



Flat 108 - Enabling Independence

Annual Report 2017-18

Kath Starmer & Anna Maudsley



Supported by
BBC
**Children
in Need**

© BBC 2007 Reg. charity England
& Wales no. 802052 and Scotland
no. SC039557

Report on the second year of the project supported by the funding of BBC Children in Need. This report covers the differences we aim to make, the achievements our young people have made so far and their feedback.

1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018

Contents

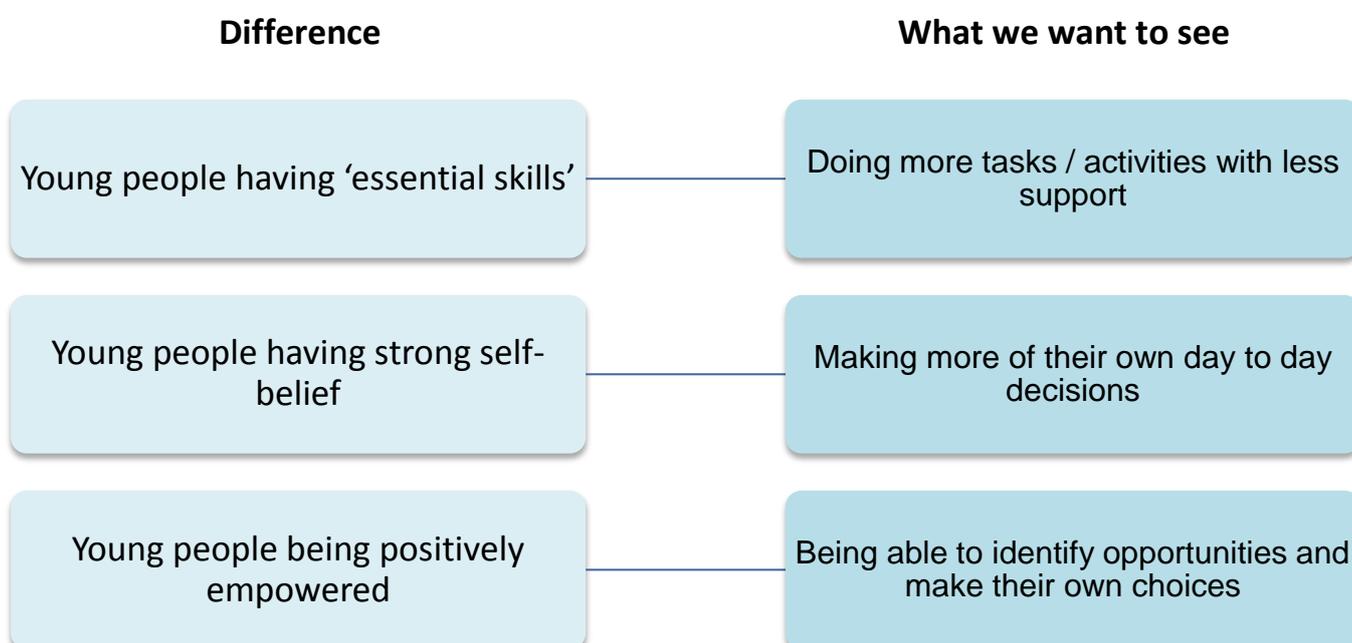
Introduction	3
Collecting feedback.....	4
Our activities	5
Other Work we did this year.....	6
Young People	7
Challenges and Success.....	8
What our young people achieved	9
Difference 1 – Young people having ‘essential skills’	9
The difference we’ve seen	9
Difference 2 – Young people having strong self-belief	10
The difference we’ve seen	10
Difference 3 – Young people being positively empowered	11
The difference we’ve seen	11
Other differences we made in young people’s lives	12
Case study – Julie	13
Working with schools	14
What we’ve learned	15
Author Contact Details:	16
Follow us on social media:	16

Introduction

The Flat 108 Project has just come to the end of the second year of funding by BBC Children in Need. Due to unforeseen circumstances this year there has been a full staff change which resulted in the project suffering 3 months of interrupted service. This said however, we have been able to recover the clients and enable them to make good progress.

The majority of young people we work with are aged between 16 -18 years although we have worked with one young lady of 15 years.

There are three main differences that we aim to make to young people's lives:



We have worked with 28 young people this year. The table below shows the overall amount of young people who have experienced a positive change because of the project from July 2017 to June 2018.

15 young people have experienced a positive change	13 have been with us for less than 3 months so their interval assessments have not yet taken place	2 young people didn't engage with the project fully and left before they could experience a noticeable change
--	--	---

In addition we have been able to secure financial support from 2 further special schools for use of the flat during the day (giving us a total of 3) and we have clarified that the service can extend to young people who reside in the County.

Collecting feedback

Feedback is an important tool that we use to ensure young people and families are happy with the service we provide, it also gives us an insight into where we can improve and the needs and aspirations of young people we work with. We have used different ways of collecting feedback, such as:

- Staff observations and reflections
- Photos of young people doing lots of different activities
- Young peoples' session reviews
- Feedback from the young people involved and feedback from their families
- Young people's use of 'Emojis' to show their mood before and after sessions
- Reviews completed by young people while they were with us and when they left the service
- Follow up surveys we did with young people and their families after they left the service
- Case studies and articles written by young people for our newsletter
- Future goals collages and PowerPoint Presentations by young people
- Young people's own testimonies
- Speaking to families, young people and schools during parents evenings
- Liaising with other agencies
- Attending events such as Local Offer Live
- **Providing young people with communication strategies and aids that enable everybody to have their say**



Our activities

We offered young people a service from Monday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm. It became apparent that the young people we currently work with did not want to attend sessions or groups on Saturdays. In consultation with young people and their families we have suspended our Saturday groups until there is a need. This increased our capacity for sessions during the week, enabling more young people between 16 -18 years to attend during the day when they had a break from college.

Young people had an average of 2 hours per session, once a week and sessions focussed on goals highlighted by the young people during induction. Independent living skills and activities that promoted confidence and wellbeing proved to be most popular during the last year with many young people having communication difficulties that compounded issues. To enable good communication we developed several strategies that young people could use.

Communication Strategies we implemented:

- **Personalised picture timetables**
- **Communication books**
- **PECs (Picture Exchange Communication)**
- **OOR (Objects of Reference)**
- **Makaton signing and symbols**

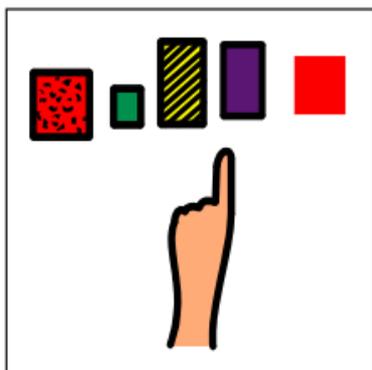
We also purchased some 'Big Mack' communicators that enabled young people to communicate with others with confidence, especially during a coffee morning we held to promote Flat 108. We have also used these speech output devices to promote personal safety during individually designed sessions, using the Big Macks as a tool to create a little fun in an otherwise very dry subject.

We supported young people to learn skills in the following areas:

- Shopping
- Travelling
- Housework
- Cooking
- Making drinks & snacks
- Personal hygiene
- Managing money
- Socialising & leisure
- Personal safety
- Routines
- Making decisions
- Confidence

Young people generally chose to focus on 2 or 3 areas from the list above; however, during our sessions most if not all areas were covered giving the young person a broad sense of development. Personal safety is paramount and this area was always included.

Areas that were most popular this year were:



- Managing money including budgeting
- Cooking
- Socialising & leisure
- Personal safety
- Travel training

Overall young people made the most progress in the following areas:



- Confidence
- Cooking
- Shopping
- Managing money including budgeting
- Making decisions

We ran activity sessions during school holidays in addition to the normal 2 hour sessions. These sessions ran between 4 -6 hours and included such things as Art & Craft, Visiting places of interest, Trampolining, Games, competitions, cookery and visits to the local cinema. We consulted young people to find out what they wanted to do and when they would be most likely to attend. These sessions are always great fun and offer opportunities to socialise with different people. They are a great way of working on personal targets.

Other work we did this year

The BBC Children in Need funding has also allowed our Project Co-ordinator to promote the work we are doing by attending and reporting to meetings such as:

- The Secondary SENCO Forum
- The Big Mouth Forum
- Leicester City Parent Carer Forum

And showing the project off at events like:

- Local Offer Live
- Flat 108 Coffee Mornings
- Local schools Parents evenings
- Awards evenings

We were also able to tell people about our service on:

- Our quarterly newsletter that is sent to partners and families online
- BBC Radio Leicester

We are also now a proud member of the Council for Disabled Children (CDC).

Young people



We promised to work with 48 young people over the life of the project.

This means our aim is to work with 16 young people a year.



Last year we worked with 19 young people
We worked with 28 young people this year.
Making our total to date **47**

So far, 15 young people we have worked with this year have been with us long enough to have a 3 or 6 month review of their progress. 13 young people we have worked with are still quite new to the project and haven't had a review of their progress yet.

We worked with these young people in 1 to 1 sessions to prepare them for adulthood and also supported young people aged 16 -18 years who have attended with their school helping them in personal targets and giving them a taste of what they can achieve in 1-1 sessions.

Schools have referred young people to us for 1-1 sessions once their allotted time with the school has ended.

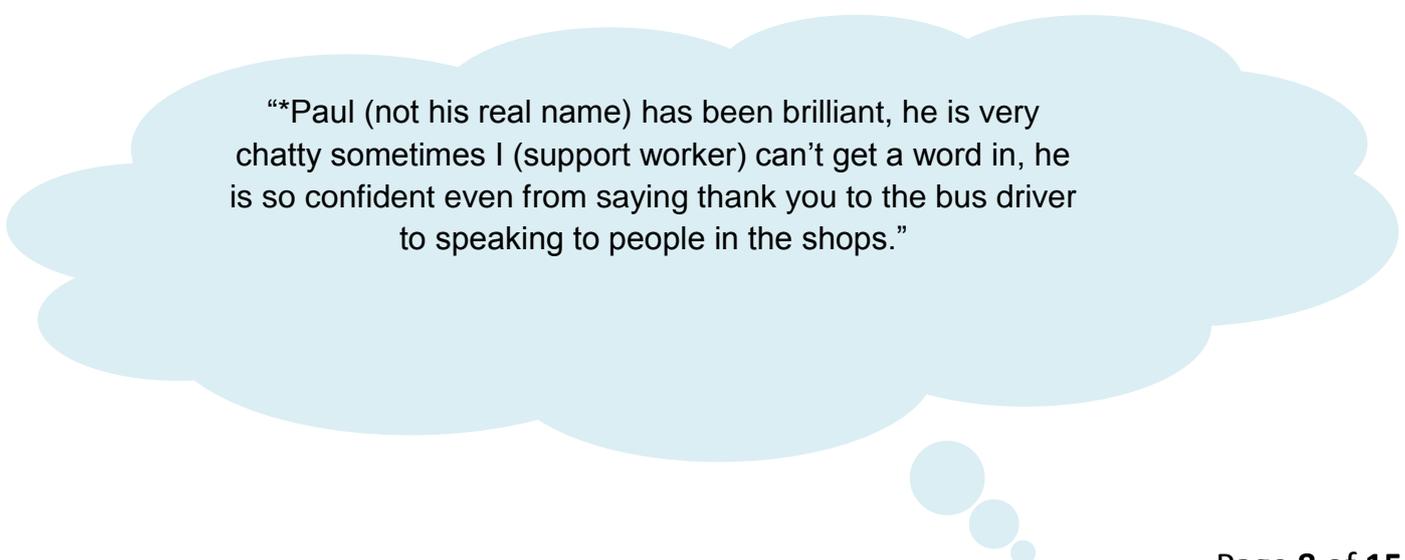
Challenges and Success

Young people that work with us in Flat 108 have a range of abilities and disabilities. We work with them all on a very personal basis, ensuring that each person has opportunities to develop life skills at their own pace in an environment that is comfortable for them. This year we have seen that lack of confidence and poor communication skills can worsen any disability and create anxieties. We have worked with individuals to help them to overcome some of their fears and this has then enabled them to develop new skills and experience more. For example, one young man with Asperger's was extremely anxious to be in new situations, meet new people and to deal with a lot of noise. This often resulted in him refusing to speak and sometimes to display challenging behaviour. His support worker provided him with plans he could use in these situations, supported him in attending college, gave him space and time when he needed it and worked very closely with his family. The young man did not feel comfortable in group activities and had refused all invitations to join our holiday based activities – until this summer. What a difference! Not only did he join the activities but he took a lead role in many of them, using tactics he had learned in Flat 108 he coped with a journey on a train, a meal in a restaurant, a group cooking activity, games and a trip to a local trampoline park.

Other young people have physical disabilities, learning disabilities and medical problems such as epilepsy that can affect day to day life.

We ensure that any strategies, work and aids we use/suggest are consistent with those already used at school or at home to ensure the best possible outcomes for our young people.

We contact young people around 3 months after they have completed their time with us to see how they are getting on – 2 young people have requested additional support which we have been able to provide – moving them back up to or above the levels they were at when they left us. These young people do not show in our numbers for this year.



“*Paul (not his real name) has been brilliant, he is very chatty sometimes I (support worker) can't get a word in, he is so confident even from saying thank you to the bus driver to speaking to people in the shops.”

What our young people achieved

Working with their support worker, families and teachers young people graded themselves at induction using our 'levels' system. Together we then revisited the scores at regular intervals (usually 3 monthly) to record progress.

What each level means	
1	I need lots of support, I have never tried this or I am anxious about trying it.
2	I try to do this but still need support and/or prompting.
3	I am having a go but still need to improve and I don't always try to do it myself.
4	I mostly manage okay but still need some support and reminders.
5	I do it independently. I manage without support. I know how to get help if I need it.

Difference 1 – Having essential skills:

Increasing independent living skills with less support

7 young people have experienced significant progress	8 young people have started to experience progress	13 young people are yet to experience progress
--	--	--

The difference we've seen

Despite having additional challenges of being homeless 1 young person made significant progress; the service had limited time to work with her due to age, but having started at the lowest levels for the majority of areas, she was able to progress to Level 4 and 5 over all areas with 35 hours of support in total (see case study). Feedback from a parent following 6 months support in the service for another young person was extremely positive, they had noticed significant changes such as the child making herself something to eat and use the oven instead of asking, she will go to the shop if mum wants her to grab something, she has stayed home to wait for repairs and was able to speak to the council – this is significant as at the start of the service she suffered with selective mutism. Another young person really struggled in the beginning practically, she only has use of one arm and has mobility barriers; we invested in particular utensils for one-handed use such as button hook, adapted cutlery, non-slip table mats and spreading boards as well as ensuring work on monetary skills was consistent with that done in school and as a consequence she has improved cooking skills, can identify coins and do shopping without support and can change her clothing with minimal support.

"I have learned some new skills such as budgeting and cooking in bulk to make my money go further. The best bits about using Flat 108 have been making friends,

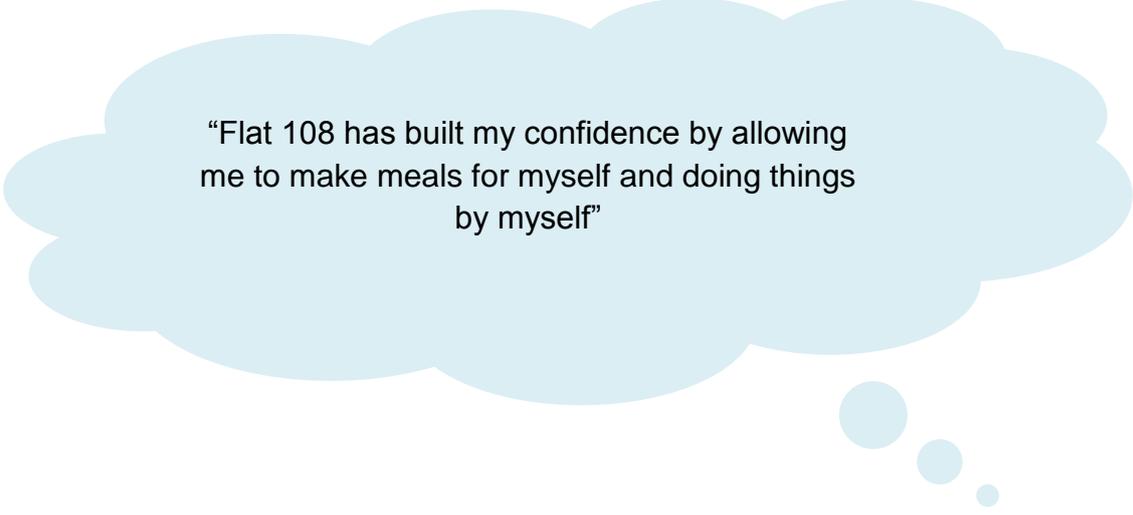
Difference 2 – Young people having strong self-belief

Young people making more of their own day to day decisions.

4 young people have experienced significant progress	11 young people have started to experience progress	13 young people are yet to experience progress
--	---	--

The difference we've seen

This particular outcome emphasises positive risk-taking and therefore mistakes are accepted and 'wrong' choices are learnt from. For our young people, this enables them to consider the order of day to day micro decisions such as not going to the toilet before leaving the flat and how each impacts on the next. This outcome is symbiotic with the first outcome and our case reviews seem to show that as skills are learnt, self-esteem grows and small decisions about what to do next take place and more skills are learnt etc. Four young people have made significant progress in this outcome (1 is explained within the Case Study below), from deciding what to eat and when, to overcoming selective mutism by feeling less anxious about talking to new people in a group situation and increasing personal freedom by using the bus independently. We have also seen that some young people confidently make decisions but don't yet have the experience / skills to see them through to a successful conclusion whilst others have not made their own day to day decisions at all; initially the team enables the development of self-esteem by encouraging young people to choose their activities within each session and providing support to succeed / achieve those goals, demonstrating the result of individual decision being acted upon, for instance, with one young person this enabled her to cope better with change and become better able to adapt the structure of her sessions to accommodate the choices she made



“Flat 108 has built my confidence by allowing me to make meals for myself and doing things by myself”

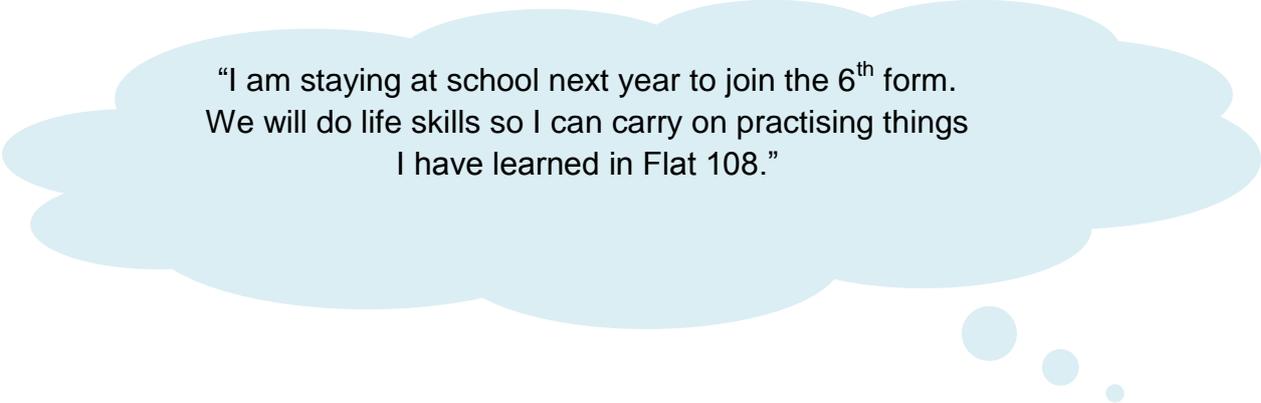
Difference 3 – Young people being positively empowered

Increasing ability to identify future opportunities to make informed choices

8 young people have experienced significant progress	4 young people have started to experience progress	16 young people are yet to experience progress
--	--	--

The difference we've seen

Some young people had an idea of what they wanted in their future e.g. being keen to live on their own vs. parent aspirations for young person to live in supported housing, our service helped the young person to experience what living independently might be like and develop the necessary practical skills, follow through on decisions with less support, encouraging pro-activeness and responsibility so that the respective parent and young person aspirations can come closer together. A young person started with the project extremely reluctantly and had stopped attending his college course having had a negative experience that had knocked his confidence. Within three months, after focussing on his interests, increasing his independence through travel training, encouraging him to participate in building the communication photo-board within the Flat and mentoring him to make his own choices (including mistakes) he started re-attending college building his way up to full time attendance. Another young person has started to make progress through the staff providing lots of reassurance and empowering her to create her own risk assessments for outings, planned holiday activities and helping staff plan for the Local Offer Live event. The team also supported her and her family to apply for a motorised wheelchair; initially she didn't know what she wanted in the future or didn't feel comfortable to say, however, she now says she wants to work in a hospital and is staying on at 6th form.



“I am staying at school next year to join the 6th form.
We will do life skills so I can carry on practising things
I have learned in Flat 108.”

Other differences we made in young people's lives

We helped young people to mature

Over the weeks working in flat 108 we have been able to see a visible change in the attitudes and behaviours of our young people. From compliance when asked to complete a household task normally done by a parent to considering healthy options when buying ingredients for a meal.

“(She) appeared to grow in maturity during her time accessing Flat 108. She was helpful and considerate of the needs of others. She also had a wicked sense of humour which came out more as she grew in confidence”

“(He) has also started to show thoughtfulness for others. After every session, after finding out that the young man after him was a vegetarian he makes sure that the Flat is spotless before he leaves.”

We supported families

Some of our families required support in different areas – from getting a young person to attend college to applying for a motorised wheelchair. We have also supported a family to help their son/brother in personal safety. The young man suffered episodes of severe epileptic seizure which robbed him of some short term memory each time, working closely with his parents and siblings his support worker was able to provide them with strategies they could use to ensure he could relearn information that would keep him safe when out in the community

Communication

Some of our young people have particular problems with communication. One young man on the autistic spectrum did not communicate with anybody except those in his family or those who were very familiar to him. He had very low self-esteem and would often lash out. By using Picture exchange communication, Now and Next strips and Objects of Reference he was gradually able to communicate with his support worker and access the community with less anxiety.

“Achievable targets in small steps and activities have helped to improve (his) confidence and show him he can achieve. He chooses what to cook and uses the communication systems in place to request things as he wants them”

Case study – Julie

Julie (not her real name) has a mild learning disability and was originally referred to The Y after being made homeless aged 17. With very limited independence skills including personal hygiene and everyday life skills, Julie presented with low self-esteem and confidence, often lashing out at things and situations she didn't understand. A very vulnerable young lady, she was often taken advantage of by others and would usually have very little or no money left within 2 days of receiving it; she was surviving on Pot Noodles, she did not brush her teeth or hair and her clothes were often dirty, she had no idea of her body size or about buying clothes for herself.

Julie was referred to Flat 108 by her key worker within The Y. Initially she was scared to come and so only attended sporadically however, with time and patience, she became more comfortable with the staff in Flat 108 and began to attend regularly. Working closely with her support worker Julie decided she would focus on budgeting, shopping, cleaning and cooking healthy meals for herself. Together they worked out weekly menus and looked at different shops to find the best value, Julie experimented with different recipes and making enough to last more than one day. She was encouraged to practise good hygiene including food hygiene and safe food storage. Julie averaged 2 hrs support per week over the 26 weeks she accessed the flat, totalling 35 hours. She often stayed longer and accessed 4 group sessions of 3-5 hours. By the end of her time with us Julie had moved up an average of 2 points in all targeted areas - 3 points in 2 areas.

As her confidence increased so did her self-esteem, her personal hygiene and appearance also improved and Julie planned a shopping trip to buy herself some new clothes with the money she saved by budgeting and saying "No" when others asked her for money. With her support worker and a friend in tow she was able to choose a selection of outfits from a local store. Julie also attended an event in the centre of Leicester providing hot drinks for the homeless, made her views known at a meeting for young homeless people and regularly attended college 3 times per week. By December Julie was ready to move on from Flat 108, she had booked a train so she could go home to York for Christmas and (with her support worker) organised a group activity with 2 friends from The Y.

Since leaving Flat 108 Julie has continued to make progress, at her follow up assessment in March this year (via telephone) she judged herself to have moved up 1 point further in personal hygiene and cleaning and a further 2 points in managing money. She has moved to Somerset and says she is managing well – especially her money.

Working with schools

We work closely with schools and colleges including schools that specialise in supporting young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

3 special schools have been using Flat 108 to practise independent living skills with their students for 4 hours a week. This introduces young people to our service; schools then refer their students directly to our project for ongoing 1-1 support where appropriate. During these sessions which are held during the school day we support young people in the group who are aged 16 – 18 years.

Young people attending local colleges also attended during the day and young people aged 14 -16 years attend after school

School	Format of sessions	Young people worked towards	Young people worked with this year
Ash Field Academy	1-1 and 1-2 sessions	their own long term and short term independence goals	6 young people aged 16-18
West Gate School	Group sessions	AIM Awards	12 young people aged 16-18
Birkett House Academy	1-1 and Group sessions	their own long term and short term independence goals	5 young people aged 16 - 18

In addition to the young people listed above we supported 4 young people who attended with their school but had attended Flat 108 previously. This was to improve their acquired skills prior to exams.

Through attending parent's evenings we have been able to promote Flat 108 and talk directly to parents about how we can support their son/daughter in developing life skills.

What we learned

Communication barriers can affect a person's behaviour, confidence, self-esteem and anxiety levels making it difficult for them to learn new skills, mix socially and feel that they have a role in society in general. We have made 'effective communication' a priority. It is being added to our targets for year 3 of our CIN funding.

Living Skills are something that children and young people need to develop from an early age. Many parents of children aged from 11 years have requested a place for their son/daughter in Flat 108. We have taken this on board and have added this age group to our new bid for continuation funding from July 2020.

Author Contact Details:

Kath Starmer Project Coordinator
E: kstarmer@leicesterymca.co.uk

Anna Maudsley, Housing Director
E: AMaudsley@leicesterymca.co.uk

The Y
7 East Street, Leicester, LE1 6EY
T: 0116 255 6507

Follow us on social media:



The Y Charity



@TheYCharity



www.leicesterymca.co.uk