



Practical Pointers: Youth Voice Practical Pointers leaflets aim to pass on useful information to practitioners working with young people

East Brighton Black and Minority Ethnic Young Person's Project Residential to Calshot by Helen Cammock

Helen Cammock and Anna Kennedy took a group of six young people from the East Brighton Black and Minority Ethnic Young Person's Group for a residential weekend at Calshot activity centre.

What follows is an excerpt from a report of that experience.

The full report contained very useful feedback on exercises and worksheets to be used in YVPP publications which the group piloted during the weekend.

Residential experience

A residential activity was something that the group members had been requesting for over a year. As a project, we didn't have the resources for this and so this opportunity meant that we were able to respond to something the group had been saying they wanted.

The young people felt heard and one said, 'At last we get to go away! I've been waiting all week – it's been the slowest week ever'.

(This young person struggles with school attendance and sometimes group attendance but was ready for pick up at the requested time with all the equipment he was required to bring.)

We had planned some group activities, alongside the Calshot activities, to further support the young people to work together as a group.

We had a film screening of a pre-agreed movie, a group quiz (with particular questions designed to explore and develop their knowledge of Black History), group sports' activities and a bracing walk by the sea.

The weather was very cold and so outdoor activities were cut to a minimum – we had an X-Factor evening on Saturday night and film screening on Friday night. The remainder of the time was spent doing three Calshot activities, piloting the YVPP worksheets and the group activities outlined above.

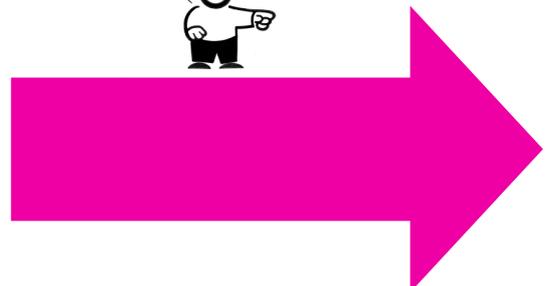
The group loved the food – one of the young people has real difficulty eating regularly and he ate three full meals each day including a cooked breakfast. He said that he 'hadn't eaten so much food ever'.

All the group had discussions about the food, how well-fed they felt, and how much they liked the food. They felt nurtured and made jokes about the kitchen staff giving them extra-large portions.

The residential was incredibly successful for the group – the young people were respectful of each other, us as staff and of the space at Calshot.

The young people devised and agreed to a set of ground rules. They adhered to them well and reminded each other of them on one occasion when someone stepped outside of the agreement.

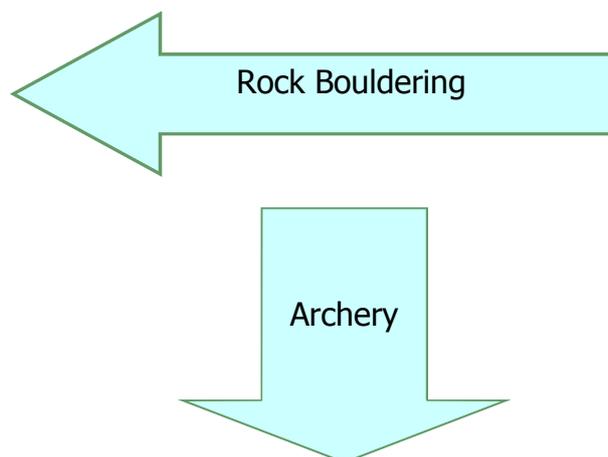
The Calshot team was excellent; flexible and supportive. In particular Ben, the duty manager during our stay, Ben made every effort to accommodate the needs and interests of the group – including setting up a private lounge for our X factor party.



Physical activities in the group

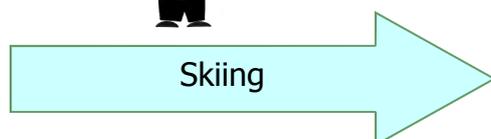
This was the group's first activity after we arrived at Calshot. It was late in the evening after a 2 and a half hour journey and the young people were tired. They found this activity hard and one young person kept getting cramp. I think this activity would have been better enjoyed had it been done the next day.

Calshot had been flexible however, as we were planned in for the Egg Challenge that evening, which we could not arrive in time for, so they changed the activity to rock bouldering for us.



Archery was really enjoyed by the whole group. One young woman was so inhibited that she took a while to settle with the activity.

With the support of staff (our team and Calshot) and the encouragement of some of the group she managed to take her turn and feel as though she had achieved something significant.



This activity was very challenging for 3 members of the group. The group encouraged each other. One of the young women felt that it was too difficult after half the session.

We spent some time after the activity discussing with her how she felt, how she could have managed the situation and her feelings differently and how we as staff could have supported her differently.

For the rest of the group there was an amazing sense of achievement and they all requested to do this again.

Peer support and interaction in the residential setting

The young people worked together really well during activities and also in periods of 'unstructured time'. There was a sense of group unity and we were really pleased to see that group members spent time as a group and in smaller sub groups and pairs with no-one left alone or isolated from the group.

One of the group members joined us on the Saturday afternoon as she was unable to come with us on the Friday (for religious reasons). The group were very happy to re-arrange an activity to ensure that she was able to participate in it, and were equally unperturbed when she missed her train which meant we had to re-schedule again.

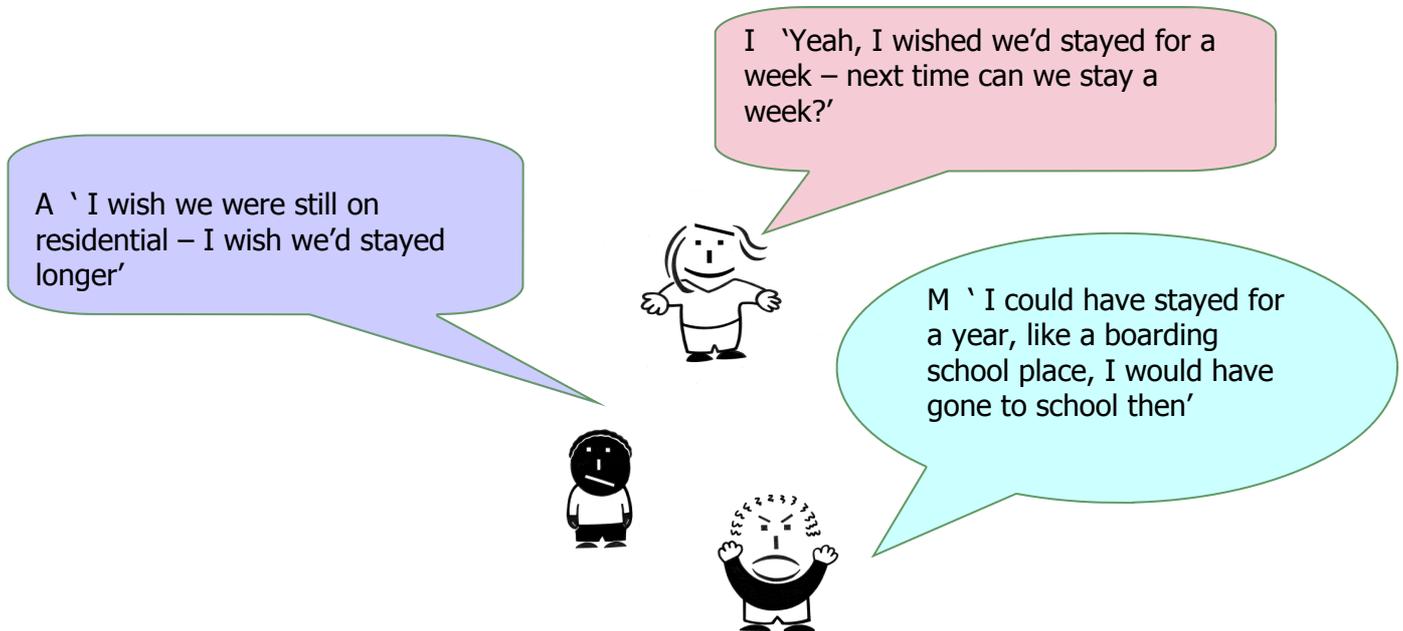
One group member said, 'It's better if we're all here to have a go, it's no worries to me'

Altogether the members of the group treated each other and staff with respect. There was a real sense of group cohesion which is often not felt so powerfully when we meet for sessions each week.

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A conversation in the car at the end of this week's session went like this:



Staff/youth interaction in the residential context

The young people looked to the staff for support during activities and when trying anything new (lining up in the dinner queue, skiing, using the showers, common room/lounge etc). After a short period their confidence grew and they worked together as a group to support each other.

The young people accepted the group's ground rules and the boundaries set by staff. The young people behaved with maturity and this meant that the staff in turn were able to be flexible and negotiate with the young people around some of the requests they made.



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