

Cornerman – Using Sport to Engage Young Men in Mental Health

Cornerman is a 3-year pilot project, funded by Comic Relief, and delivered collaboratively between Off the Record and Empire Fighting Chance, in Bristol.

The aim of this project was to develop new ways of better engaging young men from non-white and racially marginalised backgrounds in mental health services and education.

We developed a format that uses sport, in our case boxing and then football as a result of covid, as a hook to engage young men in conversations about mental health that they might have otherwise struggled to access. The format consisted of an hour of sports followed by a group work session that looked at a range of psycho-educational topics such as food and mood, sleep hygiene, anger, self-criticism, stress and others.

We used the Short Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale to monitor any changes in mood or wellbeing through the 6 – 12-week programs. Although we didn't see much change going purely by the results reported by young people using this scale, we did see a consistent reduction in anger, and significant and consistent improvements in anger management.

Some Feedback:

'Since coming to cornerman he has learnt to control his anger, his attitude has changed for the better, he interacts a lot more with his siblings too, he is a completely different child now' – **Parent of JS**

'L has been coming in on time, J has turned it around 360 in maths recently, K's been getting better at listening to instructions, so I've seen improvement for each of them throughout the whole time, really proud to see, so that's my personal observation' – **Pastoral staff member at BBA**

'Before I used to come yeah I used to get in trouble a lot more'

'since I've been boxing I've been going to isolation less'

'It helps me get tired every day and helps me sleep' – **Students from City Academy**

"I used to be able to get so angry so easily now it's a lot harder to get annoyed and angry"

"I don't get mad straight away I try not to hit out now"

"I've been able to fully concentrate on my work and my bosses and team members can see it as well"

"I'm a lot more comfortable to talk to people about my problems"

"I used to not be able to talk or was worried to mention any of my feelings now it's so much easier to say what's on my mind"

"Some people think that if you're a male it's a lot harder to talk about all the things wrong about yourself it's not you just need that group and someone to speak to, to help get it out of you and this is the best thing that I think will help men and women all over because it helped me even when I thought nothing would help" – **Young people that engaged in Cornerman just before and during the first lockdown, including those that engaged the online version**