

Case Study

A Challenging Inner-City School

CPS was asked to initiate work with this school by partner agencies from the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Indicators such as local crime rates, numbers of permanent and temporary exclusions and calls to police to manage incidents within the school suggested that the community was struggling to manage conflict effectively.

This project ran for a full calendar year, from July to July. The first step for CPS was to initiate a relationship with a key member of the school community, in this case, the senior management team member responsible for behaviour management. We engaged in a dialogue with this key staff member to establish the needs of the school, and explore various starting points for our work.

Conflict Audit

This collaborative process resulted in the delivery of a conflict audit for the school. This consisted of interviews with staff, observing a number of whole school days, and conducting three focus groups, for younger students (11-14), older students (15-16) and staff. The intention was to gather and present a range of qualitative data to augment the quantitative data we had been given, thereby providing CPS and the school with a more complete picture of the key issues.

Staff Training

Emerging from this process was an acute need from the staff for inclusion, involvement and influence in any further work. Hence, with the support of the key staff member, a staff working group was established. We then delivered an introductory training session for this group, which incorporated a conversation about next steps, again to ensure a user-led, consultative approach.

Residential Training Weekend

This resulted in 10 staff members agreeing to give up their own time to come on an intensive residential training weekend, at which they were introduced to the principles and philosophy of nonviolence, and the techniques of Marshall Rosenberg's nonviolent communication (NVC). The weekend ended with a session to explore how these ideas and techniques could best be applied at the school. What emerged was a general support for work with the year 9 students, a group which were felt to be particularly struggling with conflicts, both

amongst themselves and with staff. The head of year 9 (HOY9) was part of the training group, and agreed to spearhead this phase of the project.

Work with Year 9 Students

CPS then worked with the Head of Year 9 to put together an ambitious timetable of 60 sessions to be delivered to the 4 x year 9 classes. Space in the timetable was found through the engagement of humanities and music teachers to use their curriculum time for this project. As the delivery took place after SATs had taken place, the curriculum leaders felt that this project would provide an important contribution to preparing the students for the beginning of their GCSEs.

Outcomes

The sessions were delivered successfully, providing the students with an opportunity to explore their responses to conflict, and learn the techniques of NVC. The feedback from both staff and students was extremely positive. 79% of students expressed support for CPS continuing to work in the school, with 22 students (out of a total of 90) stating that they would be interested in engaging with CPS outside of school time.

"The Centre for Peaceful Solutions has worked intensively with staff and students over the course of this year. Their work has been greatly beneficial to us all" – Head of Year 9

Snapshots

One year 9 boy began visiting our office of his own accord, then attended a public training CPS was running in the community. He is Afghani, and told us about travelling back to Kabul to see relatives, hearing explosions and seeing guns as a matter of course.

One year 9 class described by some staff as "evil" requested a facilitated dialogue with some teachers. This was organised with six students from the class selected by their peers taking part. Two sessions were conducted. Both staff and students felt the two dialogue sessions were helpful, they felt that they were heard.