

Anstee Bridge School Case Study

Straight Talking – Anstee Bridge Case Study

Anstee Bridge supports schools in meeting the needs of Year 11 students identified as „at risk“ of becoming NEET. For one day a week, students spend time at Anstee Bridge and are provided with an alternative to the typical school curriculum.

“The young people who present for support at Anstee Bridge arrive with low self-esteem and suffer from a lack of inner confidence whatever their outward behaviour might suggest. Whatever the reason – many of these students are seriously at risk of becoming marginalised from their families, their communities and wider society”.

Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator

Students study creative subjects such as poetry, art and music and are also connected with a range of services and individuals from a variety of settings including the police and fire service, local employers and charities. The students express themselves through a medium new to them and the programme supports them to assess where they are in their lives, to review the choices they have made to date and to encourage, support and motivate them to consider the life choices they can make in the future. It does not profess to solve the underlying issues but rather provides a toolkit and the life skills to support them to cope and make better decisions for themselves.

Straight Talking is one of the charities involved in the delivery of the Anstee Bridge programme – delivering tailored sessions to the young people on the realities of teenage pregnancy and the challenges faced by young parents. In the sessions that we monitored as part of the evaluation the Peer Educators covered perceptions of teenage parents, housing, finance and child support over a 2-hr period. The groups were mixed and one male and one female Peer Educator delivered the sessions.

All of the young people attending the sessions indicated both during the session and immediately afterwards that Straight Talking had *“made them think differently about teenage parenthood”*. This was directly linked to the reality presented by the Peer Educators, specifically around finance and housing. One of the young people said *“I didn’t realise it was so tough to get a house as a young parent”* whilst another commented *“I never realised how much money you had to spend on nappies”*.

Evaluation of Straight Talking September 2012 ³⁷The Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator believed this “reality” was vitally important for the young people. *“We used to have nurses delivering sessions. They would come in and provide a wealth of information and whilst it was useful for this it never got to the nitty gritty of the issues. Straight Talking is young people who have been through tough times – this reality is inspirational to the Anstee Bridge pupils. The Peer Educators say it as it is and as a result the young people are more likely to listen to them...”*

Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator

Immediately following the sessions the young people also expressed how hearing firsthand about the experiences of teenage parenthood from the Peer Educators had *“made them think about their own perceptions and attitudes towards young parents”*. One pupil said *“it’s made me think that I shouldn’t judge someone for being a young parent”* whilst another stated: *“I want to be a young Dad – but I want to have a good job first”*. The young people also discussed how positive it was to hear Peer Educators talking about their own dreams / aspirations for the future – with a few believing young parenthood meant *“their life would be over”*. The Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator commented again that this was a key element of Straight Talking and its differentiator against the SRE curriculum the young people would normally have experienced.

“The Peer Educators who deliver the sessions often convey their own dreams and ambitions for the future. Not only is this inspirational for the young people but it also makes them think that if the teenage parents can make something of themselves, despite the challenges of being a young parent, then so can they”.

Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator

As is discussed elsewhere in the evaluation, the direct impact of Straight Talking on the behaviours of the young people engaged on the programme is difficult to attribute. However, when asked for her view the Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator stated:

“In the first year of Anstee Bridge we had three pregnancies within the cohort. This was prior to us having Straight Talking deliver their sessions and in fact, one of the key drivers for us in looking for an alternative way to convey the message. The fact we have not had any pregnancies in the period since then and we have not had anyone contemplating this as an option - is much more than just coincidence”.

Anstee Bridge Programme Co-ordinator