

Case Study

Reducing exclusions at a Community Secondary School

CPS were asked to develop a project which took an innovative approach to reducing internal, fixed-term and permanent exclusions at a secondary school.

What we did

As with all of our work, initiating and nurturing a key relationship with a lead staff member was our starting point for this project. In this case, the inclusion manager at the school was identified as the obvious choice to liaise with CPS, as his role involved constant contact with those students most at risk of exclusion.

After-school sessions

Through an exploration of the issues these students faced, we developed the concept of delivering a series of workshop sessions outside of school hours, at the CPS office rather than within the school. This was driven by an understanding of the needs of the group of students we were proposing to work with, all of whom had extensive negative associations with the school environment. It was felt that these sessions would be much more effective if the students were taken out of this environment, giving them more space for reflection.

Through two introductory sessions, CPS got the engagement of a group of 8 students, all of whom had a track record of behaviour issues and exclusions. The students agreed to give up their own time to take part in a series of 6 evening workshops.

Over the course of the workshops, the students were given the opportunity to share their experiences of conflict within school and elsewhere. They were then introduced to the concepts of nonviolent communication (NVC) and, through the use of examples from their own experience, shown how they might apply these techniques in their own daily lives.

Outcomes

The feedback from the students for these sessions was extremely positive –

“I’ve learned a lot still from what we did... it kind of helped me in a way... it opened my eyes to stop getting into fights which aren’t good for me”

“I talk to the two people who are fighting and try to resolve the situation... I try to help them to sort it out the easy way”

The rates of exclusions from this group also suggests the sessions were effective –

	Number of Internal or Fixed-term exclusions
4 month period prior to sessions -	11
During the delivery of the sessions (2 months)	1
4 month period following the sessions	3

The inclusion manager, who attended the sessions, also felt that he had benefitted from the project -

“It has certainly made me think about my own anger and has given me insight into how [the students] think”

Snapshots

One participant described a teacher telling them that :
“The only way you’ll ever get in the paper is when you get put in jail” – after the group initially found this funny, they discussed how it left this person feeling hopeless and embarrassed.

The group surprised us by drawing a ‘goodbye and thanks’ poster at the end of the last session.