



Risky business – preventing the escalation of harmful behaviour

The tailored group work offered by CashBack 180 provides effective, engaging support for students to get their behaviours in school and the wider community back on track.

CashBack 180 is delivered by Mayfield and Easthouses Youth 2000 project (Y2K). The programme provides support to schools and their students through group youthwork and one-to-one support sessions, tailored to young people's needs. In this case study Fiona McDonald, a Head of House at Newbattle High School, explains why the support provided by Y2K is so important for the school and its students, why the CashBack 180 delivery model works, and positive changes she has seen in the young people who have accessed support.

“ Because of the risk, I think we felt that the group itself was just at risk of somebody getting really hurt. And when they reach that point, that's always when Y2K comes into our head, where there is a risk of something, either dangerous or detrimental happening to these young people.”

The need for change

Risky behaviour outside of school and disruptive behaviour inside school led to staff identifying the need for Y2K to deliver group-based support to a group of friends.

“They are a friendship group, so we decided to target them as a friendship group, because they had been involved in a number of issues, primarily in the community, but just after school, and if not, you know, direct perpetrators of violence, certainly on the periphery of it.”

“And in a less important sense, there were some behaviours in school we were concerned about, just silly behaviours that the boys didn’t see as serious, you know, daft stuff like running around in the corridors and the way that they were engaging with members of staff.”

The right environment and approach to working with young people

School staff knew a different approach was needed and were confident that Y2K could help the young men to achieve the change they wanted to see.

“There was a real difficulty in engaging the group and having discussions around making more positive choices. And because Y2K have such brilliant relationships and a great standing in the community, the idea was if we could bring them together as a friendship group, in a really safe environment to have open discussions about kind of risky behaviours to see if we could see that positively in the community.”

“With this group, in particular, it was a reduction in violence. You know, we wanted to see less black eyes to put it bluntly coming in the door. But also, we wanted them to be able to have restorative conversations because we found they had just almost as a double down on this narrative about violence being their way of solving things.”

Clear improvements in behaviour, maturity and engagement

Since their participation in CashBack 180, teachers have found the group more open to constructive conversations and have observed improved attitudes and behaviour in school.

“And what I would say is the boys are much more approachable, I think for key members of staff and much more positive discussions and they’re far more ready to be open and honest about what’s going on in situations.”

“We’ve seen a reduction in the silly behaviour in the corridors, and I think that’s largely down to them. I think the group take a lot of pride in the programme that they’ve gone through, I think they took a lot out of it, I think they have matured as a result. And therefore we do have more positive conversations with them.”

“Since the programme, I’m aware of one incident in the community, but to be fair to the boy in the group that was involved, it was kind of a situation outwith his control, but I was really happy with the conversation that we had afterwards, and the conversation that he’d had with his parents about not getting into those situations and how to avoid them in the future.”

Why the CashBack 180 delivery model works

Y2k’s support is highly valued at Newbattle High School. CashBack 180 staff are respected for their ability to quickly forge trusted relationships with students, their knowledge of challenges and issues in the local community, and for offering a safe environment that supports young people to have open and honest conversations.

“I think that the way that they’re able to really positively engage the young people and almost develop more of a compassionate sense around some of these issues, that that’s the thing that makes the difference there.”



“I mean, as soon as one programme finishes, we endeavour to run another one. And it’s very much about identifying a friendship group, a particular issue that we want to target. And Y2K work with us on that. I mean, Y2K has been in touch with me already about a group they’d like to run in August because of situations that the community is aware of. So it is very much a rolling programme here at Newbattle.”

“I think in the school, they’re sort of viewed as trustworthy adults who pupils can have, I think, really safe conversations about difficult topics. Y2K just have such a strength in building those relationships from the get go.”

“So yeah, it’s just so valuable to us. I couldn’t really overstate that.”

In the accompanying case study, students who participated in the CashBack 180 group programme describe the impact on their behaviour and choices.