Moses for the night and there was lots of humour around as he played the religious leader.”

Julia Wolton. Personal reflections on residential

During the week significant attitudinal changes could be observed in both young people and the staff. The beauty of our surroundings affected us all and provided a safe environment in which to explore new ideas and grow. The young people’s body language became more open, eye contact was maintained and tight relationships were developed between staff and young people. There was a lot of humour and laughter and when the groups responded and played as children they were given the space and encouraged to do so. At all times opportunities arose and were taken, not only to have informal discussions with young people but also for them to individually and in groups have confidential conversations with the members of the delivery team. The young people received positive feedback and their strengths were identified and acknowledged.

“It became clear that all three groups were experiencing their own version of this transformation in their own way, and the interaction between the group of young people as a whole shifted dramatically on the third day, when they spontaneously
decided to clean their rooms, finding a Brathay staff member, locating a Hoover, and then showing off how many bags of rubbish they had filled and inviting us into their room to marvel at their good work. It was so unexpected and so good natured that we were almost hysterical with surprise and laughter.”

Dinah Senior – X-it Project Interim Status Report

We utilised team-building games; drew body maps and had positive imaging sessions.

This notion of re-enforcing positive messaging was, as anticipated, put to the test on a number of times during the residential. For example we had a visit from the fire brigade after cannabis smoking triggered the smoke detectors and set off the fire alarm. On our penultimate evening, following the alleged second verbal abuse of a member of another group, we chose to leave Brathay. This was to enforce both the positives of the week and the consequences of actions.

Incidents must be expected when working with groups such as these; it is how we respond that is important. The first incident proved to be a turning point where group leaders clearly emerged.

“Following the fire alarm incident, I stayed in the main lounge as everyone started to pack their bags. I was very disappointed at what was happening. In the room with me were Terror, Tubby, Fyber and Buddha. I sat down on the floor next to them and told them that I was very ashamed at them for not speaking up in the meeting. Tubby told me that he had been responsible for the setting off of the fire alarm. They told me that they hadn’t had the courage to speak up in the big meeting and that they didn’t want to go home. I told them that they needed to do something about this and to find the other workers and outline why they wanted to stay. These young people at this point took a clear leadership role, accepted the responsibility for their actions and asked to speak to staff. They took the bollocking they got and argued their case cogently and passionately - we stayed.”

Julia Wolton. Personal reflections on residential

Also despite the “dramatic end” to the residential the following two statements made to me on the journey emphasised the importance of programmes like this: -

“On the way home after our hasty departure he asked me if I was going to stop the programme. He said “please don’t we need it” I told him it would take more than a few windows to get the better of me”

Julia Wolton. Personal reflections on residential

And

“You know you have to keep going with this programme. The kids will push you and push to see if you will stop and withdraw your support. They expect it and have to learn that you will always support them whatever they do”

Young person
During the week the progression of the young people was astounding. The senior consultant from In-volve was able to use the time to build relationships with them. She identified the leaders and explained the forthcoming Leadership programme and its requirement for a total commitment to the process. No more messing around, time to get serious.

By the end of the week all bar two of the young people had asked to be part of the leadership programme.

6.7. THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The leadership element of the programme is being run by In-volve and is still taking place. Currently there are 22 young people attending the sessions. Of these 11 are young people who have participated in all elements of the programme; a further five came in at the residential stage with the rest joining afterwards. (See chart of participants)

It was initially planned to run and fund the leadership programme for eight weeks. In-volve has funded the dovetailing of a RAW programme onto this, enabling the young people to receive another residential experience and six months of the intensive RAW process.

In-volve offers the young people one to one support and life coaching opportunities. They are now participating in major conferences and are being paid for work. In-volve also aim to employ the young people wherever possible and have identified at least one trainee post with an 18K starting salary which is proving to be a good group incentive.

“The aim of the Leadership programme was to identify the leaders in each of the three groups and to work with them independently as a single group. The leadership programme would effectively run as a RAW process, an intensive intervention with a proven track record with young people heavily affected by social exclusion. The aim of the RAW process is to increase levels of self-awareness and emotional competency, and to empower socially excluded young people towards constructive and informed decision-making.

The leadership programme was pitched to each of the three preparatory programmes in March, where all groups engaged well and a total of 19 young people put their names forward.

It was agreed that the leadership programme would run after the residential and not before, as originally planned. This decision took into account the different personalities of the three programmes, which gained momentum at very different times, making it impossible to target all three group in the same way at the same time. It was also increasingly apparent as the project progressed, that the residential would provide the most powerful reflective space of the programme as a whole, and that this would be the obvious time to observe the young people and to allow natural leaders to emerge.”
As mentioned earlier this process is happening now.

**6.8 ONE 2 ONE SUPPORT & TRAINING**

The YAP provided two workers from the start of the programme. One took on the leadership role for the Loughborough Park Estate group and both attended the residential.

Alongside In-volve’s RAW programme the YAP workers are offering the young people one 2 one support. They offer a personal mentoring, goal setting and training programme. It is aimed to provide each young person who requests it a certificated training opportunity. They are also able to offer pastoral care to the young people. These two workers are currently supporting 8 of the participants. So far four young people are taking part in an introduction to youth work course (Run by UK Youth) with another four doing the BAWLA certificate.

**6.9 THE FULL CIRCLE**

It is always a concern when running intensive support programmes about what will happen when the programme finishes. Young people who are left without any support mechanisms can quickly revert to previous behaviour patterns. The beauty of this programme is that the young people come up from the roots of and are integrated back into their communities. The entire group who went away on the residential are now using the Marcus Lipton Youth Club on a regular and consistent basis. The Senior Worker there, who worked on the residential, reports that the group is now actively involved in and taking on a number of positive leadership roles within the youth club. She has also commented on their politeness and respectful approach; this about a group which contains some young people she had previously banned from the club forever.

In-volve also makes a strong commitment to the participants of their RAW programme. The young people are told that they are joining a family and wherever they go that family will support them.

Alongside this we will also be employing four of the current group as Peer Workers on the next X-it Programme.

There will be a final graduation ceremony on the completion of the programme. This will provide a closure to the programme and will enable us to celebrate and publicise the young people’s achievements. Their parents and dignitaries will be invited; we shall have a slide show from all the photos we have taken with an award ceremony where they will be presented with their...
certificates. It will be formal dress with speeches from the young people, good food and lots of fun.

7. THE COST

The cost of the X-it Programme was £44,000. This does not take account of the considerable Youth Service input in terms of youth work staffing (co-ordinator and two staff); provision of meeting spaces or resources and transport costs. Other partners also provided funding in-kind; these include the GEL team (peer worker), In-volve (Identity & Difference training for delivery team) and the Metropolitan Police (Police officer).

The following is a simplified outline of the expenditure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YAP UK (One 2 One Mentoring and Training)</td>
<td>£9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAP UK (Staff member)</td>
<td>£1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brathay Hall (Staff Training &amp; Residential)</td>
<td>£14,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-volve (Staffing – residential &amp; leadership programme)</td>
<td>£7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Out</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Educators</td>
<td>£2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Funding was raised from a variety of sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Office of London</td>
<td>£20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution Brathay Hall (Sponsorship programme)</td>
<td>£2,809.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coldharbour Community Safety Team</td>
<td>£5,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brixton Police</td>
<td>£7,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth Youth &amp; Play Service</td>
<td>£2,638.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Community Safety Fund</td>
<td>£3,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwood Community Safety Team</td>
<td>£3,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. CONCLUSION

Currently the X-it pilot programme is still running and criminologists Roger Matthews (South Bank University) and John Pitts (Luton University) are undertaking a formal evaluation. Until the evaluation has been completed it is impossible to conclusively identify what we have achieved.

Notwithstanding the above, the staff that have worked on the X-it programme have all observed considerable behavioural changes in the young people. This is most noticeable in those young people who have been involved in all the elements of the X-it Programme, many of whom, having started to discover a sense of identity and self-worth, are behaving more positively. Their offending rate has gone down and they are taking up opportunities to progress with an eagerness and hunger that is amazing and wonderful to observe. They are moving and speaking with confidence, accepting responsibility for their actions and stepping to the plate when asked. They have made a commitment to being honest and open with who they are and from that they are starting to blossom into their true potential. The group has now matured to a level where it has created it’s own systems of mutual support. Members of the group now encourage each other to participate in the Programme rather than sitting back, enjoying and egging on other’s disruptive behaviour.

Outside agencies such as YOT and young people’s legal representatives have told me that they can see visible differences in young people attending the programme.

For me there is a vast range of factors that have contributed to the X-it Programme’s efficacy. These include:

1. The voluntary nature of the X-it Programme
2. The creation of a team of partners all of whom were able to bring different skills to the table
3. The succession of the modules which started softly and progressed to an intensive RAW programme
4. The diversity of the staff team
5. The role of the peer workers
6. Possibly controversially, I also believe a key to the success of the X-it Programme was having a police officer on the staff. It can be seen from the above table that those with whom the policeman worked directly have a 100% attendance record. The support that he was able to offer and deliver to them during court appearances and on being arrested was phenomenal. He also retrieved mobile phones, clothing and bikes from various local police stations for the young people. The young people despite the “on road culture” acknowledge him in uniform openly in the street and hold him with the utmost regard.
7. The development of a common work style, underlying ethos and training programme
8. Having a good level of funding enabling us to deliver a high quality programme

I have thoroughly enjoyed the whole process of creating and implementing the X-it Programme. To be able to design, source funding for, work on and then watch as the effectiveness of the programme has unfurled before my eyes has been a humbling experience. I have learnt a huge amount both from the experience and the professionalism of my fellow workers and young people.

The perceived successes from this pilot have led to the securing of funding for a second programme. The lessons learnt will be absorbed and the programme adapted and modified where appropriate.

Fundamentally I have learnt that young people respond to your expectations; if these are low they play to the stereotypes. An approach that treats them with respect and honesty provides positive messaging and an opportunity to explore their hopes and fears gives them high aspirations. Both are self-fulfilling prophecies.

The participatory nature of the X-it Programme with its “lead by example” style meant that members of the delivery team also showed signs of significant personal growth. Adults and young people alike share the learning process and ethos of the Programme, resulting in its greatest strength:

“A Cohesive Commonality of Purpose.”

Julia Wolton (X-it Programme co-ordinator)
July 05
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