**Violence Affecting Young People network group**

**Meeting 21st July 2021**

**Notes from meeting**

**Attendees**

Darwin Bernard, Mayor of London’s Violence Reduction Unit

Chris Murray, Young Brent Foundation

Sarah Willis, MTVH

Safia Noor, Hyde Charitable Trust

Michelle Myrie, Youth Music

Chloe Harvey, Southwark Council

Sally Healy, Berkley Foundation

Killian Troy O’Donovan, Social Finance UK

Aaron Mcdonald, Young Westminster Foundation

Daisy Ryan, BBC Children in Need

Clare MacNamara, London Youth

**Chair’s welcome & introductions**

Sarah welcomed all to the first Violence Affecting Young People network group meeting in 2021. She set some questions for the group to consider both in the meeting and going forward, including:

* How can this group be purposeful?
* How can we generate some hope?
* How can we ensure the intelligence and learning shared in this group lead to action toward a common goal?

We now this year have a rise in murdering of young people, important to have that has a context. We also need to see beyond the statistics and remember that these are young people with names.

The inequality amplified by the pandemic also means we must reset the dial. Sarah asked attendees to tell what they hoped to get out of the meeting in [this jamboard](https://jamboard.google.com/d/1HntWGViPl1enBw8ijw01Yh0Y1MAsglAAJLKtNB-biNc/viewer?f=0).

**Presentations**

**Chris Murray, Murray (CEO, Young Brent Foundation)**

Chris spoke about about the Young Brent Foundation’s (YBF) overall approach to working with young people and their new programme – One Flow One Brent (OFOB).The OFOB programme enables young people and communities to lead and develop solutions to tackling violence. The programme runs across 3 estates and is delivered in partnership with 3 housing associations.

Chris shared YBF’s findings from conversations they’ve had with young people in the last year, which centered around four core issues:

1. Serious violence- adults talk about this a lot but so does young people, maybe slightly different way of normalizing that conversation but they do talk about it.
2. Brent Black Community Action Plan: it is quite a brave step for local authorities to back the plan but it is supported by the community. It is going to have peaks and throughs and will be bumps in the road, especially when we talk about racism and inequality but that is normal. It is really when we come over at the other end where the learning takes place.
3. Environmental impacts vs economic impacts: Brent is a borough where every ward has elements of growth and development, but young people are not benefitting from that economic development. Brand new communities springing up but the community themselves don’t feel themselves part of that expansion, there aren’t job opportunities following on from that. There is a bit of a challenge there for young people to see themselves in that future of growth and development.
4. Impact of covid-19 on communities: we lost 34 members of one community- the Somali community. Much more could have been done for the children and young people in that community so out of that conversation led us to a position where we did some work with MTVH and did more outreach to support communities

From this, Chris also shared YBF plan to bounce back from these issues, including:

* Off and online campus where young people can access services when they want to access it, not when adults say youth clubs close. The campus separates young people by age, stage and interest. If they are interest in music and arts, they can access those services in a particular area of Brent but it also available online where so young people can access it from anywhere in the borough. One thing that surprised us was how interested young people were in environmental action and what is happening where they live.
* Contextual safeguarding as an approach encompasses all the work YBF is doing
* It’s about our systems approach, which is very much part of the One Flow, One Brent programme

Chris also covered how this plan to ‘bounce back’ sits within the wider ecosystem- e.g. from an environmental perspective, it’s about the physical environment where young people, the social environment where young people interact and the political environment where decisions are made that affect young people. YFB also encourage their stakeholders to think about the space young people occupy, whether it is about violence or feeling safe in their community. It also illustrates that we need to be talking about how we contextualise safeguarding with young people.

The One Flow, One Brent programme was where YBF threw all their theories into one box and had a series of conversations with our housing partners about how they could do better. YBF also spoke to young people who told us that the River Brent connect all three of the estates and young people would walk from one estate to the other. YBF used that as a catalyst for change and the golden thread through all of this was the intercultural dialogue (there is over 100 languages spoken in Brent) and the intersectionality between communities. It was also about the complex trauma that young people talk about- whether it is going home from school or sitting on their stairwell it’s about recognising the complexity of trauma young people are experience. There is a really important element about how we are going to change behaviour in the community, it is about our behaviour as adults in that space and how we support young people to grow.

**Darwin Bernard (Community Engagement Lead,** **Mayor of London’s Violence Reduction Unit):**

Darwin shared his reflections from setting up the Violence Reduction Unit’s (VRU) Young People`s Action Group. The important thing in that process was bringing in a diversity of young people who have faced hardship. But the challenge was that City Hall wanted the young people to be vetted, but we know that anyone who isn’t an A+ student wouldn’t survive that vetting. Young people want to work in our spaces, but our processes didn’t allow it. Darwin explained how he took a risk and put out a recruitment drive to ensure a diverse group of young people was involved with the Action Group. This took the VRU about 3-4 months to do- what they found is that young people want to get involved, but they want to know what it looks like and what’s in it for them.

VRU offer pay, training and support packages, equipment (computer, desk etc) and £20 a week so young people can buy food etc. On top of that, young people get to work on programmes. Alongside this, VRU help them explore what they are passionate about- funding them do to that and someone helping them from beginning to end to develop their projects. Within all of that, it is for us as funders to challenge people and systems and show young people that we need to fit with their lifestyle not the other way around.

**Q&A session**

Q How do we engage the voices of 7–10-year-olds?

A (Darwin): You need to come in with a different energy to engage them. You get kids as young as 10 years old who already excluded, the idea of becoming a policeman isn’t even something they contemplate. there anymore. If we are funding these organisations to engage with young people we need to know they can do it practically. Give young people that opportunity to get to know them and develop those personal relationship. We need to get out of our computer desk and talk to people

Q How prepared is everyone to turn around and say it’s not working? Very rarely we have that conversation (especially with funders) where we can totally pivot and do something different. We all want to share our success stories, but we need to dare to say when it’s not working

A (Chris): We do a lot of monitoring checks but sometimes we need to cease relationship with organisations when it is not working. So, when it’s not working I’m happy to say it’s not working.

Safia: from a housing perspective, there is a lot of pushing and pulling, we need monitoring, and we have budget. If its not working, we are not afraid t say it’s not working, doesn’t mean we have ceased that relationship. It’s a lot better than what it used to be.

Q How do we create conditions were the people we are funding can be completely honest without grantees fearing they will lose their money? It’s about Breaking down that power barrier between grantees and funders

A (Darwin): we need to be the ones who create those spaces where those we fund can be honest and come in and have a chat. If we are going to be putting out funding, we need to do it based on what people are saying when we talk to them. You need to create a space where people feel they can come to you

**Discussion with the group: what next? How do we make this purposeful?**

* It’s about listening and the cultural competence. It’s about being intentional about the people you employ and ensure it reflects the communities and funders have a role in that.
* It’s about being visible to the people we try to fund, let’s talk to the people and create those trusted spaces where we can ask what they need to do where they feel it is designed by us, for us. We also need to be asking ourselves how adaptable we are
* And we as funders need to be open about when things are not working- we all want to share our success stories but can funders create the spaces where organisations feel they can be honest about what’s not working? This was something we discussed in a recent meeting with our Violence Against Young People network group