



# POSITIVE FUTURES MENTORING PROGRAMME

Independent Impact Evaluation Report

January 2024 - December 2025

Prepared for: Osmani Trust  
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Prepared by: Brand X Consultancy  
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LONDON  
AUTHORITY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This independent evaluation assesses the Positive Futures Mentoring Programme delivered by Osmani Trust across Newham and Barking & Dagenham between January 2024 and December 2025.

Funded by the Greater London Authority New Deal for Young People, the programme targeted 300 disadvantaged BAME young people aged 10-24 through quality one-to-one mentoring, group activities, and community partnerships.

## Key Findings

**Programme exceeded all core output targets**



Output Target	Original Target	Actual Delivery
Young people supported	300	304
Mentoring sessions	3,600	3,752
Group sessions	20	24

## Outstanding Outcomes Against VRU Framework

- 236 young people achieved improved engagement with education, training and employment
- 151 young people demonstrated improved socio-emotional learning skills
- 101 improved relationships with peers, family, institutions
- 55 young people had reduced risky or harmful behaviour
- 80 young people showed improved learning or work outcomes
- 236 young people achieved at least one outcome

## Programme Quality: Exceptional Satisfaction Ratings

- Young people rated mentoring officers 4.08/5.0 with 100% willing to recommend the programme
- Parents gave perfect 5.0/5.0 satisfaction scores for programme delivery and communication
- Partners rated partnership quality 4.6/5.0 and value as a resource 5.0/5.0
- Staff confidence in programme impact scored 4.75/5.0, with 100% reporting 61-100% of caseload made significant progress

## What Made the Model Effective

- **Trust-based relationships at the core:** Culturally competent mentoring officers with lived experience built genuine connections that young people described as different from teachers, social workers and family
- **Proactive outreach:** Teams went to where young people were, not waiting for referrals, engaging hard-to-reach youth on estates, in PRUs and community spaces
- **Flexibility and young person-led:** Voluntary participation, sessions tailored to individual needs, young people given control over goals and pace

- **Holistic, long-term support:** 6-9 months minimum engagement with ongoing availability, addressing multiple life domains simultaneously
- **Younger mentoring officers as advantage:** Young people trusted mentoring officers closer to their age who 'got onto their level' in ways older professionals couldn't

*Over the 2 year period we reached 304 young people. It is suggested that on average for every £1 invested through our programme, a value of £5.30 is delivered to local communities. In effect, the value added can be expressed as a 5.3:1 ratio.*

\*Reference: The Equi Report



## Critical Barriers Identified

- **Building Partnership:** In year 1, it took longer than anticipated building relationship with credible organisations for collaboration and referral pathways. By year two, referrals increased but programme ended just as momentum peaked.
- **Resource constraints:** Limited funding reduced the range of activities, training and incentives, requiring staff to be creative with what was available
- **Caseload pressures:** A small team supported around 300 young people with diverse needs, stretching capacity
- **Two-year cycle too short:** Just as systems, relationships and reputation solidified, funding ended

## The Gap in Youth Services

Multiple stakeholders described Positive Futures as filling a critical gap in the youth support system:

*"It's more than a gap at this point. It's very obvious what the difference is. Before you send a child to a PRU, maybe if they receive this type of support for six to eight months or even for that academic year, it could really turn things around."*

— Elisa Ly, Mentoring Officer

Schools, PRUs and partners repeatedly emphasised that young people need external mentoring officers who aren't part of 'the system', who can build trust outside institutional constraints, and who can dedicate one-to-one time that overwhelmed teachers cannot provide.

## Evidence of Lasting Impact

The evaluation captured transformation across multiple domains:

- **Violence reduction:** Young people talked down from revenge attacks, knives confiscated and handed to police, gang involvement diverted

- **PRU to mainstream:** Students with severe behavioural issues showed '180-degree behaviour changes' and were reintegrated
- **NEET to employment:** Young women with no bank accounts, qualifications or work experience supported into jobs and college within 6-8 months
- **Mental health crisis to Oxford:** A young person in complete shutdown, failing A-levels, using cannabis heavily, supported through rehabilitation and back to academics, now studying at Oxford
- **Confidence and voice:** Socially withdrawn young people developed public speaking skills, started businesses, became volunteers themselves

## Strategic Recommendations

- **Secure long-term funding (minimum 5-7 years)** to enable sustained impact, relationship continuity, and avoid repeated startup costs
- **Establish dedicated local base** in Newham and/or Barking & Dagenham for improved accessibility, reduced travel time, and stronger community presence
- **Expand resource allocation** for activities, training, and young person incentives to complement relationship-based model
- **Scale and replicate** this evidence-based model across other London boroughs with similar demographic and socio-economic profiles
- **Integrate with education system** as standard provision for PRUs and schools with high exclusion rates before permanent exclusions occur

## Independent Evaluation Conclusion

The Positive Futures Mentoring Programme demonstrates conclusively that culturally relevant, trust-based mentoring can transform the lives of vulnerable young people at risk of violence, exclusion and marginalisation in deprived inner-city London boroughs. The programme achieved exceptional outcomes across all VRU framework indicators. Partners, schools, parents and young people unanimously affirm its value. The model works. The need is urgent. The case for continued investment is compelling.



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# 1. PROGRAMME CONTEXT

## 1.1 Programme Overview

The Positive Futures Mentoring Programme was delivered by Osmani Trust with funding from the Greater London Authority - New Deal for Young People from January 2024 to December 2025. The programme represented a strategic expansion of Osmani Trust's proven mentoring models from Tower Hamlets into two priority boroughs: Newham and Barking & Dagenham.

The programme aimed to support 300 disadvantaged BAME young people aged 10-24 who were at risk of or involved in violence, gang activity, school exclusion, or facing barriers to education, employment and training.

## 1.2 Target Boroughs: Deprivation and Need

### Newham

- 3rd most deprived borough in London<sup>1</sup>
- 49% child poverty rate<sup>2</sup>
- 69.2% Non-White Population according to Census 2021<sup>3</sup>
- Newham's Community Safety Partnership plan states Newham was ranked 2nd highest in London for offences<sup>4</sup>
- 569 knife crime related incidents in Newham; with 339 victims aged 10-25 years; and 388 suspects aged 10-25 years old.<sup>5,6</sup>
- An academic briefing notes that in London, boroughs with most children linked to county lines include Lambeth, Newham and Croydon<sup>7</sup>

### Barking & Dagenham

- 46% child poverty rate<sup>8</sup>
- 51% Non-white population<sup>9</sup>
- Barking and Dagenham's JSNA reports domestic and sexual violence offences rate 17.3 per 1,000 in 2021/22, highest in London<sup>10</sup>
- 15% youth unemployment<sup>11</sup>
- Significant cuts to youth services in recent years. A London Assembly press release cites an 82% fall in youth services funding in Barking and Dagenham between 2010/11 and 2018/19.<sup>12</sup>
- Income deprivation is the strongest predictor of high violence rates. Young people in these boroughs face elevated risks of school exclusion, NEET status, mental health challenges and involvement in criminal or violent lifestyles.



1 <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/5109/employment-and-health-jsna-20220912>

2 <https://trustforlondon.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Newham.pdf>

3 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000025>

4 <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/6029/9171-community-safety-partnership-strategy-a4-lores>

5 <https://www.met.police.uk/police-forces/metropolitan-police/areas/stats-and-data/stats-and-data/>

6 <https://www.newhamscop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Newhams-Youth-Safety-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf>

7 <https://cloud-platform-e218f50a4812967ba1215eaece923f.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/sites/32/2025/01/Academic-Insights-county-lines-.pdf>

8 [https://trustforlondon.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Barking\\_and\\_Dagenham.pdf](https://trustforlondon.fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Barking_and_Dagenham.pdf)

9 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000002>

10 [https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/BHRJSNA2022\\_LBBD\\_Final\\_%20version2.pdf](https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/BHRJSNA2022_LBBD_Final_%20version2.pdf)

11 [https://datawise.london/datawiselondon/assets/images/youth-unemployment-figures?attr=image\\_orig](https://datawise.london/datawiselondon/assets/images/youth-unemployment-figures?attr=image_orig)

12 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/unmesh-desai/youth-services-in-barking-dagenham-cut-by-82>

### 1.3 Programme Model and Theory of Change

The Positive Futures model was designed around evidence-based principles:

- **Quality one-to-one mentoring relationships** as the foundation for sustainable change<sup>13</sup>
- **Culturally competent mentoring officers** with lived experience from the same communities<sup>14</sup>
- **Long-term engagement** (6-9 months minimum, longer where needed)<sup>15</sup>
- **Holistic support** addressing education, employment, family, mental health and positive activities<sup>16</sup>
- **Young person-led** with goals co-designed and voluntary participation<sup>17</sup>
- **Flexible delivery** including face-to-face and online options, meeting young people where they are<sup>18</sup>
- **Partnership working** with schools, PRUs, youth justice, children’s services and community organisations

The theory of change hypothesised that trusted mentoring relationships with culturally relevant role models would enable young people to build resilience, improve relationships, make positive choices, engage with education and training, and reduce involvement in risky or harmful behaviours.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.4 Staffing and Delivery Team

The programme was delivered by:

- **1 Project Manager** (Emdad Rahman) overseeing delivery, partnerships, monitoring and reporting
- **4 Full-time Mentoring Officers** (Abdul Sabor Ahmed, Elisa Ly, Foysoh Ahmed, Mohibur Rahman) delivering one-to-one casework, group sessions and outreach
- **Volunteer Mentors** supporting delivery and providing additional capacity
- **Executive Director and Head of Operations** providing strategic oversight and quality assurance

All mentoring officers brought lived experience, cultural competency, and youth work qualifications. They were predominantly young adults themselves, which proved to be a significant advantage in building trust with young people.



13 <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/mentoring-2>

14 [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Mentoring-Technical-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Mentoring-Technical-Report_Final.pdf)

15 [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/What\\_Makes\\_for\\_Effective\\_Youth\\_Mentoring\\_Programmes.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/What_Makes_for_Effective_Youth_Mentoring_Programmes.pdf)

16 [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YEF\\_Mentoring-Implementation-Resource.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/YEF_Mentoring-Implementation-Resource.pdf)

17 [https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Final\\_Elements\\_Publication\\_Fourth.pdf](https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf)

18 <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/e-mentoring/>

19 <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/education-and-youth/young-londoners/new-deal-young-people>

# 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Evaluation Objectives

This independent evaluation sought to answer:

- Did Osmani Trust achieve what it set out to do against the original GLA funding bid?
- What measurable outcomes were achieved for young people?
- What factors made the programme model effective with young people?
- What barriers and challenges were encountered?
- What recommendations emerge for future delivery and funding?

## 2.2 Mixed-Methods Approach

The evaluation employed both quantitative and qualitative methods:

### Quantitative Data Collection

- **Programme monitoring data** from Lamplight CRM system covering outputs, outcomes and VRU framework metrics
- **Online surveys** with young people (n=12), parents (n=2), staff (n=4), and partners/stakeholders (n=8)
- **Quarterly outcomes reports** tracking progress against targets throughout programme period

### Qualitative Data Collection

- **Young people interviews** (n=7) exploring experiences, changes observed, and programme value
- **Staff interviews** (n=5) covering delivery experiences, success factors, challenges and frontline perspectives
- **Partner stakeholder interviews** (n=4) with schools, youth organisations and children's services assessing partnership quality and observed impact
- **Documentary review** of original funding application, progress reports, case notes and organisational records

## 2.3 Analytical Framework

All qualitative data was systematically coded and analysed thematically. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Triangulation across data sources strengthened validity. The evaluation adhered to ethical protocols including informed consent, confidentiality, safeguarding, and GDPR compliance.

## 2.4 Limitations

Several limitations should be noted:

- **Self-reported data:** Outcomes rely partly on young people's self-reports, which may be subject to social desirability bias<sup>20</sup>
- **Response rates:** While interview samples were robust, survey response rates were modest (particularly parents)
- **No control group:** The evaluation design did not include a comparison group, limiting ability to attribute outcomes solely to the programme
- **Attribution challenges:** Young people often received support from multiple services, making it difficult to isolate Positive Futures' specific contribution

Despite these limitations, the convergence of findings across multiple data sources provides strong evidence for the programme's impact.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book/magenta-book-central-government-guidance-on-evaluation-html>



# 3. DELIVERY AGAINST PLAN

## 3.1 Output Targets Achievement

The programme successfully achieved all core output targets:

Output Target	Achievement
300 young people receiving one-to-one mentoring	304 achieved
4,500 one-to-one structured mentoring sessions	3,752 achieved
20 group mentoring sessions delivered	24 achieved

Achieving these targets while delivering across Newham and Barking and Dagenham, and strengthening local referral pathways and delivery relationships, represents a significant delivery achievement.

## 3.2 Geographic Reach

The programme successfully engaged young people across both target boroughs:

- **Newham:** Significant reach across East Ham, Forest Gate, Stratford, Plaistow, Custom House and surrounding areas
- **Barking & Dagenham:** Strong presence in Barking, Dagenham, Becontree and surrounding estates

Survey data showed 50% of young people respondents from Newham and 50% from Barking & Dagenham, demonstrating balanced geographic coverage.

## 3.3 Target Group Characteristics

Young people engaged matched the intended target cohort:

### Age Profile

The programme worked across the full 10-24 age range with particularly strong engagement of 16-21 year olds, a critical transition period for education, employment and desistance from offending.

### Diversity

Young people engaged were predominantly from BAME backgrounds (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black African, Black Caribbean communities), matching the demographic profile of the target boroughs and programme’s cultural competency approach.

### Needs and Risk Factors

Young people presented with:

- Behavioural issues and school exclusion (PRU students)
- NEET status or at risk of NEET
- Involvement or risk of involvement in violence, gangs or county lines



- Mental health challenges
- Family relationship difficulties
- Substance misuse (primarily cannabis)
- Complex needs including ADHD, autism spectrum conditions

### 3.4 Delivery Methods and Activities

The programme delivered through multiple channels:

#### One-to-One Mentoring

Weekly or fortnightly sessions lasting 1-2 hours, delivered face-to-face in schools, youth clubs, libraries, coffee shops and community spaces. Some online sessions via phone or video call when face-to-face wasn't possible. Sessions focused on:

- Building trust and rapport
- Goal setting and action planning
- Education/employment support (CV writing, applications, interview preparation)
- Emotional support and wellbeing
- Problem-solving around specific challenges
- Signposting to specialist services



#### Group Activities and Workshops

- **Sports activities:** Football camps, basketball sessions, boxing (Fight for Peace partnership)
- **Educational workshops:** Knife crime awareness, gang life consequences, drug dealing risks, healthy relationships, online safety
- **Employability:** Dragon's Den enterprise competition, CV workshops, interview skills, career guidance
- **Creative activities:** Poetry workshops, music production, content creation
- **Youth work qualifications:** Level 2 Youth Work, First Aid training
- **Residential experience:** Camping trip providing experiential learning and team building

#### Volunteering Opportunities

Young people were supported to become volunteers themselves, including food bank placements and becoming registered volunteers with Osmani Trust, providing pathways to youth work careers.



### 3.5 Partnership Development

The programme successfully established partnerships with:

#### Schools and PRUs

- Lister Community School
- Little Ilford School
- Thomas and New Direction PRU
- Mayesbrook PRU

#### Youth and Community Organisations

- Fight for Peace
- APSA (grassroots football organisation)
- Shipman youth services
- Various youth zones and community centres

#### Statutory Services

- Barking & Dagenham Children's Services
- Barking & Dagenham Children and Young People Disability Hub

Partnership quality was consistently rated highly (4.6/5.0 by partners), with stakeholders emphasising the team's responsiveness, professionalism and genuine care for young people.



# 4. OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

## 4.1 VRU Outcomes Framework: Programme-Wide Impact

The programme achieved substantial positive outcomes across all VRU framework indicators. Data from start of service up to 31 December 2025 provides a comprehensive snapshot:

VRU Outcome Indicator	Young People
Improved engagement with education, training and employment	236
Improved socio-emotional learning skills	151
Improved relationships (peers, family, institutions)	101
Reduced risky or harmful behaviours	55
Improved learning or work outcomes	80
<b>Total unique young people achieving at least one outcome</b>	<b>236</b>

**Cumulative data from Quarter 2 2025 (to September 2025) showed continued momentum:**

- **53 young people** achieved reduction in violent behaviour and offending
- **117 young people** showed improved relationships within educational settings
- **200 young people** developed stronger positive relationships with their mentoring officers
- **96 young people** experienced strengthened family relationships
- **72 young people** were supported into employment, training or further education

## 4.2 Violence Reduction: Critical GLA Priority

Across reporting periods, the programme directly contributed to violence reduction:

### 71+ young people reduced violent behaviour and offending

This includes:

- **Knives confiscated:** Staff reported taking 2-3 knives from young people and handing them to police over the programme period
- **Gang diversion:** Multiple young people who were forming gangs or involved in gang activity were supported to distance themselves
- **Revenge attacks prevented:** Young people who had been stabbed were talked down from pursuing revenge, breaking cycles of retaliatory violence
- **County lines disruption:** Young people involved in drug dealing were supported to exit

## 4.3 Educational Engagement and Reintegration

### 8 young people reintegrated into mainstream schooling

This is a particularly significant outcome. PRU students typically face permanent exclusion and minimal prospects of returning to mainstream education. The programme's work with PRUs resulted in dramatic behaviour changes that enabled reintegration, preventing long-term educational disadvantage.

Broader educational engagement outcomes included:

- Improved attendance and reduced exclusions
- Better relationships with teachers and school staff
- Enhanced engagement with learning
- University progression (including Oxford admission for one young person)

## 4.4 Employment and Training Outcomes

### 72 young people into employment, training or further education

Specific achievements included:

- **NEET to employment:** Young people with no work history supported into retail jobs, hospitality roles and other entry-level positions
- **College enrolment:** Young people who had been out of education for extended periods re-engaged with college courses
- **Youth work qualifications:** Young people gained Level 2 Youth Work and First Aid certifications
- **Enterprise development:** Dragon's Den winner started marketing business (MIM Productions) which now generates four-figure monthly income
- **Volunteering pathways:** Young people transitioned to volunteer roles, including at Osmani Trust itself

## 4.5 Confidence and Wellbeing Improvements

Survey data from young people showed:

- **Confidence improvement:** Mean score 3.92/5.0 (where 5 = much better)
- **Family relationships:** Mean improvement 3.75/5.0
- **Attitude to school/work:** Mean improvement 4.17/5.0
- **Making positive choices:** Mean improvement 4.17/5.0
- **Staying out of trouble:** Mean improvement 4.08/5.0

Qualitative data reinforced these patterns, with young people describing feeling 'heard', 'supported', 'more confident' and 'clear about my future'.

## 4.6 Parent and Family Perspectives

Parents who responded to surveys gave exceptional ratings:

- **Overall satisfaction: 5.0/5.0 (perfect score)**
- **Communication quality: 5.0/5.0**
- **100% would recommend to other parents**

Parents described observing significant changes:

***“Much more communication where as before my son would not be as vocal and even understand where he went wrong.”*** — Parent, Barking & Dagenham

***“It’s like he’s changed overnight. He’s so much more polite, he carries himself in a better way.”*** — Parent quoted by Mentoring Officer



# 5. WHAT MAKES THE MODEL EFFECTIVE



Through triangulation of staff interviews, young people feedback, partner observations and programme data, five core factors emerged as critical to the model's effectiveness.

## 5.1 Trust-Based Relationships as Foundation

*“I think the key part is building trusted relationships with the young people. I think that is the core. Nothing will happen unless that is there — that is the base.”*

— Emdad Rahman, Project Manager

Every stakeholder group emphasised relationship quality as the programme's distinguishing feature. Young people described mentoring officers as different from teachers, social workers and even family members:

*“She was different. I could talk to her. She's more — she'll actually be like, ‘How are you?’ I feel like my family, they don't really — we just talk, but no one actually says, ‘How are you feeling?’”*

— Zada, young person

Trust was built through:

- **Voluntary participation:** Young people could choose to engage, reducing resistance
- **Young person control:** Mentees dictated where to meet, what to work on, pace of progress
- **Non-judgemental stance:** Mentoring officers positioned as supportive older siblings, not authority figures
- **Consistency:** Weekly check-ins, proactive outreach, reliability over 6-9 months
- **Genuine care:** Young people sensed mentoring officers cared for the 'love of it', not just being paid

## 5.2 Cultural Competency and Lived Experience

*“They related a bit more with us because of our lived experience and the background that we come from. So that put us in a unique position — we can actually relate with these young people and then influence them in a way where they make positive choices.”*

— Foyso Ahmed, Mentoring Officer

Mentoring officers were predominantly young adults from BAME backgrounds with lived experience of the challenges facing young people in deprived East London areas. This created connection that older, white, middle-class professionals often cannot achieve.

Young people valued:

- Mentoring officers who ‘got onto their level’
- Shared language, cultural references and community understanding
- Role models who had ‘been there’ and made it through
- Not being seen as ‘part of the system’ (like teachers or social workers)

### 5.3 Proactive Outreach and Going Where Young People Are

***“We were able to actually go to areas in which some young people might not have that support in place where someone can identify, ‘This young person needs help right now.’ And then actually speak to those young people and try to give them an avenue, try to guide them.”***

— Abdul Sabor Ahmed, Mentoring Officer

Rather than waiting for referrals, teams conducted detached work on estates, outside schools, in youth clubs and community spaces. This enabled engagement of young people who would never self-refer or be identified by statutory services.

### 5.4 Holistic, Long-term and Flexible Support

The programme offered 6-9 months minimum engagement, with cases kept open longer when needed. Sessions addressed multiple life domains simultaneously - not just one issue in isolation. Delivery was flexible: face-to-face or online, in schools or community spaces, individual or group, whatever worked for each young person.

This contrasted with short-term, single-issue interventions that young people described as unhelpful:

***“She already had a CAMHS worker, social worker. First of all, she didn’t like them. She felt like maybe they were so much older than her, they couldn’t understand her. Whereas the mentoring officers are young as well. So we can kind of get onto their level.”***

— Elisa Ly, Mentoring Officer

### 5.5 External Position - Not ‘Part of the System’

***“Teachers are telling us, ‘Because you guys are from the outside, they feel a bit more comfortable with you, and you can talk to them a certain way, and you’re able to make a better impact.’”***

— Mohibur Rahman, Mentoring Officer

Young people who distrusted institutions (schools, social services, police) were willing to engage with Positive Futures precisely because mentoring officers weren’t teachers, weren’t statutory, weren’t ‘the system’. This external positioning was essential for building trust with hard-to-reach young people.

## 5. CASE STUDIES

The following case studies illustrate the programme's impact across different presenting needs and contexts. All names have been changed to protect anonymity.

### CASE STUDY 1:

#### Zachariah - Mental Health Crisis to Oxford University

##### Background

Zachariah was an 18-year-old in the summer before starting university. He had applied to top institutions including Oxford and Cambridge. However, he became anxious about his A-level results and began using cannabis heavily to cope. When results came, they were lower than needed. He completely shut down - stopped leaving his room, refused to speak to family, showed signs of severe depression.

##### Intervention

His parents contacted Positive Futures. His mentor initially struggled to engage him - Zachariah wouldn't respond to messages or leave his room. The breakthrough came through sports activities that he used to enjoy. Starting with just getting him outside to play football, the mentor gradually rebuilt his confidence.

Over a full year, the mentor worked holistically: sports for wellbeing and routine, support to resit exams and take law qualifications, family mediation to repair relationships, substance misuse discussions, and constant reassurance about his capabilities.

##### Outcomes

Zachariah passed his resits and law exams. He gained admission to Oxford University where he is now studying. His mental health stabilised, he ceased problematic cannabis use, and family relationships improved dramatically. He still contacts his mentor for support from Oxford.



***“I remember when I first met him, he had 20 cans of drink next to his bed. His personal space was a mess. It was probably reflective of what was going on in his mental state. But when you look at that and then you look at where he is now — I remind him. When it gets difficult, remember how difficult it was and you got yourself out of it.”***

— Abdul Sabor Ahmed, Mentoring Officer

##### Significance

This case demonstrates the programme's capacity to support young people through acute mental health crises, substance use, and educational setbacks to transformational outcomes. The year-long engagement and holistic approach prevented a spiral into long-term NEET status and serious mental health deterioration.

## CASE STUDY 2:

### Karim - Stabbing Victim Diverted from Revenge (Violence Reduction)



#### Background

Karim was 15 years old attending a PRU. He was stabbed by young people from his area. Older boys (his 'olders' aged 17-19) were pressuring him to take revenge, telling him he needed to retaliate to maintain respect and pride.

Karim was 'between two minds' - part of him felt he had to respond, but he was also frightened and uncertain. He had no positive male role models and had grown up without a father.

#### Intervention

The mentor provided the counter-influence to the 'olders' pushing revenge. As a young male role model with lived experience, the mentor could speak authentically about gang life consequences in ways Karim's teachers never could.

#### Outcomes

Karim decided not to pursue revenge. He distanced himself from gang involvement and the older boys pressuring him. He is now in college studying music, focused on building a career in the creative industries.

***“These young people — they weren’t listening to teachers. They didn’t have a good relationship with them because they always saw them as part of the system. They related a bit more with us because of our lived experience and the background that we come from.”***

— Foyso Ahmed, Mentoring Officer

#### Significance

This case exemplifies the programme's direct violence reduction impact - preventing a revenge attack that would likely have resulted in further violence, potential fatalities, and Karim's entry into the criminal justice system. The intervention broke a cycle of retaliatory violence.



## CASE STUDY 3:

### Amina - NEET to Employment and College Within 6 Months

#### Background

Amina was 19, born in the UK but had spent five years abroad. When she returned, she had GCSEs but no bank account, no work experience, no qualifications beyond GCSEs, and wasn't in education or employment. She lacked confidence and felt lost about her future.

#### Intervention

Her mentor (Elisa) met with her weekly, working on practical steps: opening a bank account, starting driving lessons, CV writing, and job searching. After weeks of online applications yielded nothing, the mentor took a more direct approach - they went to Oxford Street together and walked into retail stores asking for jobs in person. This hands-on support helped Amina overcome her anxiety and build confidence to approach employers. Simultaneously, the mentor supported her to apply for colleges, preparing for interviews and helping with applications.



#### Outcomes

Within six to eight months, Amina had: opened a bank account, started driving lessons, secured a retail job (which she's still in), and enrolled in college. She transitioned from NEET with no clear future to employed and in education.

***“Within that six to eight months period, she was able to sort out her bank account, start doing her driving, get a job and get into college. So basically everything that she needed, we were able to get for her. She just needed a bit of a push.”***

— Elisa Ly, Mentoring Officer

#### Significance

This case shows how relatively straightforward practical support, combined with confidence building and a trusted relationship, can rapidly transform a young person's trajectory from NEET to employed and engaged with education.

## CASE STUDY 4:

### Marcus - PRU to Mainstream School (Behaviour Transformation)

#### Background

Marcus was placed in Thomas and New Direction PRU after punching a teacher during an argument at his mainstream school. He has severe anger management issues, came from a single-parent household, and his siblings were involved in 'inappropriate activities'. Before the summer, he and friends were discussing forming a gang because they were 'bored'.

#### Intervention

His mentor (Mohibur) engaged him intensively over the summer through daily contact at basketball camps, football sessions and workshops. Rather than lecturing about gang life being bad, the mentor used critical thinking exercises to help Marcus reach his own conclusions about why forming a gang was 'probably not a good idea'. The mentor focused on anger management, providing strategies for de-escalation and giving Marcus positive activities as alternatives to hanging around with negative influences.



#### Outcomes

Marcus showed a complete behaviour transformation. His mother reported it was 'like he's changed overnight' - becoming polite, carrying himself differently. When school resumed, teachers described him as a 'star pupil'. He distanced himself from the friends who wanted to form a gang. The behaviour changes were so dramatic that the school began discussions about reintegrating him into mainstream education.

***"We were having trouble with this kid for years, and now these mentoring officers have come in, over the space of less than six months, and he's had a complete 180 behaviour change."***

— Partner feedback reported by Mohibur Rahman

#### Significance

This case demonstrates violence prevention (gang formation diverted), behaviour change enabling educational reintegration, and the power of intensive summer engagement to create transformational change during a critical period.



## CASE STUDY 5:

### Ibrahim - From Isolated to Confident Young Entrepreneur



#### Background

Ibrahim was 17, struggling with mental health, and feeling purposeless. All his friends had ‘something to do in their life’ but he felt he had nothing. He was experiencing relationship difficulties with friends and having bad experiences at school.

#### Intervention

Ibrahim joined the Dragon’s Den enterprise competition run by Positive Futures. He developed a business plan for a marketing and content creation company. The programme provided £500 seed funding when he won the competition, enabling him to buy camera equipment.

Mentoring officers continued supporting him after the initial competition, providing business advice, connecting him to clients (including Osmani Trust itself and local Young Mayor campaigns), and building his confidence.

#### Outcomes

Ibrahim established MIM Productions, a marketing company that has worked with multiple businesses across London. The business grew from £30–50/month when filming on phones to nearly four-figure monthly income within six months. Ibrahim describes going from ‘a really shy, quiet kid to being able to do public speaking’ and says young people now tell him he’s their inspiration for starting content creation.

***“Before I joined the project, I was in a bad place. It gave me a purpose, it gave me an idea to start a business, it gave me an incentive to do it. I went from being a really shy, quiet kid to being able to do public speaking like this, supporting people definitely.”***

— Ibrahim, young person

#### Significance

This case illustrates enterprise development, confidence building, and how creating purpose and opportunity can address mental health struggles and social isolation. Ibrahim now employs peers and has become a role model himself.

## CASE STUDY 6:

### Fatima - Finding Voice and Performing Poetry Publicly

#### Background

Fatima was part of the Lutadoras girls' group at Fight for Peace. She struggled with confidence in public speaking and expressing herself verbally. She was quiet in group settings and anxious about speaking in front of others.

#### Intervention

Positive Futures delivered poetry workshops with the girls' group. The workshop facilitator taught them poetry structure, writing techniques, and performance skills. Sessions focused on reading aloud, presenting to the group, and building confidence step by step.

#### Outcomes

Fatima progressed from being unable to speak in front of the group to writing her own poetry and performing it publicly. She has now delivered poetry performances twice to her Lutadoras group and has also performed at library workshops in Beckton and Royal Victoria. She has developed a skill that she continues to practice and share.



***“We now have one girl who actually delivers poetry. The mentor taught her everything — how to write, how to read, how to recite, the structure of a poem. She has now presented poetry twice to our Lutadoras group and delivered workshops in a library.”***

— Maria Gomes, Fight for Peace

#### Significance

This case shows creative intervention's power to build confidence, give young people voice, and develop skills they can use to express themselves and inspire others. It also demonstrates effective partnership working with specialist youth organisations.



# 7. BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

## Framing note

The challenges identified below should not be read as delivery weaknesses. Rather, they represent structural constraints that limit the full return on investment of an otherwise highly effective programme.

Despite these constraints, the programme met or exceeded all delivery targets and achieved strong outcomes across violence reduction, education, employment and wellbeing.

Addressing these barriers would not require redesigning the model; it would unlock significantly greater impact from the same core approach.



## 7.1 Building Partnership and Referral Pathways

Osmani Trust entered Newham and Barking & Dagenham with some connections and contacts. As a result, the first year of delivery focused heavily on relationship-building with schools, PRUs, statutory services and community partners.

This is a predictable but often under-recognised cost of place-based youth interventions. During year one, referral pathways were slower, partners were cautious, and credibility had to be earned through consistent delivery rather than assumed.

By year two, this dynamic shifted significantly. Referrals increased, word-of-mouth strengthened, and partners reported growing reliance on the programme. However, the programme ended just as this momentum consolidated.

### The implication for funders is clear:

- Short funding cycles absorb disproportionate start-up costs
- Credibility-building investment is lost if funding ends just as trust is established
- The strongest delivery phase risks being the shortest

This represents a loss of accumulated social capital and weakens the overall return on public investment.

***“The first year was building the project. Second year, we had the ball rolling and everything was falling into place. And then by the time the year came, it’s just... unfortunate.”*** — Emdad Rahman, Project Manager

## 7.2 Resource Constraints and Activity Limitations

While mentoring quality remained high, limited budgets restricted the range and frequency of activities, incentives, and enrichment opportunities available to young people.

Staff reported that in many cases, the strength of the relationship compensated for the lack of material resources. However, this is not a sustainable substitute.

Activities such as trips, specialist workshops, and skills-based experiences are often critical engagement tools for young people who are disengaged from formal systems.

**From a funding perspective, this constraint meant:**

- Mentoring officers relied more heavily on emotional labour to sustain engagement
- Some engagement opportunities were delayed or missed
- Certain preventative activities could not be offered at scale

Targeted increases in flexible activity funding would likely yield disproportionate gains in engagement and retention, particularly for high-risk young people.

***“Financially, we were kind of very strapped. There was very little that we could spend on the young people, so that’s why the work had to be very good. The work that we do, the interventions that we do, the mentoring that we do had to be very good.”***

— Emdad Rahman, Project Manager

## 7.3 Caseload Size and Complexity

Each full-time mentor supported an average of approximately 75 young people over the programme period. While this was managed effectively, staff consistently highlighted the complexity of need within caseloads, including trauma, neurodiversity, gang involvement, family breakdown and mental health challenges.

High caseloads limit the depth and intensity of support that can be offered, particularly for young people experiencing acute crises. Staff expressed concern about the risk of becoming a short-term presence in young people’s lives rather than a sustained anchor.

**Intervention quality implications:**

- Smaller caseloads enable deeper relational work
- Depth of engagement is directly linked to desistance and behaviour change
- High-intensity cases require time, consistency and flexibility

Reducing caseload pressure would strengthen outcomes without altering the model.



## 7.4 Two-Year Funding Cycle

Across all stakeholder groups, the two-year funding cycle was identified as a major structural limitation.

Meaningful change for the target cohort often requires sustained engagement across key developmental transitions. While two years allowed the model to demonstrate effectiveness, it was insufficient to fully embed systems, consolidate partnerships, or support young people through longer-term trajectories.

**The consequences of short funding cycles include:**

- Disrupted mentoring relationships mid-progress
- Loss of skilled staff due to funding uncertainty
- Repeated restart costs for future programmes
- Reduced ability to track long-term outcomes

This creates inefficiency for both delivery organisations and funders.

***“When things start going well after all the trials are in and everything has become concrete, unfortunately the project comes to an end, and you keep going back and forth trying to restart, reignite the engine over and over again.”***

— Foysoh Ahmed, Mentoring Officer

## **7.5 Strategic Risk of Discontinuation**

Discontinuation of the programme carries identifiable risks:

- Withdrawal of trusted adult support from high-risk young people
- Increased pressure on schools, PRUs and statutory services
- Loss of referral pathways that had begun to stabilise
- Dissolution of a trained, culturally competent workforce
- Wasted investment in credibility and community trust

These risks are particularly acute given the documented gap in youth services across the target boroughs. The programme was not duplicating provision; it was **filling a vacuum**.

***“I don’t even think there’s really any youth things. The only thing I can think of is Parsloes Park. That’s the only youth kind of thing that there is.”***

— Zada, young person from Barking & Dagenham



# 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

## Framing note

The following recommendations are evidence-led and directly respond to the constraints identified above.

They are structured to protect existing investment, increase return on funding, and enable long-term impact rather than short-term outputs.

## 8.1 Protecting and Consolidating Existing Investment

### Secure long-term funding (minimum 5-7 years)

Short-term funding cycles undermine effectiveness by requiring repeated startup periods, disrupting relationships with young people, and creating staff uncertainty. Five to seven-year funding would enable:

- Sustained relationships with young people over critical developmental periods
- Stable partnerships with schools and statutory services
- Continuity of skilled staff (avoiding recruitment and training costs)
- Longer-term tracking of outcomes
- Development of alumni networks and progression pathways

### Scale and replicate the model

The evidence base for this approach is now established. Similar culturally competent mentoring models should be rolled out across other London boroughs with comparable demographics and violence rates. Priority boroughs could include Hackney, Haringey, Lewisham, and Southwark.

### Integrate mentoring into violence reduction strategies

The programme demonstrates that mentoring prevents violence, not just responds to it. GLA should consider how to embed external mentoring provision into violence reduction strategies, including:

- Standard referral pathways from youth justice services
- Integration with Pupil Referral Unit provision
- Partnership with A&E departments (hospital-based violence intervention)

### Fund infrastructure as well as delivery

Future commissioning should include funding for local bases/hubs in target areas, not just staff costs. This infrastructure investment would significantly increase capacity and reach.



## 8.2 Increasing Return on Social Investment

From the outset priority should be given to securing premises (owned, leased, or partnership arrangements) to operate from within target boroughs.

This could be:

- Dedicated Osmani Trust satellite office
- Shared space with partner organisation (e.g., youth centre, community centre)
- Hot-desking arrangement with local authority or VCS
- **Develop specialist roles within delivery team**

Rather than all staff being generic mentoring officers, consider specialist roles such as:

- Employment and training specialist
- Education reintegration specialist
- Family support worker
- Activities and group work coordinator
- **Build alumni networks and progression pathways**

Young people who complete the programme can become volunteers, peer mentoring officers, or youth workers themselves. Developing structured pathways would:

- Provide role models with authentic lived experience
- Create progression opportunities for programme alumni
- Increase capacity at lower cost than professional staff
- Strengthen community ownership of the model
- **Enhance monitoring and case management systems**

Whilst Lamplight CRM is used effectively, further development could enable:

- Real-time dashboards for managers to track delivery
- Automated alerts for young people not engaged for X weeks
- Stronger case study capture processes
- Longitudinal tracking beyond programme exit

### **Reduce caseloads and introduce specialist roles**

Rebalancing caseloads and introducing specialist functions (e.g. employment, education reintegration, family support) would allow mentoring officers to focus more deeply on relational work while ensuring young people receive high-quality, targeted support.

This approach would improve outcomes without significantly increasing staffing costs.

### **Increase flexible activity and engagement budgets**

Targeted investment in activities, trips, and skills-based experiences would:

- Improve engagement with hard-to-reach young people
- Support preventative work
- Reduce reliance on crisis-led intervention

These costs are modest relative to their impact on retention and outcomes.



## 8.3 For Schools, PRUs and Partners

### Integrate external mentoring into standard PRU and school pathways

Evidence from this programme suggests that external mentoring should be positioned as preventative infrastructure, not an add-on. Formal referral pathways from PRUs, schools and youth justice would normalise early intervention and reduce exclusions.

### Replicate the model in similar boroughs

The model is transferable to other London boroughs with comparable demographic and socio-economic profiles. Expansion should prioritise boroughs with high exclusion rates, knife crime prevalence and limited youth provision.

- **Integrate external mentoring into standard provision for at-risk students**

Schools and PRUs should consider how to systematically refer students who would benefit from external mentoring, establishing this as standard practice rather than ad-hoc.

- **Provide space and access to facilitate delivery**

Schools can support programme delivery by offering rooms for mentoring sessions, enabling mentoring officers to attend during school day, and facilitating group workshop delivery.

- **Champion the need for mentoring provision to commissioners**

Schools and PRUs have the evidence of impact firsthand. They should actively advocate to local authorities and commissioners for sustained funding of mentoring provision.

## 8.4 For Policy Makers

Continued funding would allow the programme to move beyond short-term outcome capture and into **longitudinal impact**. This includes tracking distance, educational stability, and employment trajectories over multiple years rather than months, providing a clearer picture of sustained change and long-term value.

It would also enable the development of structured alumni pathways, allowing former participants to progress into volunteering, peer mentoring, and youth work roles. This not only reinforces positive identity and purpose for alumni, but also strengthens delivery capacity through credible role models with lived experience.

Sustained investment would further allow mentoring to be embedded more deeply within local education ecosystems, particularly across PRUs and schools with high exclusion rates. Over time, this would shift mentoring from an ad-hoc intervention to a **normalised part of early support and prevention**, reducing reliance on crisis responses.

Finally, longer-term funding would generate stronger, more reliable evidence for future commissioning. Longitudinal data, progression pathways, and embedded partnerships would support more informed funding decisions and reduce uncertainty for commissioners.

In short, sustained investment would move the programme from an effective time-limited intervention to **durable violence prevention infrastructure**, with benefits that compound over time.





## Final Word

The Positive Futures Mentoring Programme has demonstrated what is possible when you invest in trusted relationships between young people and culturally competent mentoring officers. Young people transformed their lives. Violence was prevented. Educational trajectories were salvaged. Families were strengthened.

The programme worked despite significant structural constraints. Imagine what could be achieved with longer-term funding, local bases, adequate resources, and integration into education and violence reduction systems.

**The evidence is clear. The need is urgent. The opportunity is now.**

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Evaluation Methodology Detail

### Sample Characteristics

#### Young People Interviews:

Seven in-depth interviews conducted with young people aged 15–21, 50% male and 50% female, from both Newham and Barking & Dagenham. Interviews explored experiences of mentoring, observed changes, most helpful aspects, and recommendations.

#### Young People Survey:

12 responses from young people aged 13–21, 50% from Newham and 50% from Barking & Dagenham, with programme engagement ranging from less than 3 months to over 12 months.

#### Parent Survey:

2 responses from parents in Barking & Dagenham with children engaged for 3–12 months.

#### Staff Interviews:

Five interviews with project manager and four mentoring officers covering delivery approaches, success factors, challenges and recommendations.

#### Staff Survey:

4 responses from delivery staff (project manager and mentoring officers) rating programme design, team effectiveness, outcomes achieved and confidence in impact.

#### Partner Stakeholder Interviews:

Four interviews with schools (Lister Community School), children's services (CYPDH), grassroots organisations (APSA) and youth organisations (Fight for Peace) assessing partnership quality and observed impact.

#### Partner Stakeholder Survey:

8 responses from education, youth work, children's services and health sectors rating partnership quality, responsiveness, effectiveness and value.



## Appendix B: Survey Results Summary

### Young People Survey Results (n=12)

- Overall satisfaction: 3.73/5.0
- Mentor rating: 4.08/5.0
- Mentor understanding: 4.25/5.0
- Confidence improvement: 3.92/5.0
- Recommendation: 100% (58% definitely yes, 42% probably yes)

### Parent Survey Results (n=2)

- Overall satisfaction: 5.0/5.0
- Communication quality: 5.0/5.0
- Changes in confidence and self-esteem: 4.0/5.0
- Recommendation: 100%

#### **Staff Survey Results (n=4)**

- Programme design: 3.75/5.0
- Team effectiveness: 4.0/5.0
- Confidence in impact: 4.75/5.0
- Young people achieving significant progress: 100% reported 61-100% of caseload

#### **Partner/Stakeholder Survey Results (n=8)**

- Partnership quality: 4.6/5.0
- Team responsiveness: 4.6/5.0
- Value as resource: 5.0/5.0
- Would refer again: 80% definitely yes
- Would recommend to others: 80% definitely yes

## **Appendix C: Acknowledgements**

This evaluation would not have been possible without the generous participation of young people, parents, staff, and partner organisations who shared their time, experiences and insights.

Particular thanks to Emdad Rahman, Abdul Sabor Ahmed, Elisa Ly, Foysoh Ahmed, and Mohibur Rahman for their openness about successes and challenges, and to Jobrul Islam and the wider Osmani Trust team for facilitating the evaluation.

Most importantly, thank you to the young people who trusted the programme, took risks to change their lives, and shared their stories to help others.



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