CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS

Understanding the drivers that may lead young people to commit hate crime

With thanks to Nola Ellen Education Training and Consultancy for the front cover image.

Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank Leeds City Council. This pilot project could not have taken place without an innovative partnership between the third sector and the Council's Communities and Environment Team, which seconded seven Project Support Officers to work directly on the project.

We have received a fantastic level of challenge and direction from our steering group which included representatives from: The BME Hub, The Challenge, Leeds City Council, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Crime Reduction Network, The Refugee Council, The University of Leeds and Young Lives Leeds.

Finally, we would like to thank the Home Office for funding and supporting this important investigation into the drivers of race hate crime and a range of community based responses to it.

It should be noted that this report does not contain an exhaustive list of approaches, nor does it seek to suggest that these are the only ways to open up Challenging Conversations around complex issues. However, we do hope it will provide a useful starting point for beginning to embark on discussions with young people which will lead to greater understanding and acceptance.

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Executive Summary

Between January and June 2017 Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) undertook *Challenging Conversations*; an innovative 6 month project (funded by the Home Office's Hate Crime Community Projects programme) which supported a group of third sector led, neighbourhood level short-term pilot interventions across Leeds. These projects aimed to investigate the causes of hate crime amongst young people and some potential responses to it. By providing a co-ordinating role, VAL captured learning from these small scale interventions that may otherwise be lost. VAL and Leeds City Council worked closely together, with a group of seven Project Support Officers seconded to work directly with partner organisations, to find out what works when opening a *Challenging Conversation* with young people.

What young people told the project

Young people identified a range of issues that impact on their behaviours and attitudes including:

- First-hand experience of prejudice, and in some cases being victims of hate crime
- Lack of understanding of other cultures
- Feeling unsafe in neighbourhoods they were unfamiliar with
- The negative influence of media stereotypes on society, on them and on their peers
- English as an additional language and the use of home language

What the project found

Challenging Conversations projects had a small, but valuable, impact on young people, helping them to build better relationships with each other and laying the groundwork for more in depth conversations in the future.

Key considerations in carrying out future work of this kind include:

- Creating a safe space with trusted adult facilitators where young people can discuss issues of identity and belonging
- Enabling young people to share experiences through shared interests that reflect their own culture and help them to learn from each other
- Recognising that young people may express more negative views once they feel they are in a safe environment, rather than continuing to stick to views that they believe are more socially acceptable. This can be a step towards exploring their concerns more openly
- Designing activities that are 'classroom based' may be necessary to lay the groundwork for future conversations but young people may be less engaged in them
- Adult facilitators need the confidence to start and shape a conversation while listening carefully to young people's responses and taking care not to overlay their own

assumptions or prejudices *on young people's experience; this requires highly developed inter-personal skills and the confidence to question one's own actions and behaviours*

- *Engaging young people in Challenge Conversations requires sustained commitment from organisations to make lasting and in-depth progress.*

Key learning and recommendations

The project suggested that there is the potential for small, non specialist, third sector and community based organisations to make an increased contribution to diverting young people from race hate crime. In order to support these organisations to have more impact there is a need for:

- Capacity building to raise confidence in opening discussions; responding to sensitive issues and resolving conflict
- Networks that link organisations so that they can introduce young people to each other and share skills
- Resources to support organisations to shape activities and the conversations that stem from them (the toolkit and outcome wheel that accompany this report contribute to these resources).

Background to the research

Voluntary Action Leeds' (VAL) interest in hate crime and young people emerged from a number of comments expressed by young people Not In Employment, Education or Training, (NEET), who took part in 2015 research by Young Lives Leeds (the third sector network for organisations working with children, families and young people) into their views and experiences. Although the research focused on barriers to young people securing and sustaining employment or development opportunities, several young people expressed worrying views regarding communities different to theirs. These views suggested that at least some of the young people who are struggling in the UK are directing their frustration towards those from different ethnicities and religions to themselves.

Shortly after the completion of this research, and in the aftermath of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, an upturn in the incidence of race hate crime was recorded across West Yorkshire. A number of high profile cases in Leeds were reported in the press and third sector organisations began reporting heightened tension between communities. VAL resolved to make a contribution to supporting communities to challenge hate crime and the negative behaviours and perceptions that feed it; Challenging Conversations is the first step in this work.

In the Autumn of 2016 VAL brought together group of interested organisations including Leeds City Council's Voice, Influence and Change Team, Young Lives Leeds, the city's BME Hub, The Challenge and local third sector organisations to explore how best to respond to building better relationships between young people from different cultures. This group were keen to see an approach that prioritised building skills amongst community based organisations and testing a range of ideas in different contexts and locations. They acknowledged that a key barrier for practitioners and volunteers might be to find the right way to open and sustain sensitive conversations about tensions around race, culture and identity with young people.

Subsequently, VAL successfully sought funding from the Home Office's Hate Crime Community Projects (HCCP) programme which supports innovative work to counter hate crime. The vision for the project was for VAL to use HCCP funding to support a group of third sector led, neighbourhood level short-term pilot interventions across Leeds. The selected projects would have the potential to be scaled to city or national level. By providing a co-ordinating role, VAL would be able to capture learning from these small scale interventions that may otherwise be lost. The project was delivered between January and June 2017 and aimed to:

- Positively challenge young people's discriminatory views (open a Challenging Conversation)
- Gain greater understanding of the drivers of hate crime / potential hate crime
- Collect and collate evidence of what works, and what doesn't, sharing this learning through a best practice 'toolkit'.

Methodology

The project was designed with VAL providing a co-ordinating role to capture learning from community based organisations. It recruited a group of seven partner organisations who would design and deliver interventions, while the VAL team took responsibility for collecting and collating information about the young people's 'journey' and the impact of partners' interventions.

The VAL team

VAL entered into a dynamic arrangement with Leeds City Council which enabled it to maximise the human resources available to the project. Seven Project Support Workers from Leeds City Council's Graduate Programme were seconded providing a dedicated team member to work with each project. Two of these Project Support Workers led the project, with VAL providing project oversight.

The project was directed by a steering group which grew out of initial project discussions and included representatives from: The BME Hub, The Challenge, Leeds City Council, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Crime Reduction Network, The Refugee Council, The University of Leeds and Young Lives Leeds.

Project recruitment

Partner projects were recruited through an open invitation shared with members of VAL, Young Lives Leeds, the BME Hub and Leeds' Crime Reduction Network. The invitation was also promoted on 'Doing Good Leeds'; the website for information about the third sector in Leeds.

Project proposals were made through a standardised, short expression of interest form which asked potential partners to describe:

- Their organisation
- Their proposed project
- The young people that they would aim to recruit
- Their track record in working with young people.

Eight project proposals were received and considered by the steering group with four being approved outright. The steering group approved a further two applications after further clarifying information was provided and advised that a better outcome could be achieved if two of the applying partners developed a project jointly, with one of the projects delivering to young people while the other worked in an advisory capacity.

- **Project A** was delivered by two community based consultants with a background in evaluation and social action through the Arts. It brought together young people from two dance organisations, RJC community dance programme and the Northern School of

Contemporary Dance (NSCD). Though RJC and NSCD are close neighbours, they could be miles apart in that their young members have markedly different life experiences. The project used three structured conversations with the young people to explore their similarities and break down the barriers that stop young people 'crossing the road' between their studios.

- **Project B** was delivered through a collaboration between three organisations; a freelance trainer specialising in working with young people, a Community Interest Company (CIC) with a background in supporting wellbeing in families and a non-profit DJ'ing project that works with young people. It facilitated interactions between five young males from settled communities and five young males who had recently arrived in the UK through a diversity awareness course and workshop to produce shared DJ tracks.

- **Project C** was delivered by a volunteer led football project and youth club in outer Leeds supported by a specialist organisation working in hate crime. Through two sessions it worked with children, aged 9-12, delivering activities that explored issues of race, belonging and cultural understanding.

- **Project D** was delivered by an alternative education provider linked with a commercial skatepark. Working with young men who had previously been not in education, employment or training it ran a series of activities to explore how race is represented in the mainstream media and develop greater understanding of other cultures amongst the young people.

- **Project E** was delivered by an organisation specialising in employment and skills development with BAME people. It brought together young BAME adults from settled and newly migrant communities to discuss issues over a shared meal and investigate aspects of Roma culture; a culture unfamiliar to the participants.

- **Project F** was delivered by a volunteer led community centre in a highly diverse neighbourhood. Young people from the Roma and Asian communities attended three sessions including a presentation on hate crime, a structured discussion about identity led by a partner organisation and an exploration of the young people's shared interests led by volunteer facilitators from the community centre.

Before embarking on their projects, partners were invited to build their capacity through a training day, attended by five projects, on opening sensitive conversations around race delivered by a steering group member. The project also provided a workshop, hosted by Stop Hate UK, looking at aspects of hate crime and diversity and approaches that could be used to intervene. This opportunity was taken up by three partners.

Capturing learning from young people

Challenging conversations used a twin track approach to capturing information from young people.

To develop an overview of how far young people had travelled in their views, the VAL team designed an 'outcome wheel', supported by a questionnaire, which showed how young people assessed themselves in seven areas related to their level of integration and views about people from other cultures:

- Awareness of other communities
- Openness to other communities
- Level of interaction with other communities
- Level of positive attitude towards other communities
- Level of empathy with other communities
- Level of critical thinking skills
- Ability to express views and opinion[1]

Participants completed a questionnaire at the beginning and end of each project. Subsequently, the project team analysed the results to give an indication of the ways in which young people's views had developed.

Context and depth on young people's views and behaviours was provided by focus groups which explored:

- Participants' perceptions and experience of prejudice and hate crime
- Their views of different cultures
- Thoughts about how identity is constructed
- Views on different neighbourhoods across the city
- Perspectives on the impact of the EU referendum[2]

VAL team members held focus groups at the beginning and end of each project; in some cases where partner projects worked with different groups of young people or not all young people could attend, additional focus groups were arranged.

Capturing learning from projects

A key part of Challenging Conversations was capturing information about what works, and the context in which it works. In order to capture practitioner views the VAL team observed session delivery and received feedback from partners about what they felt had worked, and what might have made the sessions more effective.

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[1] A blank copy of the outcome wheel is reproduced at Appendix 2b
[2] A full copy of the focus group questions are provided at Appendix 2a
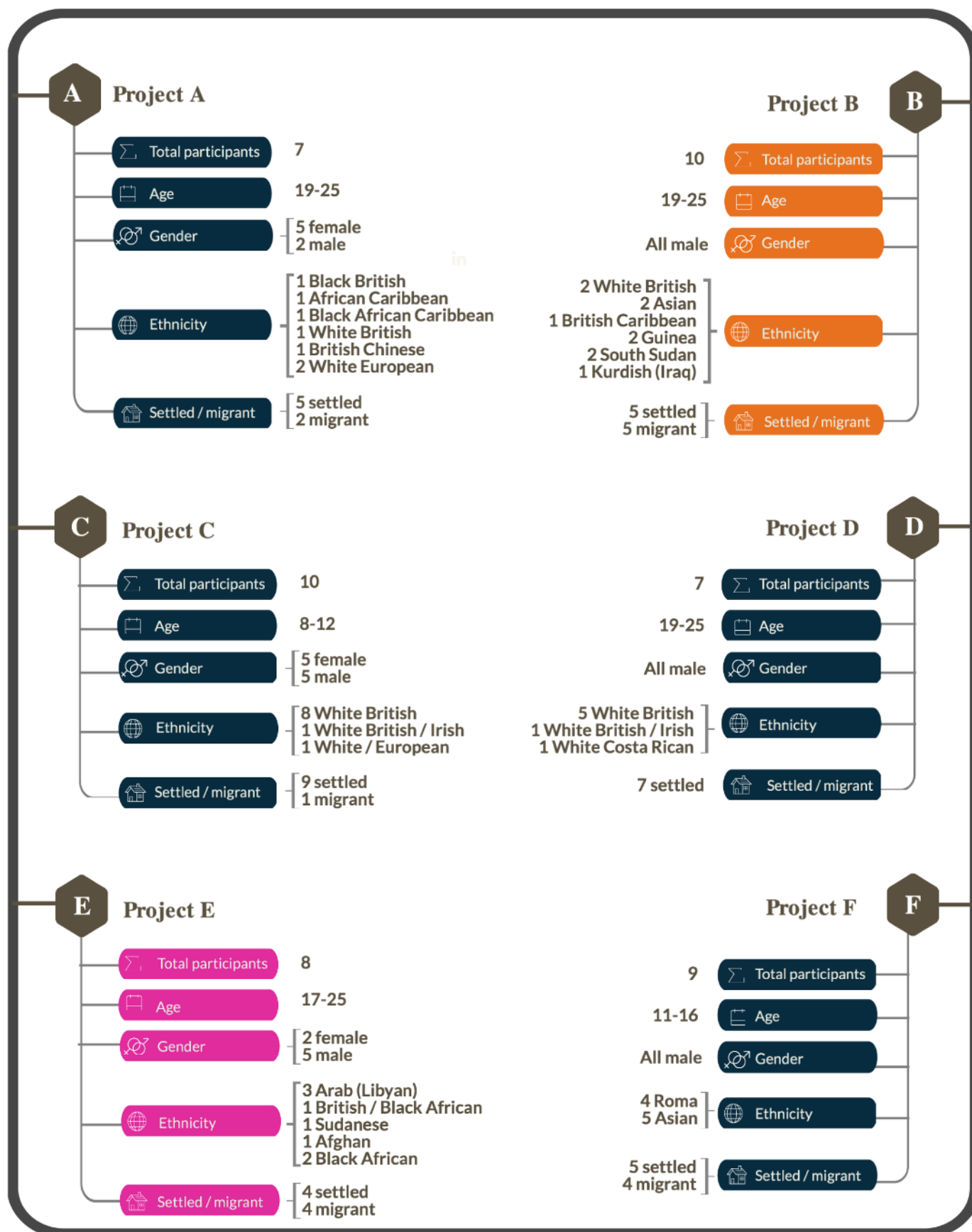[3] The Linking Network: http://thelinkingnetwork.org.uk/
[2] A full copy of the focus group questions are provided at Appendix 2a

When all project delivery had concluded, the project team held a workshop to compare their experiences and capture effective practice. Additionally, five of the project partners also attended a workshop where they shared their reflections about the project.

The young people that took part in projects

In total 51 young people between 9 and 25 years old took part in the projects. The young people lived in a wide range of primarily economically deprived neighbourhoods across Leeds and were drawn from both the settled and newly migrant communities. The table below provides details about the young people. Young people self-defined their ethnicity and it is reported according to their definition.

A Project A

Total participants	7
Age	19-25
Gender	5 female 2 male
Ethnicity	1 Black British 1 African Caribbean 1 Black African Caribbean 1 White British 1 British Chinese 2 White European
Settled / migrant	5 settled 2 migrant

B Project B

Total participants	10
Age	19-25
Gender	All male
Ethnicity	2 White British 2 Asian 1 British Caribbean 2 Guinea 2 South Sudan 1 Kurdish (Iraq)
Settled / migrant	5 settled 5 migrant

C Project C

Total participants	10
Age	8-12
Gender	5 female 5 male
Ethnicity	8 White British 1 White British / Irish 1 White / European
Settled / migrant	9 settled 1 migrant

D Project D

Total participants	7
Age	19-25
Gender	All male
Ethnicity	5 White British 1 White British / Irish 1 White Costa Rican
Settled / migrant	7 settled

E Project E

Total participants	8
Age	17-25
Gender	2 female 5 male
Ethnicity	3 Arab (Libyan) 1 British / Black African 1 Sudanese 1 Afghan 2 Black African
Settled / migrant	4 settled 4 migrant

F Project F

Total participants	9
Age	11-16
Gender	All male
Ethnicity	4 Roma 5 Asian
Settled / migrant	5 settled 4 migrant

Learning from projects: the drivers of inter-cultural tension and how the projects addressed them.

A lack of inter-cultural understanding

Many of the projects started from the view that many young people have little understanding about how people from other cultures or neighbourhoods live their lives and that this is a barrier to cohesion. Indeed, Project A explicitly sought to bring together young people that share the same interests and practice their craft in facilities that are literally across the street from each other but have very little contact with one another.

The young people themselves tended to confirm that their knowledge about each other's lives was extremely limited. In one project a participant hinted at an active rejection of multiculturalism when they stated that they preferred *'not to bother'* with other cultures. Across other projects young people repeated a range of worrying common tropes and stereotypes; black people commit crime, Roma people are untrustworthy, Eastern Europeans cause fights, Muslims do not take full part in British culture, White British people are unwelcoming of people from different cultures. While it should be noted that most of the participants reported that these were views that they believed other people had about communities the fact that they rarely shared counter narratives suggests that these stereotypes are deeply embedded (the exception to this was around "Islamophobia" where several participants noted that a negative view of Muslims was a dominant media theme).

Some young people, notably in Project B Group A, were aware that their lack of understanding of different cultures and the historical and institutional construction of racist tropes was problematic. They argued that they had not had access to these debates in school and saw this project as a chance to explore ideas in more depth.

The projects took two main approaches to developing a more in-depth understanding of different cultures:

- Delivery of 'classroom' activities (e.g. diversity awareness training) – often with young people from a single community
- Bringing young people together in a managed environment to learn from each other and / or adults from other cultures.

In two projects diversity awareness work was used as a precursor to a more 'open ended' conversation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants tended to report being more disengaged from traditional workshop approaches. However, one participant who only took part in diversity awareness work reported that the intervention had helped them to understand more about why other people were the way they are. Several project leaders also reported that they felt the more formal passing on of knowledge was important to lay the foundations for greater engagement.

On balance more benefit was gained where projects offered a structured opportunity for young people to share ideas and discuss what made them different and what made them alike. One project structured one of their conversations around developing a joint statement of Human Rights, this enabled young people to focus on a positive shared identity while discussing their cultures and how they responded to them.

Facilitating dialogue between young people from different cultures should begin to reduce the influence of the negative race discourses, however it may not address the full range of stereotypes they reported. Future Challenging Conversations may benefit from open discussion about these stereotypes, how and why they are constructed, and the ways in which, in reality, the actions of people – and particularly young people - defy them.

CASE STUDY
PROJECT E
'ASK WHATEVER YOU WANT'

Project E decided to use their Challenging Conversation to address some common myths and misconceptions about the Roma community. Their shared dinner was attended by an adult from the Roma community.

Over dinner the adult invited the young people to ask whatever they liked about her life and the life of her community. The young people felt empowered to ask some sensitive questions and by answering them openly and honestly the adult built a trusting relationship with the young people and offered a valuable insight into Roma life (although it's important to stress that the opinions expressed were one individual's perspective and not necessarily representative of the whole community).

Gaining a wider understanding of the city around them and the people in it

Young people in the projects reported that they liked where they lived and that they felt proud of Leeds and of the UK. Indeed, young people from Southern Europe that took part in Project A compared the UK favourably to their home countries, saying that in general the people were more open to other cultures and implying that there is less overt racism.

Despite this generally positive initial picture, further enquiry began to demonstrate that many young people have limited experience of neighbourhoods outside of their immediate home. This territoriality could be influenced by a wide range of issues including: a sense of safety amongst immediate friends and neighbours, staying close to family, lack of resources and having no specific reason to visit other neighbourhoods.

In one project, where young people reported being concerned about gang-related violence, 'safe' neighbourhoods were, for them, limited to just a few streets.

However, for most young people in our focus groups their limited knowledge of other neighbourhoods resulted in categorising places they had never or rarely visited as 'other' or unsafe. Young people from diverse inner city neighbourhoods, (such as Chapeltown and Harehills) believed neighbourhoods that they perceived as less diverse in the cities' outer ring such as Seacroft were as threatening. Conversely, the predominantly White British young residents of outer suburbs reported that they would feel scared in Chapeltown or Harehills. Whilst it should be acknowledged that participants were not drawn from across the whole city and that this may have affected the range of views the project heard, it was striking that despite there being many neighbourhoods in Leeds that share the characteristics of Chapeltown, Harehills and Seacroft, these were the places that almost all project participants discussed. Why these areas in particular stand out for young people, and whether there are other neighbourhoods in Leeds with a similar reputation, should be investigated further.

Several of the projects made some progress in breaking down territorial boundaries. In each case an important consideration was to create a safe and *neutral* space in which young people could learn from each outside of their normal surroundings. In the project where young people reported gang violence this neutral territory was a community centre in the neighbourhood, while for other projects young people attended activities based in the centre of Leeds.

While the new friendships that young people struck up through these projects could over time begin to change their perceptions of different neighbourhoods, the fact remained that few of the young people had first-hand experience of the places that the other young people live. A next step might be to investigate ways in which young people can visit places that other young people call 'their own' and learn about their lives. A future programme of third sector 'exchanges' could, perhaps be modelled on the experience of inter-school exchanges enabled by the Linking Network.[3]

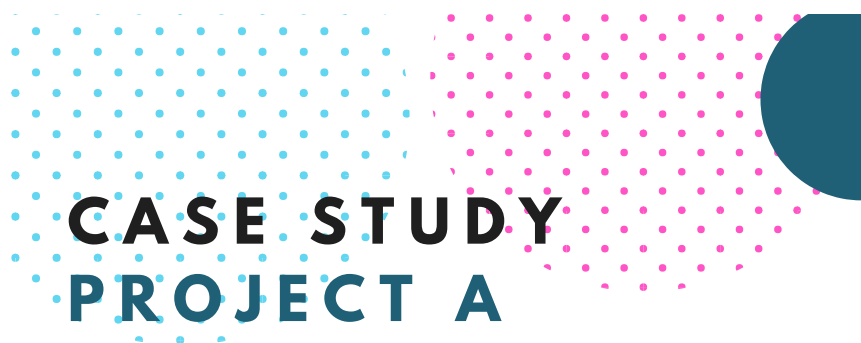[3]The Linking Network: http://thelinkingnetwork.org.uk/

Media and myth

Time and again the young participants in our projects showed that they are aware of the way that the mainstream media construct powerful, and generally negative, narratives about diverse communities. For example, nearly all the focus groups included a discussion about how the participants felt newspapers encourage Islamophobia.

In some focus groups, notably Project B and Project E, project participants discussed their use of social media as a source of news and information. Worryingly, for participants in Project B, where the 'traditional media' was generally distrusted and subject to critical analysis, the participants seemed to be more accepting of information they gained from social media; perhaps because it was ostensibly shared by trusted peers. This may suggest that project participants could be vulnerable to 'viral' propaganda or to occupying a relatively limited world view which excludes a range of opinion.

CASE STUDY PROJECT A

CHOOSING A 'NEUTRAL TERRITORY'

Project A was strongly rooted in the young people's shared love of dance. For their final intervention they chose a neutral space, a city centre arts centre that appealed to all of the young people they worked with.

Along with a shared meal this set young people at their ease and enabled the young people to reflect on an earlier conversation that explored the barriers to 'crossing the road' between their two dance studios. An extra innovation that brought the experience to life was their choice to record the session through live drawing.

There was some evidence that the young people have internalised media / societal stereotypes about their race and either expect others to define them by these stereotypes or are beginning to define themselves in this way. For example, in one focus group a Black British participant discussed how he expects others to see him as violent and can use this to his advantage by using this expectation to avoid confrontation.

Three projects used newspaper clippings and / or documentaries to open a debate about the influence of the media on young people's views. In each case while young people began to engage with the issues the depth of conversation did not extend far past identifying how this fed into public opinion. Whilst these conversations may have contributed to further developing young people's skills in interpreting the media, project partners felt that a more nuanced debate that encompassed the role of social media and how dominant discourses affect their

sense of self would require a more extended engagement. One approach to a longer term conversation, particularly with young people in the upper age range, would be to set some ground rules about acceptable behaviour and then simply encourage them to discuss current affairs including what views they hold, how they came to this view and how it makes them feel.

Participants in Project E discussed the benefits of social media in bringing building social action movement across boundaries; pointing particularly to the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. Future Challenging Conversations might work with young people to explore ways in which they can harness this potential to take positive social action.

Starting from shared cultural experiences

Several of the projects used culture as the 'hook' to engage and motivate young people. Projects engaged with music, dance, food, art and football, generally to good effect to create the right conditions for young people to be able to engage.

Many, although not all, of the young people were extremely open to new cultural experiences that built on their existing interests. Even where some young people expressed negative views about other cultures they recognised qualities in each others cultural lives that spoke to their experience. For instance, some participants from Project B, Group A, shared negative views about other cultures during the second focus group, they bonded with Group B participants through a shared appreciation of Arab Rap; a genre of music that they may not have previously been exposed to. Indeed, in this example, future meetings between the young people may open up the possibility for the participants to discuss the life experiences described in music which is important to them and what the lyrics have to say about life in the UK, and around the world.

Given that none of their lives are untouched by global cultural influences, it is perhaps unsurprising that most of the young people were culturally flexible. However, there remains a challenge, partially addressed by Project B, in supporting young people to gain an appreciation of forms that are less familiar to them or widen understanding of cultures that are less obviously part of the cultural mainstream of British life.

Of course whilst a good starting point for many, cultural engagement is not a panacea. Some of the young people in Project D reported being disengaged from society, with lives that were limited to their involvement with the organisation. This suggests that for some young people work to build their confidence and address their social isolation perhaps on a one to one basis, is an essential foundation to being able to go on to explore and possibly embrace cultural difference in the future.

Each of the projects that used culture as a way to engage young people reported that participants, where they brought young people from different backgrounds together, began to see new and stronger bonds forming and that where young people were from similar backgrounds they demonstrated a greater inquisitiveness to understand how other people

lived. To build on this work, project leaders fedback that they would wish to move beyond introducing new cultural perspectives to encouraging conversations that explore how culture brings people together, is sometimes used to exclude other groups and intersects with complex ideas of race, ethnicity and faith.

Engaging younger children in Challenging Conversations

One volunteer led partner project worked with younger children (8-12). Potentially, work around identity and belonging with children of this age could deliver important benefits in developing more inclusive behaviours and reducing the risk of them developing negative attitudes as they get older. However, there are particular challenges in discussing complex concepts of race, identity and cohesion with younger children as they have less life experience, are still developing their own sense of self and tend to see things through 'black and white' lens of 'fairness'. Volunteers in local groups are uniquely placed to support children to unpick their feelings, and help them to gain a more nuanced view. However, some volunteers may find working with sensitive concepts with this age group particularly challenging and therefore need capacity building or support.

While focus group references to Stephen Lawrence suggested that these participants had been introduced to concepts about race in school, few, if any of them, could discuss how race impacted on their lives.

The project took the approach of using structured activities (games, exploring ideas about different nationalities through their flags) to engage the young people. The young people were most engaged in a physical activity that used a concept of 'fair' and 'unfair' to shine a light on how it might feel to be discriminated against. This suggests that when working with younger children, activities that have a clear focus on binary concepts (safe / unsafe, fair / unfair, right / wrong, happy / sad) and encourage them to think about how people from other backgrounds might respond may

CASE STUDY
PROJECT C

EXPLORING 'FAIRNESS'

The project participants were separated into two groups and told they were going to play a game in teams. Each team was given a set of rules which they weren't to share with the other team. The rules one team were following favoured them over the other team meaning, of course, that they scored more goals. After playing for a while the young people had the chance to discuss how they felt.

This opened up the chance to discuss ways in which people can feel excluded and frustrated when they experience unfairness, and how the 'rules of the game' are not always clear to all groups. This, in turn, could lead to a discussion of how people from different backgrounds might feel frustration and how young people can work together to address this.

help to develop and sustain positive behaviours; activities should aim to develop empathy.

Whilst, for this group, the activity focused on fairness showed positive benefit, activities that sought to build understanding of cultural diversity were hampered by the participants' low starting level of knowledge and understanding. Learning from other projects could be applied to this issue. For instance, more success may have been achieved by inviting an adult from a different culture to talk openly about their life or by creating opportunities for children from different cultures to play and talk together.

Dealing with specific issues is important

Whilst many of the projects set out to explore issues of identity and belonging in a general way, one of them was very specifically targeted at young people from different backgrounds who lived in the same neighbourhood and reported high levels of inter-ethnic tension and gang violence.

The project brought together young people from Roma and Asian communities who had been involved in, or were close to incidents, of hate crime. The leaders reported that they felt real progress had been made at the end of the project, with a Roma young person describing an Asian young person as *'my brother',* a significant statement for someone from this culture.

Although the project included important preparatory workshops around understanding hate crime and embracing diversity, the project team felt that progress was based less in the specifics of the activities and more in the clear focus of the project and the local knowledge of the leaders. Some of the factors that contributed to success were:

- The centre at which the activity was based is community led by a group of volunteers from different backgrounds and is already regarded by young people as a 'safe space'
- The two main adult facilitators were drawn from the communities that were the focus of the work and were seen by the young people to be working together
- One of the adult leaders, through their profession and other voluntary work, was respected in their community and had highly developed skills in discussing sensitive issues
- The project's local knowledge and familiarity with the neighbourhood enabled them to bring young people into activities, who, while displaying some challenging behaviours, were prepared to positively engage
- Adult facilitators reported that once the young people were engaging with each other they felt confident to step back from guiding discussion and allow them to explore their new relationships; while continuing to observe their interactions and be prepared to intervene if 'flash points' occurred.

Clearly, this set of circumstances could not be replicated in all projects and is largely influenced by the skill and capacity of the adult facilitators involved. Indeed, it could be that in different circumstances a reliance on projects shaped by 'community leaders' might be counter-

productive if their skills and inclusive approach were not as highly tuned, or they did not share the same standing amongst young people. However, with appropriate safeguards and capacity building activity in place there is real potential in 'hyper-local' projects aimed at addressing very specific problems.

Language, inclusiveness and belonging

In several of the projects some of the participants' engagement was hampered by their relatively poor English. In the project working with Roma and Asian young people the Roma facilitator reported that they felt lack of English in the Roma community is a significant barrier to building better relationships. It is probable that the projects that brought young people together will, over time, help them to develop language skills and build informal English that will help their self expression, building relationships and taking a fuller part in society. Wherever possible, young people (and adults) should have the opportunity to learn English and to develop their skills in English as a pre-requisite to accessing services and building relationships.

In one of the focus groups young people reported feeling uncomfortable when their peers or adults around them used their home language to talk to each other. In another focus group a young person reported being abused when using their home language in the street.

CASE STUDY PROJECT B
SHARING ACROSS LANGUAGE BOUNDARIES

By focusing their project on music Project B bypassed some of the challenges created by a lack of English. Whether they understood the words or not, the young people in this project could share their interests and find a shared space to develop their ideas.

Whilst the new migrant participants did not understand the technical language related to DJ'ing, friendship bonds between the young people were strengthened through 'learning by doing' with the participants with English as a first language showing the new migrants how to achieve what they wanted.

These experiences open important questions about the role of language in young people's definition of themselves and their sense of belonging. It is, of course, entirely natural that peers that share a language other than English might use it on occasion to express ideas that they don't have the vocabulary to express in English, or that young people will use their home language in the private sphere with their families and with friends. However it should be acknowledged that in some circumstances use of other languages may exacerbate tensions between groups of young people.
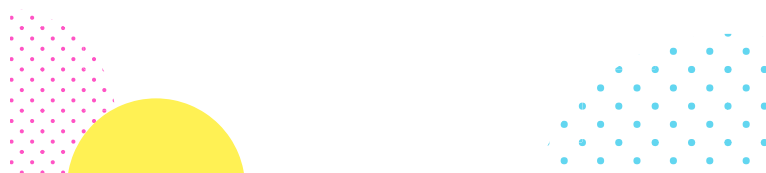
None of the projects explicitly engaged with these issues around language and this left the concerns young people raised unexplored. A profitable area for future Challenging Conversations might be to discuss with young people how best to navigate living in a society where many languages are spoken, whether they speak English as a First or Additional Language. One starting point for this conversation might be to discuss how young people use slang and 'street talk' to differentiate themselves and define their membership of groups.

Understanding hate crime, reporting hate crime

Few, if any, of the young people involved in the project had a full understanding of what constitutes a hate crime. However, some young people said that they had been victims of hate crime but had not reported it.

The project that brought Asian and Roma young people together included an activity, delivered by a retired Police Officer, that discussed the definitions of hate crime, how people can report it and what happens when it is reported. Project facilitators said that they felt that this information giving was important in laying the foundation for future work, however the young people did not appear fully engaged during this session.

Whilst it is clearly necessary to include work around hate crime in projects, taking a more creative approach that enables young people to shape their definition, match it to the legal definition and describe what they would wish to happen might be more effective.

Ensuring additional support for newly migrant communities and the neighbourhoods they are moving into

Several of the projects included participants from newly settled migrant communities. In both Project E and F participants discussed their sense of dislocation and perception that more settled communities were not welcoming of their culture. By coincidence both Project E and F either included newly settled Roma young people, or facilitated engagement with Roma culture. In both cases, the opportunity for young people to learn more about this 'less familiar' culture laid the foundation for more positive relationships.

The young people in Project E were initially reticent to discuss their experience of hate crime, with VAL team members reporting that they believed that they might be concerned about the impact of 'speaking out' on their immigration status.

During feedback, a Roma adult facilitator from Project F said that they felt that poor English is a particular barrier to Roma young people building strong relationships with people from other communities.

Whilst projects should not 'single out' or 'target' specific communities there is a need to recognise that newly settled migrants face particular challenges, as do the neighbourhoods into which they move which may be subject to rapid social change.

Projects should seek to signpost services that enable young people to meet the practical challenges of settling in the UK such as learning English. Although not specific to young people, Leeds' Migrant Access Project[4] provides a model for enabling newly settled communities to learn from each other and engage with service providers.

It is, of course, also important that projects working with newly arrived migrants enable wider conversations through which young people from settled communities can learn about and adapt to newly arrived cultures, while young people from newly arrived communities can better understand the cultural norms of UK society.

Creating a shared 'manifesto' and enabling social action

Whether it was discussing the impact of 'Black Lives Matter', expressing their pride in their neighbourhood and city or talking about their aspirations for public parks in which people from all communities can get on, many of the young people were keen to shape their lives for the better, and in some cases could see routes for this to happen. In Project A, young people had a chance to shape a manifesto built on their conception of Human Rights which laid the groundwork for more detailed discussions about belonging and identity.

Challenging Conversations projects have given participants opportunities to express positive aspirations and future work could build upon this foundation to shape these aspirations and bring them to life. Variously, young people could explore ways to take part in social media campaigns, work together to build a shared concept of inclusiveness in their neighbourhood, contribute to refining the vision of Leeds set out in Leeds' Children's and Young People's Plan[5], or work with adults to take social action to improve local infrastructure.

Building capacity and sustaining engagement

The most successful projects achieved a delicate balance between providing structured activities for young people and leaving space open for new relationships to form and discussions to take place. Of course, in the best examples, even these 'spaces' were structured and guided. Adult facilitators needed a wide range of skills and capacity in order to deal with very sensitive topics. Some key factors included:

- A clear structure at the outset with specific area of discussion in mind for activities
- Pre-planned open questions that could encourage young people to speak openly about their feelings and experiences
- The ability to keep the overarching structure of the intervention while responding to the particular interests and concerns of young people
- Familiarity with the lives of the young people, or the cultures being discussed.

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[4] A video on the Migrant Access Project is available at: https://vimeo.com/131881094
[5] A copy of the **Children's and Young People's Plan 2015-19** is available:
http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Leeds%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Plan%202015-2019%20WEB.pdf

Some of the projects were shaped by adult facilitators with less direct experience of working with young people around diversity and cohesion; either because they work more generally with young people or because the main focus of their work is in other fields. These facilitators are to be particularly commended for seeking to make a difference in area that could be uncomfortable and unsettling for them as well as for the young people.

However, some projects did appear to underestimate where conversations might take them, and in some, adult facilitators seemed unprepared for the questions they might be asked by young people. This suggests a real need for capacity building in community based projects and new partnerships with specialist organisations to give practitioners on the front line of working with young people the confidence to open and sustain a Challenging Conversation. Some adult facilitators reported that there was a particular need to develop skills in conflict resolution to enable them to open sensitive topics, knowing that they could diffuse any tensions that resulted.

One concern raised in feedback, although not directly reported from project delivery, is that adult facilitators can unconsciously apply their own assumptions or prejudices rather than responding to young people's lived experience. Adult facilitators need to be alive to this possibility, plan for it, and address it in their practice.

Analysing the 'outcome wheel'

The project designed and piloted an 'outcome wheel' to give a visual representation of progress in seven key areas and an accompanying questionnaire. The project team decided to use a questionnaire to give quantitative results that were comparable across all projects. A further consideration was that the outcome wheel might act in future projects as tool for young people to self-evaluate progress with adult support in future projects.

Of the 51 young people that took part in the programme, 40 completed at least one questionnaire and 19 provided sufficient feedback to allow for accurate analysis. Analysis of the feedback showed a small positive effect with 12 young people's answers showing an increase in their score. The project team noted that young people appeared disengaged from this process and the low useable response rate tended to confirm this. Whilst the team expected relatively small movements because of the short-term nature of the intervention, they concluded from the young people's engagement in the process that this evaluation method was, in retrospect, not ideally suited to this project.

Having said this, the Project Team believe that with further refinement and development the use of an outcome wheel tool that supports young people to set their own targets and self-define their progress, whilst giving projects a way to capture their effectiveness could be valuable. Our work with small third sector organisations suggests that 'softer' outcome measures are more appropriate for these organisations. Should an outcome wheel, or a similar tool, be developed further it would be of most benefit to longer-term projects led by larger, relatively well resourced organisations.

Capturing learning and presenting project aims

Challenging Conversations set itself the complex task of testing approaches to diverting young people from race hate crime and capturing the learning from six different projects, delivered by very different community based organisations.

The approach of exploring young people's behaviours and perceptions through overarching focus groups was successful in giving a detailed picture of what young people thought and how their relationships have changed.

However, some project partners, particularly those that did not know the young people before their intervention began, felt that the inclusion of the initial focus group and survey limited their ability to build trust with the young people. The model of recruiting organisations through an expression of interest into a short-term overarching project left little time to work with partners to shape evaluation. Ideally, future VAL projects which draw together learning from multiple sources will more fully involve delivery partners in deciding the best method of capturing feedback.

Challenging Conversations aimed to recruit young people who were perpetrators, or at risk of committing hate crime. Some project partners found this description problematic in recruiting young people to their interventions. In many cases projects took the approach of presenting the projects as working with young people to build better relationships. Whilst this description, meant that some of the participants may not have fully met the project brief (although all had a complex relationship with identity and belonging) it was entirely appropriate to focus on positive outcomes rather than less positive beginnings and led to positive conversations and stronger bonds between the young people involved. Future projects should adopt this approach.

Conclusion

The young participants in this report draw a picture of a quickly changing, sometimes frightening, world in which they face real challenges in learning about and from other cultures, feeling safe in neighbourhoods that they are unfamiliar with and negotiating a positive sense of self in the face of prejudice. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that some young people feel overwhelmed by these challenges and withdraw from society.

Challenging Conversations started from the premise that small third sector and community based organisations provide an incredible amount of support to young people in finding their place in the world, and that there was a willingness to do more to create a space for young people to address issues of identity and belonging.

The evidence from the project demonstrates this to be correct, but also suggests that organisations that think about what they want to achieve, plan interventions carefully, seek to bring young people from different backgrounds together and, after listening to young people, build on their interests and explore their concerns are likely to have the most long-term impact.

Whilst there is a need for young people to have access to specific learning about race and ethnicity, it appears more important for adult facilitators to create safe spaces for discussion, to arm themselves with a group of questions and activities that support young people to explore issues and have the skills and confidence not to shy away from the difficult subjects.

Young people are aware of how negative narratives about different cultures influence them and the society they live in, but reducing the impact of these stereotypes will often require an extended period of engagement. The short-term projects delivered through Challenging Conversations helped many young people to develop new friendships and, in some cases, engaged them in new interests and activities. The adult facilitators that worked with them would suggest that this just a first step in a longer process.

The findings of Challenging Conversations suggest that effective ways to divert young people from race hate crime are entirely consistent with well established good youth work practice.

There are countless volunteers, sometimes supported by paid staff, in third sector sports clubs, community associations, informal youth clubs and uniformed youth activities. With the right capacity building these people could make a massive difference by simply having the confidence to address sensitive issues by asking '*What made you feel like that?'*.

Recommendations

For third sector organisations wishing to start a Challenging Conversation

- Undertake capacity building to raise your staff and volunteers' confidence
- Encourage staff and volunteers to have a Challenging Conversation with themselves and with each other about their own assumptions, prejudices and fear of opening sensitive topics
- If young people address views that concern you, listen carefully and sensitively - it's critically important that you address the topic by starting a conversation
- Where appropriate (if an issue needs to be addressed more widely) design activities that help young people to express themselves and explore their views
- Look for ways to bring young people from different communities together
- Offer, or signpost, practical support and opportunities to young people, bearing mind that newly settled communities may face particular challenges, such as having English as an Additional Language
- Ensure that you have appropriate safeguarding policy, procedure and practice in place and that adult facilitators understand when and how to make reports.

For third sector infrastructure organisations and Local Authorities

- Seek to create networks of organisations that link communities, exchange skills and enable young people to gain wider experience
- Encourage partnerships between specialist organisations and organisations that work with young people more generally or in other fields
- Identify resources and invest in capacity building for third sector organisations, with a particular emphasis on the areas highlighted in this report
- Draw together sources of information and activity resources that support Challenging Conversations. There may be a particular need for interactive resources that:
  o Enable practitioners to work with young people to positively explore their experience of living in a society where many languages are spoken; valuing both home languages and the role of English within in a vibrant multi-cultural society
  o Inform young people about hate crime and raise their confidence to report it
  o Support young people to critically analyse media representations of race and culture with particular emphasis on social media.

For Local Authorities

- Build on the positive opinions young people share about their neighbourhoods to form a consensus around a shared set of principles, behaviours and values that apply across a whole Local Authority area
- Investigate why particular neighbourhoods are described negatively by young people
- Wherever possible, continue to invest in high quality youth work in both the third and public sectors, commissioning the right services to enable young people to deal with sensitive issues and learn from each other
- Direct support towards newly settled communities, and the neighbourhoods in which they have settled, which will help to address practical barriers and reduce cultural misunderstandings
- Wherever possible, invest in events across the Local Authority area that will enable people to build a shared pride in where they live and embrace other cultures.

For education providers

- Review Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural, and other relevant curricula, to ensure that young people develop critical thinking around race and ethnicity; helping them to deconstruct narratives and form their own opinions.

For Government

- Challenge the media to promote a more balanced view of UK communities
- Work with local authorities to direct resources towards youth work
- Consider further direct investment in community based responses to hate crime.

Appendix 1: partner project reviews

Project A

Introduction

Two community based consultants who have worked together on many projects in the arts, cultural and third sector over many years with a particular interest in projects addressing the issues of equality and social justice.

Project A worked with worked with two dance organisations - RJC community dance programme and the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Though RJC and NSCD are close neighbours, they could be miles apart and their young members have markedly different life experiences. RJC is a respected dance company which nurtures an interest in dance primarily amongst residents of Chapeltown, an ethnically diverse, economically deprived inner city neighbourhood in North East Leeds. By contrast, NSCD is an internationally renowned conservatoire which attracts students from across the globe.

Their proposed activities aimed to enable groups and individuals to talk and listen to each other through structured conversations whilst reframing how young people perceive migrants and refugees.

Participants

The project recruited two groups of participants. Group A consisted of three black British participants of African Caribbean descent in their early twenties who have participated in the RJC community dance programme in Chapeltown. Group B was made up of four individuals - two who identified as Spanish, one British and one British - Chinese who were in their mid to early twenties and were placed at Phoenix Dance Theatre and studying at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, also located in Chapeltown.

Initial focus group

<u>Attitudes towards other communities</u>

> *Seeing the different people and a lot of the immigrants who are coming and living in Chapeltown, just how they dress and how they act socially and it's just interesting to see somebody different or a similarity*

Both groups of participants expressed positive attitudes towards diversity and made particularly positive comments about the diversity in their area. Participants also demonstrated an understanding of tensions between different communities and how these can develop. One participant in Group B made reference to tensions between the Spanish and South American communities. Participants also showed awareness of the dynamics within neighbourhoods and how these can be affected. In particular one participant from Group A talked around the impacts of lots of people moving into a neighbourhood quickly and how this can impact the 'sense of self' of residents already in the area. Participants were able to hold conversation and

have in-depth discussions around the complexities of communities suggesting they are aware of issues and problems that arise in areas of mixed communities and are able to understand and empathise with those involved.

When asked about communities that might be disliked both groups of participants reluctantly referred to Polish, Middle Eastern and Muslim communities but made clear that this was not their own opinion but the opinion of others. Some participants from Group B were very uncomfortable answering this question.

Racism

> *We were in this street in Manchester. I was here just for one week so I didn't speak a lot of English. And one homeless I don't know asked if I had a cigarette or something and I said, "Sorry, I didn't understand you. I don't speak English" or something, and he shouted at me, "What the f*** are you doing here if you're not English? If you're living in the UK you need to speak English!"*

Almost all participants stated that they had been affected by racism with most participants giving examples of incidences of name calling and verbal abuse. Participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the term racism and also showed an understanding that racism exists between different groups rather than being a behaviour associated with the White British community. One participant in Group A made reference to cycles of racism and gave the example of older generations of the black community being prejudiced to newer Asian communities. Participants from both groups linked the misunderstanding of the term racism and lack of understanding around race to poor education and suggested that these concepts should be taught in schools, as early as primary school.

Interestingly, some participants from Group B were unfamiliar with the term hate crime whilst participants from Group A demonstrated a clear understanding.

Safety

> *If I'm going to a part of Leeds that I've never really been before, or that I know is more mainly white people live there, that usually makes me a little bit – not on edge, but I have to be more aware, aware if a group of guys are following me, aware, because just things like I listen to what people are saying as well, because sometimes people will just walk past you and say things*

Most participants stated they felt safe in Leeds. One participant from Group A made reference to the fact that he felt safe because his skin was black and the negative media portrayal of the black community made it less likely that people would approach him. However he then went on to say that in a new predominantly white community area he would feel wary due to how he could be perceived by others.

Participants from Group B reported they mostly felt safe in their day to day routine but did not attribute this to their race or ethnicity.

Participants from Group A stated they felt safer than their parents would have and recognised a decrease in racial attacks in their area, they also went on to state that all communities may feel their safety is compromised in certain areas or around different communities demonstrating a strong understanding of issues faced by different communities and the relationships between them.

Media and Use of Language

> *It's just language, really. I always hear the language people use and it's the language they learn from the media, it's the language they learn from the mass, the narratives told, like why does the enemy have to be pointed out straightaway? And straightaway it's going to be someone Muslim, so then it creates that story for everyone to justify not liking someone, 'Oh, I don't like them because they're Muslim and you know what Muslims do*

Participants from both groups demonstrated critical thinking skills throughout the focus groups making frequent reference to how media and the use of language can impact how a community or race is perceived. One participant from Group A made reference to terrorist incidents and how they are portrayed by the media, suggesting that the Muslim community are unfairly portrayed by the media and that this is problematic.

> *And my example of this is with any terrorist attack, if an attack is done by a brown person who is Muslim then it's a terrorist attack, and if an attack is done by an English person or a white person, then it's just a crazy white person*

Participants from Group A in particular discussed how the negative portrayals of certain communities by the media do not follow through into their neighbourhoods and how everyone treats each other equally. The critical thinking skills exhibited by participants again shows they are open minded and highly aware of community dynamics, the issues some ethnicities face and how this can impact the way they are received by the rest of the community.

Activities

Project A held several activities over the course of the project based largely around facilitating structured conversations. The groups had their initial activities separately but were brought together towards the end of the project.

Their first session was a conversation around neighbourliness focusing on the two questions: *'Who is my neighbour?'* and *'What sort of treatment are we all entitled to and what might make it difficult to extend that treatment to others?'* Participants also developed a manifesto based on their interpretation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in this session.

Their second session was a joint conversation between the two groups to share the outcomes of session one and completion of a 'crossing the road exercise' that explored the barriers to entering new spaces and the similarities in the young people's lives. This session was interpreted by a live illustration.

Their final session was a shared meal giving an opportunity to reflect on the process as a whole.

Closing focus group

Education

> *A generational thing as well, you know? I think if you look, it's slowly fizzling out as the generations come down, come down, come down. So I think people learn from what their parents say they don't like and if you've been brought up hearing that. You were saying, "Oh Chinese people" then...*

As with the first focus group both groups of participants made reference to the need for more education around race and racism in school. Participants suggested that racism often stems from lack of education, making particular reference to information being passed down through generations without being questioned. This idea was particularly prominent in Group B. One participant also made reference to racism in their home country being linked to migrants starting new businesses and opening shops in the area.

Racism

> *Yeah, my answer is similar, like I feel today the racism which goes on is more institutionalised. So like I mentioned people may feel racism through applying for jobs and then their CVs automatically getting rejected because of their names.*

As in the first focus group participants described how both they, and members of their family, had been affected by racism. They noted changes across generations, with, they felt, overt racism decreasing over time. Discussions around racism through generations was particularly prominent in Group A.

Interestingly in the second focus group one participant from Group A referred to institutional racism which wasn't discussed in the first focus group, this may indicate an increase in awareness of how racism might manifest itself over the course of the project, or that the participants felt more comfortable to discuss more complex aspects of racism throughout the project.

Brexit

> *It makes me feel more negative, it makes me feel less wanting to stay in England or more willing to move away for whatever reason. I feel from Brexit the social and the economic state of the country will decrease*

Throughout both focus groups participants from both groups expressed negative views on our exit from the European Union stating reasons such as the ability to travel and the impacts on

the economy. Participants were well informed about the Brexit campaigns and were able to give clear reasoning for their feelings and thoughts on the outcome of Brexit.

Conclusions

- Participants were enthusiastic participants in the project, gaining a new appreciation of each others lives. Through their positive engagement in a structured conversation around 'Crossing the Road' the young people began to consider ways in which they could break down barriers between their two dance studios.
- In the second focus groups participants made reference to institutional racism which may suggest a deeper understanding following the interventions or a greater level of comfort for in-depth discussions
- Participants highlighted the need for more education around race and racism in school consistently throughout focus groups
- Participants were very focused role of the media in the portrayal of communities in society and how this can have a negative impact.

Project B

Introduction

This project was a collaboration between three organisations:

- A freelance trainer, facilitator and consultant specialising in culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches to youth and community work
- A Community Interest Company (CIC) service with a vision for wellbeing and positive relationships and families
- A non-profit social enterprise teaching DJ and music production skills to anyone of any age and ability.

The project facilitated interactions between five young males from settled communities and five young males who had recently arrived in the UK. The project activities were based on learning how to DJ, by mixing music tracks in pairs (consisting of one participant from a settled community and one new arrival). The project proposal included a total of three sessions including a diversity awareness workshop, which was delivered to the group of young people from the settled community in order to give them a stronger contextual understanding from which to engage with the migrant young people and minimise any tensions that might arise.

Participants

Group A consisted of five males from settled communities across Leeds, two identified as white British, two as Asian and one as British / Caribbean.

Group B consisted of five males from a refugee or migrant background with two originating from Guinea, one from Iraq (self-described as Kurdish) and two from South Sudan.

Initial focus group

The initial focus group took place with the Group A (settled community) participants. Due to the limited language and resource constraints of the project it was not possible to carry out a focus group with Group B.

Perceptions of hate crime, racism and diversity

> *It's like discriminating people because of they're different, like their beliefs are different or they're from a different country or different skin colour*

The participants' understanding of the terms racism and hate crime was very literal suggesting a lack of understanding of the deeper complexities and issues associated with the terms. All participants agreed that racism could be verbal or physical and said that they felt that religious and racial discrimination is not a problem in Leeds.

Participants indicated throughout the focus group an appetite to learn about the historical, systematic and institutional aspects of racism. While it is possible, although not guaranteed, that the young people had begun to explore these issues at school, this suggests opportunities to continue this discussion after leaving education and gaining wider world experience are lacking.

Participants expressed positive opinions regarding diversity and showed negative attitudes towards extreme-right wing groups, in particular the EDL. Participants recognised positive impacts immigration has on our society with particular reference to the NHS. One participant also thought that immigrants do the jobs that British people do not want to do.

Role of the media

> *It's difficult to say, like some of its lies and some it's they're just not telling us what we ought to know*

Participants showed an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the media but also expressed a deep mistrust of the information being shared by some media outlets making reference to the reporting of false news and the way that negative narratives about race and faith, notably about Islam, are constructed.

When asked where participants source their information many of them made reference to social media platforms. Participants trusted social media platforms as opposed to other media outlets and did not approach the information emerging from them in a critical manner. This suggests that these young people's views may be susceptible to 'group think' and may be shaped by a narrow and exclusive set of narratives.

<u>Safety</u>

> *I know a lot of people. As long as you know people round the area you're perfectly fine, if you don't know people around the area you feel a bit more wary because you don't know them.*

Participants expressed mixed opinions regarding feelings of safety in Leeds. Some participants reported that they did not feel safe in Leeds, referencing reasons such as gang and drug crime whilst other participants stated they did feel safe. Participants did not refer to ethnicity or religion as a factor influencing the level of safety they felt or that may affect the feelings of others. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the participants reported that they felt the safest in areas where they knew people or had a network and few reported having first-hand experience of areas outside of their own immediate neighbourhood; their views were shaped by their perception of safety, or lack of it.

<u>Brexit</u>

> *I don't know, I mean it's what we make of it. It's like Britain was one of the most powerful countries.*

Participants had a mixed response when asked about Brexit. Some participants were confused and showed a lack of understanding of the term whilst other participants stated that they thought Brexit would have a negative impact on the country. While some participants took the view that for some voters the referendum was influenced by a wish to reduce migrants there was little discussion about whether Brexit debates have had an impact on race relations in the UK.

Activities

The Diversity Awareness Workshop covered several elements and was delivered through a session based around a powerpoint presentation. The session was designed to include several interactive exercises that encouraged participants to debate and discuss the content of the workshop. Not all exercises were delivered due to the time constraints of the workshop. Principle elements covered in the workshop were:

- Definition of term diversity
- Understanding stereotyping
- Islamophobia
- Role of the media
- Refugee, migrants and asylum seekers.

Participants were asked to take part in several interactive exercises throughout the workshop, these included:

- Matching up images with labels - highlighting how we are often fast to stereotype

- 'Accept, Tolerate, Reject'- participants were shown images of several behaviours (taken from different cultures and countries) and asked to state whether they would accept, tolerate or reject the behaviour and give reasons for their choice.

The session provided important factual information about current immigration as well as giving the young people a chance to explore how their views may be influenced by dominant media and other societal narratives. In short, it began to open the space for discussion about how racism is constructed that many of the young people had said was lacking in the initial focus group. However, some of the young people felt that this session could have been more engaging. This suggests that while a 'traditional' workshop approach can pass on important factual content, there is a need for some young people to have more 'open' debates about world events and how they shape stereotypes.

Before embarking on joint DJ-ing sessions, Group B participants undertook a short introductory activity where they introduced themselves and shared their favourite form of music.

It became clear that the relatively poor English of some members of this group would limit the amount of nuanced discussion about race, culture and ethnicity that the project could achieve and might affect Group B participants' understanding of technical vocabulary related to using the DJ equipment. However project leaders were confident that the unifying nature of the activities would deliver positive benefits.

The first time that both groups met they undertook a short a series of short ice breaker activities and an introduction to mixing music tracks.

Initially, participants from Group A were paired with Group B. Participants were asked to find some information about their partner based on their musical taste (name of favourite genre of music) and then introduce them to their group, for instance '*this is X, he likes to listen to reggae'*. They were also asked to draw a picture of each other without looking down at their paper. The participants and facilitators took it in turns to play their favourite song to the rest of the room.

After the icebreaker, the DJ School UK lead taught the basics of mixing and introduced the participants to the equipment for the remainder of the first session. Following the introduction, the participants practised individually on the mixing decks for the remainder of the session, which lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The second activity session was the principal focus of the project. Having learnt how to DJ in the previous session, the participants were paired in the same groups as the previous day and were tasked with creating a mix set, which was then recorded and shared with other participants at the end of the session. The two hour session consisted of a brief summary of how to use the mixing decks from the previous session, lasting fifteen minutes. The participants then mixed in pairs for approximately forty-five minutes; the intention was for the participants to discuss which tracks to use for when creating a set during this time and become accustomed

to the DJ equipment. The remaining hour was dedicated to recording the set. Before the end of the session, the each group recorded their set to a CD (a copy of which was given to each participant). The participants then listened to each group's set before the session came to an end.

This opportunity to bond over a shared love of music was effective in creating new relationships between the young people. Although conversation was limited, both by the limited English of some group B participants and by the technology (wearing headphones), adult facilitators noted a growing understanding and respect between the young people. Subsequently adult facilitators have reported that some young people from the migrant group have continued to attend the DJ School project and develop their relationships.

Closing focus group

Perceptions of other communities

> *Have you noticed how in town when there's ever like a fight, on a night out, it's nearly always the Romanians*

Although group participants generally continued to express positive attitudes towards diversity in Leeds, in the closing focus group they also highlighted communities they felt might be subject to dislike. This may indicate that participants felt more comfortable to express their opinions after the intervention. Two participants also noted that they would like to see more British people in their area. One participant stated he felt the media wanted him to dislike the Asian community, highlighting an ability to think critically about information presented.

Having brought the young people to a point where they are able to discuss 'transgressive' opinions more openly there is a need to explore their views and support them to shape more positive views.

Racism and hate crime

> *It's not the best of things at all. I've been in the situation where I've been racially slurred. Because I'm half Scottish as well. So people have called me a Jock and that lot. I get stuff like that shouted at me.*

Unlike in the first focus group, participants seemed comfortable to share experiences of racism in the second focus group with one participant opening up about his experiences after previously saying he has never experienced racism. This may represent that the project (specifically the diversity awareness training) brought about a step change in the participants' recognition and understanding of these terms.

Education

> *See they tell us they… in school, they say, "Oh, the… Hitler and the Germans, that's the worst part of history. That's the motivations". Or the Spanish Inquisition.*

When basically the Spanish were trying to make everyone Christian. Catholic. But they've never said that Asian people used to look after the black people. They used to hide the black people from the Spanish people. So that they wouldn't be killed. Same with… it's like…it's like even today, black people and Asian people don't normally get on.

As with the focus groups participants called for better education around the history of racism with more focus on the experience of the black and Asian communities. Participants highlighted that they didn't believe schools accurately portrayed all aspects of history that may be used to better educate young people.

A profitable approach may be to work from exploring how the historical and systemic construction of racism has touched on the young people themselves; e.g. negative terms about Scottish people may be centred in deep-seated nationalist tensions between the nations of the UK.

Conclusions

- Young people felt more comfortable having discussions around difficult topics after having spent time together showing the importance of creating a non-judgemental safe space for groups to have these conversations
- Young people wanted to learn more about the history of racism and feel current educational systems do not give accurate portrayal. The Diversity Awareness Workshop covered some of these issues but providing information through a structured, but ostensibly more open discussion or debate may have enabled young people to explore issues in more depth
- Young people enjoyed using music (which was an important cultural unifier) as a medium for conversation and enjoyed the experience of the project. By the end of the project young people had developed new relationships that have continued through engagement of the young people in the project.

Project C

Introduction

Project C is a community organisation based in Seacroft with a focus on developing the sporting skills of young people as well as their sense of self - belief, self-discipline and self-worth that can be communicated in all aspects of their lives. The project's programmes attract young people from various ethnic and social backgrounds allowing them to engage with each other, often for the first time.

Seacroft is an outer city suburb in the East Leeds with a population of around 18,000. Given its relatively large size there is little and often no diversity in some areas of Seacroft meaning participants taking part in this project may not have been exposed to other cultures previously.

Project C worked in collaboration with an organisation providing specialist work with young people around hate crime for the Challenging Conversations project. The specialist organisation designed the activities while the local organisation delivered them.

Participants

Project C recruited 10 young people between the ages 9-12, all of whom identified as White British with the exception of one young person who had a European background.

Initial focus group

Attitudes towards diversity

> *it's good because then you can learn about other people's religions and you can actually make friends with them.*

In general participants expressed positive attitudes towards diversity mentioning being able to make new friends and learn languages as positives. However participants also recognised that there is relatively little diversity in the area they lived in meaning they had little exposure to people from different backgrounds. A couple of the participants were hesitant about the concept of diversity and made reference to shootings in Paris. This may highlight the role of the media in how different communities are perceived and how this can impact people from early ages.

Given the relatively young age of the participants, these responses suggested a need to help them to explore the complex issues around terrorism in a way that could set world events against the positive behaviours of the vast majority of citizens.

Perceptions of other communities and safety

> *Kind of because like you never know like what's going around. Like when there's like travellers around and some of them are bad and some of them are good so you don't know what they're going to do.*

When asked which communities might be disliked, participants made reference to the Black, Indian and Muslim community. However when asked why this might be, participants were reluctant to give responses which might suggest they have adopted these viewpoints from other sources such as the media or family members, or they felt uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Participants seemed to associate members of the black community with crime and being intimidating. One participant discussed how they were uncomfortable with people from different backgrounds using their home language.

When asked about safety participants reported that they felt safe for the most part but also made reference to not feeling safe around the travelling community. Seacroft, and other areas of East Leeds, have historically offered locations for informal Gypsy and Traveller encampments. The feelings of the young people may highlight the tensions between the settled communities and the travelling community and how this is being instilled in children from a young age.

Taken together, this builds a picture of young people whose understanding of diversity was limited by their lack of experience of it, and whose views are largely shaped by what they are told by others.

Understanding of racism and hate crime

I would know because they're like talking about the colour of their skin and what they're from and what religion they're from.

Participants demonstrated a very basic and literal understanding of the term racism. When asked for examples participants made reference to name calling incidences at school but showed little understanding of the deeper complexities of racism. This is consistent with the emotional development of young people of this age.

In this part of the debate participants also made reference to Donald Trump and Adolf Hitler highlighting the challenge of helping children to make sense of complex world events.

Participants were unfamiliar with the term hate crime, and the interviewers felt that further investigation of the term was neither relevant nor necessary for this group of young people. During this part of the discussion the participants referred to Stephen Lawrence as an example of someone who'd been the victim of racism but could share no details of what had happened to him, or why his case was important. This may suggest that the Lawrence case had been discussed in school (or another forum) but that further 'follow up' work was needed to ensure the participants understood why the case is important.

Activities

Project C ran two activity sessions.

The first session was broken down into two parts. First participants were divided into two teams, each with their own set of rules (one set of rules favouring one group over another). After the activity participants were asked to discuss how it felt to be treated differently in everyday life and if there were any groups of people who may also be treated differently. The second part was based around crafts, each participant was given a flag and asked to paint it onto a hardboiled egg, and during this participants were asked to share facts about the country their flag represented in order to open discussion.

The physical activity exercise was particularly age appropriate and participants fully engaged with this exercise however the discussions following the exercise did not fully address racism or

racial discrimination. Participants understood the general concept of how it was unfair to be treated differently but did not make the link to racism or hate crime. A more structured conversation could help participants with this in the future.

This second activity, which was less well attended with project leaders feeling that this was because it took place over school holidays, was based around food and cooking. Participants made onion bhajis and fried plantain. During the cooking participants were asked about the different background and cultures the dishes were from and what they knew about those cultures. The participants engagement in this activity was hampered by their low knowledge about the places and cultures from which the foods came, this limited the potential for participants to engage in the intended conversation about diversity and how British life (and cuisine) has been shaped by it.

Feedback with project leaders suggested that they felt the timing of activities could have had an impact on how effective they were. As well as the second activity taking place during school holidays, activities were delivered immediately before the start of the regularly scheduled youth club meaning the participants were distracted by the arrival of their friends.

Closing focus group

Attitudes and exposure to diversity

> *Because… because like if there were black people coming to the… to England, then they might be racist towards the white people. Or it might be the other way around*

As with the first focus group, most of the participants expressed strong positive opinions towards diversity, stating similar reasons. One participant continued to be more hesitant around the concept of diversity, stating they felt they could become victims of racism.

Perceptions of other communities

> *If people… if like it's like Polish people, they might not like the accent.*

The discussion of how participants thought other communities were perceived did not differ a great deal from the first focus group however part of the conversation did focus in passing on how Eastern European migrants might be disliked and the role that language plays in constructing 'difference'.

This suggests that a profitable area for future Challenging Conversations with this group might be explore the relationship between home language and belonging and how this need not be to the exclusion of settled communities with English as a first language.

Conclusions

- Participants in this project were very young and may have benefitted from the use of more age appropriate materials and / or experimenting with a different approach that focuses on bringing participants into contact with young people from other cultures through shared activities
- Activities like the game with different rules for different groups opened up a space for discussion and young people began to explore concepts of race through their experience of 'fairness' - when developing projects, adult facilitators need to be prepared to steer these debates sensitively towards addressing issues raised (e.g. around use of home language)
- Careful consideration needs to be given to the timing of events, avoiding school holidays where possible and thinking through how other activities might distract from the intervention
- Participants in this neighbourhood would strongly benefit from structured engagement with young people from more diverse parts of Leeds, leading to a more nuanced cultural understanding. The engagement of participants appeared low at times but this could be attributed to the fact the sessions were being run immediately before or during a youth club session that the young people associated with play. In future ventures it may be worthwhile holding sessions away from a time and environment associated with play to increase levels of engagement throughout.

Project D

Introduction

Project D operates a commercial skate park and free sports facility, as well as a social enterprise that has established two alternative education provisions: an Academy for 11 – 16 year olds and post-16 provision. The Academy provides an alternative learning environment for children and young adults who cannot access mainstream education and are at risk of becoming NEET. This provides alternative education and opportunities for young people to gain qualifications in areas such as sport, catering and functional skills.

The organisation proposed to run a series of activities with young people taking part in the programme which aimed to look at what assumptions and 'truths' may influence people's behaviour and attitudes, including an examination of the media and personal attitudes. This included a total of seven sessions exploring a range of issues and topics including the history of immigration in Leeds, exploring different media sources and experiencing food and music from other cultures. The organisation hoped through this work to have 'open conversations about the issues will help to at the truth of the situation and allow attitudes to be challenged'.

Participants

Whilst the organisation is based in Hunslet, participants were drawn from a range of areas across Leeds. Due to the nature of the work that the organisation does, the majority of participants have faced difficult circumstances and are affected by economic pressures. All but one of the participants identified as White British, with one young person identifying as mixed White British and Costa Rican.

Initial focus group

Feelings of safety, disconnection and indifference

> *I don't really go out of my house unless I'm coming here or to a skate park. So I don't really see many people. So it just don't bother me. People, I'm happy that they're there and I'm happy that they've got somewhere to live, but I don't care what they think about me, what I think about them.*

A common theme running through the focus group was a negative view of Leeds as a place to live, regardless of whereabouts participants live in the city. Crime and aggressive behaviour were regarded as the primary reasons for this, with respondents expressing views suggesting they do not feel safe in the areas they live, particularly at night, although this was not directly attributed to the make-up of their communities. The group repeatedly referenced social isolation from their localities and communities, giving the impression that they travel from home, to school or friends without engaging in the community.

There was an attitude of perceived neutrality regarding other groups and cultures, which participants displayed and seemed to regard as a demonstration of their commitment to equality – 'not being bothered' about other cultures was seen as a default position amongst some in the group. This could be seen as an acceptance of these groups, as race and ethnicity is not seen as an identifying characteristic to the participants, or as a passive rejection of cohesion, through not wanting to associate with people from different backgrounds.

Use of language

> *Because like there's a lot of people from Pakistan up there, isn't there? I'm all chilled with them all. I don't care, like, what colour or religion you are. Like I'm chilled with everyone.*

Some of the language used by participants during the focus group was problematic, but important to explore as part of an open and honest conversation. Participants themselves showed some awareness of this and rebuked one another for use of certain terms (referring to Bradford as '*Bradistan*' for example). There was no clear understanding amongst the group as to why this was a potentially problematic use of language, though there was a feeling from that this could be seen as something that could result in retribution from sources of authority. This nickname in particular continues the theme of what participants considered 'neutrality' towards others - the name was defended as '*not negative, not positive, just a name'*.

Views of others

> *I think people don't like the fact that people come over from a different country and then they're like… they'll like live on the dole and then just like won't get a job.*

When questioned about their views on different communities, participants spoke of the views of others within their community, rather than directly sharing their own views, with statements such as '*loads of white people don't like Asian people'.* It was unclear whether this was a veiled personal opinion or based on views of the media or family / friends. This approach was continued in references to the general population's dislike of other groups, such as the 'undeserving' recipients of social housing and benefits, rather than direct statements about their own views. This could suggest a lack of confidence in sharing views of this nature or a passive 'borrowing' of the standpoint of others – whether this is from family, friends or social media.

Perceptions of equality and racism

> *Because they was… I don't know whether it's black or coloured, but there were a coloured lass there. And she thought she were big and hard. And she started getting mouthy with me. So I told her to shut up. She started getting mouthy more, saying, "Don't tell me to shut up", so I told her to shut up again, and she smacked me. And then I got sent out of the classroom for it, and I got excluded from college for it, when she smacked me. So therefore that's an act of racism.*

The participants' understanding of equality and fair treatment was very literal, with little indication that they had considered the complexities of these concepts. This suggests a lack of understanding of the inequalities faced by minority groups, as the views expressed throughout the focus groups suggested they are viewed as receiving preferential treatment. Although there was willingness to accept other cultures, prejudices were regarded as justifiable to the group based on actions that impacted them or those close to them directly. One example given was if an individual from a particular group committed an act of violence or wronged the individual in some way, this was seen as acceptable to base an ongoing distrust of a particular group upon.

Lack of understanding of equality, racism and hate crime led to a perception of unfairness in the treatment of white British individuals compared to that of people from other ethnic backgrounds. Specific anecdotes show how some participants considered themselves as victims of racism based on actions carried out against them which wouldn't be appropriate if they were from a minority. Racism is seen by the participants as a way to enforce power over them and close a debate as they have no way to respond. There was a debate about whether racism can work 'the other way' - e.g. if BME people can be racist towards white people – participants though that this happened regularly but that perpetrators of this remained unpunished. Most of the examples of racism given by participants centred on name calling, neighbourhood and school incidents. Whilst this is relatively trivial compared to issues of institutional racism, it was shown to be the main experience of the participants. This appears to have created a perception amongst the group that victims of racism are merely "thin skinned" or oversensitive.

Brexit

> *If we wouldn't have left the EU, right, there would have been more and more people coming over. And Britain would have ended up sinking. It's already sinking.*

Discussion on the EU referendum result was limited by confusion and lack of understanding of the group. Whilst participants could name some issues covered in the debate, the conflicting information was met with disengagement and cynicism on both sides. Some individuals strongly believed that the UK would be better off outside of the EU, however, citing a lack of 'room' for any more people and a being in a better position once the UK is no longer forced to 'share' with other countries, whilst another felt strongly that countries should share with one another. Some of the issues which young people focussed on can be seen as unusual for their age group / geographical location – particularly the implications for fisheries policy – suggesting again that views may be borrowed from other sources.

Activities

- Session on the difference between refugees and immigrants
- Session focusing on humanising communities and individuals covered by the media- feelings
- Session focussing on the language associated with race, ethnicity, religion and immigration. This was broken down and challenged
- Documentaries were included throughout the planned lessons.

Closing focus group

Personal freedoms and restrictions

The concluding focus group began with participants reflecting again on the question of what's good about living in England. Freedom was cited as a benefit, with awareness of limited personal freedoms in other countries demonstrating an increased knowledge of cultural differences. There was however resentment expressed at certain laws or the perception that legislation was pending around certain areas, including specifically restrictions on vaping. This was viewed negatively by participants and at odds with the personal liberties that were given as positive features of living in this country.

Use of language

No it's just – I've been brought up with a family that's incredibly racist so the only words I know to call them are the bad words. I don't know the other names for them and stuff.

There was a consciousness that the language that the participants used in relation to other groups within the community was not correct. Some participants acknowledged they were not aware of what language is appropriate and displayed a pressure to 'behave' or conceal their feelings. By providing these individuals with the tools to participate in discussions and a safe space to voice their thoughts and feelings regarding ethnicity rather than repressing them may have a positive impact over time.

Living in a diverse city

Participants again selected 5 out of a possible 10 when asked to rank their feelings about whether having a mix of people in the UK was positive. Discussions included references to displaced groups, showing an increased knowledge as a result of the activities undertaken as part of the project, although these seemed to often reinforce existing insecurities about the position of White British people within the UK. One exchange between participants sought to make comparisons with Aboriginal communities in Australia – '*well, no, they're still there but like that's not their country any more, they've kind of been pushed out…*'

Stereotypes

> *They're normal human beings like us, there's no point in stereotyping different cultures or religions just because.*

Despite participants talking again about the perceived threat of an increasing population and the resulting pressure on resources, the profile of the population did not concern the group. Participants displayed knowledge of ethnicities that are often the targets of prejudice, although interestingly this raised a question from participants about their role in the project:

Chinese, Muslim, Pakistani… everyone… but you're asking us that – have you asked them that because they don't like us as much as we don't like them. It's not all just one-sided is it?

This demonstrates that the feelings identified in the first focus group - of perceived victimisation and preferential treatment of marginalised groups - are deep-seated and not likely to change quickly.

Immigration

> *It's just – people in this world, they're too selfish, they're too greedy. People like my Dad, he's like, "I f***ing hate them coming to this country, taking our jobs…" But yeah, they do half the jobs better than what you can do, do you know what I mean?*

Although there was a broad view that immigrants as a group that were likely to 'take jobs', this was not necessarily seen as unfair. Participants viewed immigrants as more willing and capable of fulfilling roles whilst the existing population were more likely to remain jobless by choice. Racism and hate crimes were regarded as having their roots in jealousy and selfishness by the participants who highlighted the role that competition for resources plays in creating divisions between communities.

The future of the UK

> *In a couple of years we'll be exactly the same as them, we'll be surrounded by poverty.*

There was pessimism around the future of the UK, and indeed the wider world, with a fear that the conditions that would cause somebody to flee their country of origin could affect the UK in the near future. Participants did not link immigration and declining living standards as a causal effect of this, preferring instead a fatalistic view that it's merely 'the way things are going'. This was related in part to global events, with several references to the election of Donald Trump and what the perceived consequences of this may be.

The role of the media

> *It's all over the news isn't it, immigration this, immigration that – it's just petty little f***ing stories, it's like Chinese whispers…*

Some participants demonstrated the development of critical thinking skills as a result of the activities undertaken between focus groups, predominantly as regards the media. A distinction was drawn between statements that were given as truths and facts, alongside an understanding that some people and organisations had a vested interest in manipulating the truth and what tools one could use to identify manipulated stories.

Hate crime

> *(On hate crime) Just acting differently towards another person's religion, belief, or just acting horrible towards a certain person in particular because of what they have a different colour hair, or their skin's a bit whiter than yours, or their skin's a bit darker than yours.*

The range of potential contributory motives behind hate crimes and the overlap between prejudice, racism and hate crimes seemed to cause confusion and debate amongst the group. There was still general confusion on the definition of hate crime amongst the group, though there was a developed discussion on the inclusion of multiple potential motives, including race, religion and culture.

Conclusions

> *"One thing it's done is make me more aware of my surroundings or my home – say what kinds of religions there is there and it's made me think about how they get treated as human beings. It's made me more aware of racism and stuff like that."*

- Young people echo the views of family, peers and the media when talking negatively about issues such as immigration, yet often acknowledge this. However, with time and space young people demonstrated an ability to explore their own feelings towards others and display a level of empathy
- Concerns about the use of the 'wrong' language often inhibited young people from talking frankly about people from different backgrounds and communities, meaning there is a need to create a safe and non-judgmental space to explore these issues
- This particular group of young people – White British, outside of the mainstream education system and at risk of NEET – often view themselves as 'outsiders' within society, meaning that they sometimes struggle to understand what they see as the preferential treatment of minorities
- The concepts of equality, discrimination and racism are often taken at face value by young people, meaning longer term work to explore these terms is needed
- Overall the evidence suggests that the young people began to develop their understanding of the external factors that shape their views and have begun to draw parallels between their lives and those of other young people. The approach taken by this organisation may be an appropriate model to explore these issues with other similarly excluded young people, to begin open conversations that can lead to the development of greater understanding and empathy for others. This would be greatly

enhanced by further work to bring young people together with their peers from different backgrounds, moving beyond theoretical empathy to a position based on lived experiences, contact and possibly friendship.

Project E

Introduction

Project E was delivered by a third sector organisation focusing on delivering inspirational and empowering programmes for BAME and other disadvantaged groups. It offers a number of projects to support disadvantaged communities into employment and respond to new challenges they face in society. The organisation also delivers ESOL (English as a second or foreign language) classes using a network of community venues ensuring the engagement and participation of the communities. It organises regular Business Networking Events to promote community engagement and encourage employers to consider the employment of young people and BAME communities.

Participants

Project E recruited 8 young people between the ages 17-25 from a variety of backgrounds. Group A consisted of three British born participants with Libyan heritage. Group B included four participants who were new to the UK: three participants identified themselves as Sudanese and one participant as Afghan. In addition to group A and B, one British born with Black African heritage participant (here called participant C) was interviewed separately.

Initial focus group

Attitudes towards diversity and rejection of segregation

> *"when the areas and the country is mixed there is going to be no more racist will be like no more racist like if go like the areas Armley Bramley because there not a lot of mix you will the racist there"*

A positive attitude regarding diversity was expressed by all participants across the groups throughout the initial focus groups. Participants were aware of the breadth of diversity in Leeds. Participants also showed an understanding that the mix of communities may vary depending on the area within Leeds.

> *"The thing is literally you can live in Leeds, you can live in one area but just because you live in that area you think that's the whole of Leeds but when you go to different areas you understand it more, you see the bigger picture of Leeds, you see different people, you mix with different people, you learn about different things."*

Participant C spoke about geographical segregation in Leeds and mentioned how this needs to change. He believed that too many residents of the city remain in their area and miss out on getting to know and learn about different people.

A participant in group B who recently settled in Leeds emphasized the importance of interaction between residents from different nationalities and the danger of segregation. He explained that he valued his neighbourhood because of his British neighbour who is according to him: *"my neighbourhood, she is my family here, she is my everything here"*.

Perceptions of other communities and safety

All participants in group A agreed that they felt safe in Leeds and within their day to day routines. However, they feel were concerned that safety may be compromised when there are incidences /crimes in the area or nationally.

 One participant noted that he felt unsafe in his neighbourhood due to police presence which may indicate either a perceived negative relationship between some communities and the police force.

The participants displayed knowledge of other factors that may impact their feeling of safety. A female participant, for instance, placed a greater awareness on her gender than ethnicity in public areas.

Class is identified as indicative of the participant's feeling of safety. Harrogate was described as both "upper class" and less accepting of minorities (including ethnicity) due to its lack of diversity. There was a tacit link between this as a wealthy, white area and a lack of willingness to accept others.

A few areas in Leeds were mentioned in relation to race and safety:

Seacroft: a largely white, economically deprived area of Leeds was given as an example of a likely source of racist attitudes.

Chapeltown: a highly diverse, economically deprived neighbourhood in North East Leeds (where the participant lived previously) was identified as a place which hosts a lot of community work, development and youth work, but which still suffers from high crime levels. He specifically mentioned the importance of community development for black children aged 14 – 16. This may suggest a perceived link between young people of African Caribbean descent and the incidence of crime.

Middleton: was mentioned when the participant was asked he if he had encountered racism. He spoke about a friend who had been beaten up and burgled when living there. Reflecting further, the participant felt that growing diversity in the neighbourhood over recent years had made the area safer for young BAME people.

Racism

> *"I don't know I walked to the street with my friend, someone like have a bottle of…of juice and threw it for us, I don't know whether that's maybe joking, or maybe racist"*

Participants in group A had a well developed understanding of racism. They were able to give examples of times they felt they had experienced racism and give a strong definition of the term. One participant stated that they had been a victim of / witnessed a hate crime because of their religion whilst other participants were not able to give specific examples.

Importantly, one participant in group A identified the role of structural racism and inequality. In addition to hate crimes and racist actions, structural inequality was seen as a source of mistrust and ignorance. The education system's selection of history, for instance, was criticised as not representing the importance of other ethnicities in major events and avoiding criticism of Britain's actions throughout history.

Some Group B participants discussed the possibility that incidents that could be perceived as racist may be evidence of more generalised anti-social behaviour. They did not seem aware that the definition of hate crime turns on the victims' perception of intent.

Perception of other communities

One participant mentioned the Asian community as linked to terror attacks but said that *'personally I feel like that is more in London'*. He also said that most people in the Asian community are *'really getting on with work, developing their business'* which suggests a nuanced understanding that most people in the Asian community are not susceptible to extremist ideologies

Polish immigrants were mentioned as *'coming into the UK'* and *'taking jobs'* although the participant reported this as a view that might be held by the White British population.

All participants in group B acknowledged the fact that language was a barrier when they first arrived in the UK.

Media

"They're depicted in a way, it's always negative, it's always negative news"

Participants stated that they thought both the Muslim community and people of colour were the most disliked by people in general and that this perceived dislike was enhanced by the role of the media and the way these communities are depicted.

Brexit

"So I think the main reason is there was a lack of knowledge there, not everyone knew what was actually going to happen if we leave"

Most participants in group A had a good understanding of the exit of the European Union and stated it made them feel negative about their future in Britain. Pressure on NHS services and immigration were also mentioned as reasons behind people voting to leave the EU.

One participant's intense negative feelings on the result of the EU referendum were tempered by an awareness that not all "leavers" were prejudiced, although they understood the general demographic to be older and therefore less likely to experience the full implications of the changes that they have voted for.

One participant was unhappy about leaving the EU because of the associated benefits, *'it's good to have a group of other nations that could help you'*. He also mentioned that *'things are going to be a bit harder',* that day-to-day living would become more expensive, and that more people might be made redundant. Although the participant said that he felt negative about the

decision to leave, he also admitted that it is not currently affecting him and he didn't believe it would 'really affect me at all'.

Activities

Project E held one activity, a cooking event- 'Come Dine with Us' which brought young people together using food as a medium to facilitate conversations around cultural differences. The first part of the event consisted in a cooking workshop. A member of the Roma community demonstrated how to cook a traditional Roma recipe to some of the participants.

The second part of the session, consisted of a question and answer session led by a different representative from the Roma community. Part of this activity, included sharing positive success stories from the Roma community. This successfully informed them on challenges that the Roma community face, but equally promoted a positive perspective on this community. Participants were particularly interested in the question and answer session and enjoyed interacting with a representative from the Roma community. Participants reported that this session had helped them to understand more about the culture of a community that had previously been 'less well known' to them.

In feedback, the project team noted that that there may have been more opportunity to explore questions deeply, and / or to include more questions around race and ethnicity in the structure of the event.

Closing focus group

Media and social media

> *'Everything is at home now because you hear things from other places and then it affects people here as well.'*

The participants expressed understanding of the complex benefits and threats of both traditional and social media. They felt that movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' offered the opportunity for young people to co-operate in global social movements. However, they also pointed to perceived bias in reporting of hate crime pointing to incidents where crimes committed by Asians were reported as terrorism whereas as crimes committed by White perpetrators were reported as 'Lone Wolf' incidents.

It is possible that this discourse feeds into a feeling of alienation and future Challenging Conversations might work with young people to consider how they can use the benefits of social media to be positive agents of change.

Racism and hate crime

Hate crime

> *'I was playing football with one of my friends, who was a white friend of mine, and one of these kids came up to me and they just beat me up for no reason necessarily. And obviously I did nothing about it because I was afraid because I wanted to fight him but I thought to myself that because this is his territory, and the guy particularly he had a big family, so I didn't want to fight him because I didn't want to put myself in danger or put my family at risk.'*

'I don't think it has to be intentional. I think you know it's racism when you know the reason behind the way they're acting, and if the reason is you're of a different race than them then that's racism. So it doesn't have to be... even if they didn't intend it to be offensive or racist I think it is still.'

Compared to the debate in the first focus group, where the participants had discussed how they were unclear whether acts had been racist, young people expressed a more nuanced view that suggested they have developed an understanding that as well as the overt expression of race hate, the victims' perception of intent is an important consideration. This may feed into a greater confidence to report hate crimes in the future and greater understanding of the way their behaviour might be perceived by others.

Project team members noted that the participants were more open about their experience of hate crime during the second focus group and conjectured that the young people had been less open during their first meeting because of concern about their immigration status and how negative views might be perceived.

Perceptions of other communities and the media

In the second focus groups participants were more open about discussing the way that a range of different communities are stereotyped in the media, and by society as a whole. This suggested that the activity had raised their confidence in expressing themselves and exploring forms of social action that could counter this negative influence.

Brexit

'It also has almost like an evil under-layer....it's sort of promoting patriotism, nationalism and we are British and that's it, we only want British people in Britain...'

The participants' negative feelings about Brexit suggested that they are highly attuned to the possible impacts of an exclusive sense of nationalism on their future wellbeing.

Conclusions:

Overall Conclusions:

- Participants were keen to express their commitment to taking a full part in British society, however their reported experience of being the victims of hate crime suggests that there is the chance for them to become socially isolated. This Challenging Conversation gave them the opportunity to express their experiences and future work should build on this to help them to take action to promote social change, should they wish to
- Many of the participants had been victims of hate crime. The project may give them more confidence to report these incidents in the future
- The project gave these young people the opportunity to learn more about a community of which they previously had little knowledge this may form the basis of future social action and / or stronger relationships between minority communities facing similar challenges.

Project F

Introduction

Project F predominantly works with young people from diverse communities (95% from BAME backgrounds) during thrice weekly youth sessions. Sessions are delivered by volunteers through the organisation's peer to peer youth delivery model to give young people better life chances and encourage young people to focus on developing more positive behaviours. Project F is based in Harehills - an, economically deprived inner city area of East Leeds with a considerable cultural and ethnic mix.

Participants

For the Challenging Conversations Project F recruited nine participants from two ethnic groups. Group A consisted of four participants from the Roma community aged between 12 and 15. Group B included 5 participants from the Asian community aged between 14 and 16. All participants were males.

Initial focus group

Main issues identified by participants

Negative attitudes towards diversity and highly segregated lives

> *"there's a lot of advantages and disadvantages of having different kinds of cultures and different people from different places but to be honest with you it's causing more of a negative effect I'd say on the place where we're living because of how you see like – if one group doesn't like another group they'll start getting the gangs or wars and that's how it's going to escalate to killing, to violence, to guns and the more abuse, so I wouldn't strongly agree that that's a good thing but I wouldn't strongly agree it's a bad thing. As I say it's a seven for me, seven to eight because of that."*

Participants reported that they liked where they live, pointing to close family networks and a sense that people look after each others' homes (although it was not clear whether this neighbourliness extended across ethnic and cultural groups).

However, they described high levels of inter-ethnic tension and segregation, typified by mutual distrust between groups and gang-related violence. The young people deployed familiar stereotypes to justify their opinions; African Caribbean people were associated with crime, White people with racism, Eastern Europeans with public displays of violence and with low level displays of violence.

> *"I think Harehills is a good area because everyone's usually – well basically everyone's Asian and you know everyone and feel comfortable and stuff like that."*

The participants from both groups reported that they chose to mix exclusively with other young people of their ethnicity. They reported that this choice was primarily driven by their sense of in locations that they know and by a lack of knowledge of other cultures.

Safety

> *"Like I said, I think my area is good but you do need a lot of work to be put into the area because of all the killings and all the stabbings and all the guns and violence that is happening…"*

> *"I am scared at night because of the black people."*

A recurring theme throughout the focus groups was the young people's intense sense that they did not feel safe outside of their own communities. Their lives are hemmed in by a highly attuned sense of 'safe territory' with the participants noting how areas just a few streets away were places where they would feel at risk. Some of the young people felt reliant on a high police presence to protect them whilst also relating incidents where police intervention had failed to keep them safe.

One of the few places the young people reported feeling safe was the community centre at which this project took place highlighting the critical role played by a responsive, volunteer led resource to break down barriers.

Racism

> *"Racism is like if somebody is making fun of the skin colour. ""Like…sort of like you're black, go back home. Something like that. Like they're swearing. They're making fun of them."*

Although group A was not able to give an exact definition of racism, they generally understood meaning of the word and were able to give examples of racist behaviour to prove their points. One participant stressed his willingness to take action around racism, by challenging his peers. It was unclear to what extent this young person had the inter-personal skills to challenge racist behaviour without causing further tension, or putting himself at risk.

All the participants in group B stated that had been victims of racism, mainly in the form of verbal abuse. The group spoke about how they generally get along with their neighbours but they had experienced racist abuse from older white people. One participant referred to one man on his street who is racially abusive. Another participant explained that he lives in a 'white neighbourhood' and that he gets along with his neighbours but , whilst acknowledging that many white people are not racist, his experience of being a victim of a serious violent hate crime had influenced how he felt about this group.

Media

Participants all agreed about Asian people and Islam being negatively portrayed in the media. One participant spoke of his frustration about a woman they believed had been portrayed in a negative light on television as she walked past the scene of the Westminster attack.

They also stated that they believed that specific incidents in their area (Harehills and more widely) are exaggerated in order to give others a negative perception of the area. They said that this has meant that relatives would not visit them.

Brexit

"Like all friends, my friends, I know that the English people, all my friends, and they vote to go home. To go home. You know? "

"Oh, they voted Brexit?"

"Yeah. "

The young people discussed the potential impacts of Brexit with some feeling that increased nationalism would lead to increased racism and / or that its negative impact on the economy would increase tensions in economically deprived areas; perhaps leading to riots. No participants reported any noticeable increase in neighbourhood tension since the vote.

A particular concern for the Roma young people was that changes to immigration policy would mean they would have to return to their home country.

In short, what emerged from this debate was a picture of young people feeling insecure about the future and their future place in the UK.

Activities

Over the course of the project Project F held three activities.

The first activity was an information session around hate crime delivered by a retired police officer. Although the young people appeared disengaged from this session, adult facilitators felt that this provided important foundational knowledge that would help the young people address some of the challenges they faced. A challenge for projects such as this may be in finding interactive and engaging ways to support young people to understand hate crime and raise their knowledge of how to report it.

The second session was facilitated by Tea and Tolerance - an organisation aiming to get people talking, thinking and doing imaginative things with each other. This activity provided the opportunity for the young people to begin to explore their similarities and differences. This session was led by adults unfamiliar to young people and while it opened up new avenues for discussion there was a discussion in feedback about whether it could more profitably been delivered by 'local' adult leaders.

The final session focused on getting the two groups to interact and talk to each other. It focused on developing positive behaviours, supporting the young people to explore each other's culture and discuss the similarities in their lives. The session involved several games and ice-breakers to encourage this. In feedback the project team noted that the success of this session appeared to hinge on the firm but sensitive way that the 'local' adult facilitators supported young people to ask questions and diffused tensions. Adult facilitators reported that one success of this session was reaching a point where they no longer needed to intervene to bring the young people together, whilst continuing to carefully observe their behaviour. One adult facilitator reported that at the end of the session one of the Roma young people described one of the Asian young people as *'his brother'* a significant statement for someone from this culture and a real success in building stronger relationships.

Closing focus group

Whilst many of the views expressed during the focus group were similar to the first the opinions of young people were notably more positive suggesting that the young people had gained confidence in themselves and in each other.

Participants made positive remarks about living in the UK. They liked that there are many different people, a good education, better job prospects, more opportunities to earn money and that it is safe. They also spoke positively about living in Harehills and that they liked that their friends and family live in the same area and in some cases on the same street.

Some participants in group A made statements that indicated that they were really happy with the diversity in their area but that the only thing that stopped them being completely happy was the racism they encountered themselves. They explained that when they first arrived in the UK, it was difficult for them.

All participants said that they feel negative about the UK leaving the European Union. They explained that many Romanian people live in rural areas where there are fewer opportunities for work so they enjoy living in a city like Leeds because they have a chance of a better opportunities and a job.

Incident in the area

The participants referred to a significant external factor that may have influenced their behaviour. The recent death of a young person who was friends with many of the participants was seen as leading to change in the community; people made peace with one another and stopped fighting.

Challenges for new migrants

During the second focus group, and to a lesser extent during the first group, the Roma young people discussed the challenges that they face in becoming more settled in their neighbourhood. The participants described being regular victims of hate crime, and their sense that they were particularly singled out because their culture is unfamiliar and unwelcome to others.

In feedback, a Roma adult facilitator added that she felt that lack of English was a particular barrier for the integration of young people from this community.

Public spaces

In the area there are several parks and the participants described how people of different ethnicities do not mix in the park. The only time they do mix is when playing football or another sport but teams tend to be made up of young people from the same background. They regularly go to the parks and explained that they keep young people out of trouble and off the streets. "No park, no life". Many comments were made about the parks being less welcoming than they previously had been.

This suggests that investment in public spaces and focused activity to make these spaces a source of community pride and collaboration would be well received.

Conclusions

- Participants were open and explicit about their experience of racism, segregation and the significant tensions that exist between the communities of Harehills
- Activities delivered within the project initiated stronger relationships between participants
- The project's community centre is seen by young people as one of the few safe spaces they can use. The respect young people have for the volunteer adult facilitators is a considerable asset as is their highly developed skill in sensitively discussing difficult topics
- Young people where migrants have newly settled may need particular support, around cultural understanding, as well practical support, such as learning English
- In both groups, there is a strong connection with their neighbourhood and this may offer future opportunity to forge a shared identity, perhaps along with renewed investment in public parks as shared spaces and sources of community pride.

Appendix 2a: focus group questions

Focus Group questionnaire (Prompts)

"Hello. My name is ………………   The reason you are here today is because we are undertaking some research so that we can try to better understand why people commit hate crimes. This will help us to think about the ways that we can stop this from happening in the future.

Respond to participant questions.

"Let's go over some rules:

1.	Please turn off your mobile phone so we are not interrupted.

2.	So we can keep track of what people are saying, remember that we have one person talking at a time. Please do not interrupt someone when they are talking.

3.	Also, this is a safe place for you to express your views freely. Everything you tell us today will be kept completely confidential. We will summarize the things you tell us and combine it with other focus groups we are giving.

4.	We should all be respectful of one another's views, even if we don't agree with them. And remember, that what we say in this room should not be shared with anyone else who is not here.

One of my jobs today is to make sure we discuss all of the issues that we need to. If I ask you questions while you are talking, it's because I am interested in what you are saying and want to learn more.

Also, if I interrupt you when you are speaking, I'm not being rude; I'm just making sure everyone has a chance to talk and be heard.

Your views and opinions are really important to me, and I appreciate you being here today.

Do you have any question?"

 "Just to get us started, let's have everyone tell us your name and something you like doing outside school." (Present yourself again and say something you like doing. Then point to someone to start; randomly select people to demonstrate that people do not talk in sequence).

"Let's begin!"

1.	Question: What do you think is good about living in England?

Prompt: What do you think is good about living in Leeds?

Probe: What about the area and the people living in your neighbourhood?

2.   Question: In Leeds there is a mix of different people, some with different coloured skin, some with a different religion and some from other countries.

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree, please let us know the extent to which you agree with this statement:

Having a mix of different people in the UK is a good thing

Prompt: Using the same scale, please let us know the extent to which you agree with this statement:

I feel happy with the diversity of the population resident in my neighbourhood

The mix of different people in my neighbourhood is great

Probe: Why do you feel like this?

3.   Question: Some people dislike particular ethnic groups/communities. What groups might these be?

    Prompt: on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being positive and 1 being negative, can you tell how much do you think people dislike that particular community? Why do you feel people may think like that?

    Probe: How do you know people might feel like that?"

4.   Question: When you're going about your day-to-day routine, do you feel safe?

Prompt: Are there any places/times where you feel unsafe or vulnerable in Leeds?

Probe: Why do you feel so?

5.   Question: Do you know of anyone who's encountered racism and if so, what happened? Do you know what racism is?

Prompt: How would you know if someone is racist?

Probe: What made you think that that person was being racist?

6.   Are you familiar with the term 'hate crime'? What do you think it means?

Prompt: Have you ever seen or been a victim of come across hate crime?

Probe: Was the incident reported?

7.   Question: Do you have any views about the fact that the UK has voted to leave the European Union?

Prompt: Does it make you feel more positive or more negative   about living in England in the future?
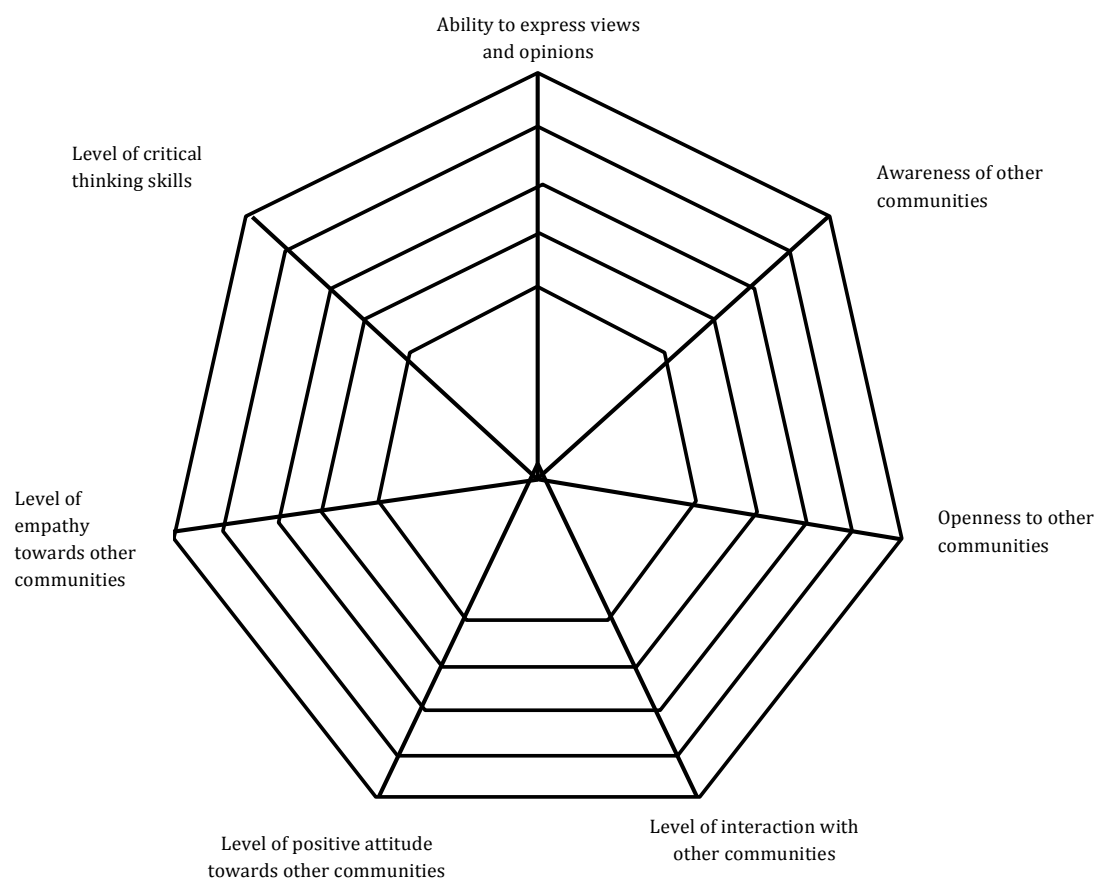
Closure.

"That is it for me. Do you have any final questions, or comments that you want to add before I finish the session? (Respond to question)

Thank you for participating in focus group today. We are excited to learn about what you think.

We will meet again at the end of the programme, after activities have taken place for another focus group session. This will help us understand what you've learnt and if your opinions has changed after taking part in the programme. Thank you"

Appendix 2b: sample outcome wheel

The project team believe that with further development and testing the outcome wheel may be a useful tool in capturing young people's progress.

Ability to express views and opinions

Awareness of other communities

Openness to other communities

Level of interaction with other communities

Level of positive attitude towards other communities

Level of empathy towards other communities

Level of critical thinking skills

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