

Flanders Way Impact Report

Interim Findings



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Forward

The Mayor Of Hackney, Philip Glanville

I'm so proud that, together as a borough and a Council, we've been able to support the remarkable hard work and energy that these young citizens of Hackney have put into helping to improve their community through this now multi award-winning project.

Young people have told us that they often feel negatively stereotyped, don't feel listened to and don't have a voice in how their area is changing, experiences powerfully documented in the Hackney Wick Through Young Eyes report. Unfortunately these experiences are not unique to Hackney; they are challenges faced by young people and their communities across London and around the country.

Feeling welcome, safe and included in your community is important for everyone, as is the trust and connection between residents that makes our neighbourhoods the places that they are. However, as the research has shown, the role that young people can play in creating communities where everyone belongs hasn't always received the attention or the support that it deserves.

I'm very happy this project has transformed Flanders Way into a beautiful space that everyone can enjoy, whether they are eight or eighty years of age. Most importantly though, the hard work of Build Up and Hackney Quest has engaged the whole community in making it happen from design to construction. I even learnt how to build and construct part of the project myself, taught by one of the young people involved. By giving local young people a voice, bringing together schools and other institutions, the project has shown how effectively they can make decisions about their local area to create places that everyone can be part of.

If we want to have communities where everyone feels welcome, we need young people, enabled by progressive local authorities, to grow up believing they have the power to lead change, now and in the future. I'm proud that Hackney has risen to this challenge, leading the way with this inspirational project and would like to give my full support to young people having a powerful voice in their communities across London.

Philip Glanville



About This Interim Report

This report aims to provide a summary of data collected to date on the youth and community impact of the Build Up Hackney project at Flanders Way. A full report will be released in March 2020.

Interim findings are based on 53 questionnaire responses and 12 interviews from local residents of all ages, ward councillors, local businesses, schools and community organisations. Three personal accounts also provide indepth experiences of those most involved.



Build Up

Build Up runs practical construction projects for young people aged 6 – 20 to design and build structures in their local communities. Working in public spaces, parks and housing estates, we support young people to design and build spaces in places that matter to them.

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What is the impact of Build Up Hackney?

Key Findings

Young people having agency and voice

- 1. Young people gain practical, vocational and social skills**
100% of young people feel they have developed design and construction skills
- 2. Young people develop resilience, confidence and self-belief**
100% of young people report feeling more confident in making their ideas happen
- 3. Young people who have experienced marginalisation have the belief that they can effect change, now and in the future**
100% of young people feel they are more able to influence their local area
- 4. Young people take a leading role in a community development process**
92% of young people report taking on a responsibility or leading an activity

People involved and included in regeneration

- 5. People feel included in change that's happening locally**
64% of people felt the project had changed their views on who can influence the local area
- 6. People feel more positive about changes in their local community**
87% of people feel more positive about their local area

91% of people would be interested in getting involved in a future Build Up project

"I think, witnessing perhaps the most under-represented members of society leading such dramatic change can really inspire others to make change, given the right support."
- Carl, local resident

A stronger sense of community, now and in the future

- "The project has encouraged integration to people from all sorts of different walks of life. Somehow the space just makes you want to chat to everyone that you walk past – people that we didn't even normally smile at."*
- Lisa, local resident
- 7. People feel welcome, safe and want to spend time in their local area**
94% of people feel the project has improved the look and feel of the local area
 - 8. People feel increased trust and connection with other residents of all ages, backgrounds and genders**
100% of people over 60 feel perceptions of young people have improved

60% of people feel that the space has given them more opportunities to connect with others

The Project

In 2019 a team of local young people designed and built a prominent public space at Flanders Way, Hackney. The project, known as Build Up Hackney, aimed to give young people a genuine say over how their local area is changing.

Located on a formally unloved and litter-covered thoroughfare, Flanders Way public space is now a well-used community space featuring a circular seating area with integrated swings, new lighting, brightly coloured bins and an exciting playful border with integrated cast iron artwork.

The scheme was designed by 26 young people through a series of workshops involving local designers and architects, which culminated with presentations of their ideas to members of Hackney Council and the local community. The young people then spent two months over summer building the scheme.

Build Up Hackney was run in collaboration with youth organisation Hackney Quest, and two local residents, Shenique and Daniel, were employed throughout as part of Build Up's paid placement programme. Over 100 volunteers contributed to the project.

The project was set up in response to Hackney Quest's 2018 report Hackney Wick, Through Young Eyes, that found a large number of local young people do not feel that they are informed about, involved in, or benefiting from the way their area is changing. Build Up aimed to address this problem by giving young people power over an important space in their community.



Before and After, Morning Lane Entrance





Before and After, from Morning Lane





Personal Account by Daniel Ocitti, 18

Written in June 2019

My name's Daniel and I am a young adult from Hackney. I'm also a member of the Build Up team and have been working with them on the Build Up Hackney project for over a month now. The project aims to effectively support the local young people to create a space for their community on Flanders Way.

Having grown up in Hackney most of my life, I've seen a lot of changes in the area, some positive and some negative. Many people have put forth great ideas for change, but always leave us with empty promises. No action taken. However, Build Up Hackney has showed me that there are people out there that understand the importance of community and want positive change just as much as the people going through the change, the young people.

For a while, I've wanted to give back to the community in any way possible, but I've never had the opportunity to do so. Build Up Hackney gave me that opportunity. I think there should be more projects just like Build Up Hackney, where they allow the local people to be actively involved in the change. As part of the older generation and as people with a voice, our mission should be to make sure every change we make in the future is for the benefit of the next generation as much as possible. Any other purpose, in my eyes, is nothing but a waste of time.

I've learnt a lot working closely with the young kids from Cardinal Pole and Berger Primary School, especially during Design Week. I feel like Design Week allowed the young people to open up more and flourish, sharing their bright ideas and aspirations for their local area. The kids all put forth very creative and unique ideas for the space on Flanders Way, which were seen by the likes of some officers from the Hackney Council. I think everyone was surprised how confident the young people became as the week progressed. One girl in particular - at the beginning of the project she was very shy and reserved. However, after consulting with the other young people and realising that they believe in her ideas just as much as she does, she took charge and presented her project model to a group of adults and young people. This is only one of the benefits that you can take away from a project like Build Up Hackney.

Growth, confidence, determination and ambition are all the things I now see in the young people, yet so early into the project. I hope that, as we move forward with the project, the young people will feel more comfortable to share their ideas and believe in their power to make change possible in their local area.



“I've seen a lot of changes in the area, some positive and some negative. Many people have put forth great ideas for change, but always leave us with empty promises. No action taken. However, Build Up Hackney has showed me that there are people out there that understand the importance of community and want positive change just as much as the people going through the change”

Personal Account by Shenique Bass, 23

Written in December 2019

My name is Shenique, and I am a young adult working with the Build Up team in my local community. As a lifelong Hackney resident, I've never had a say on what happens where I live, so I wanted to take part in a project transforming my local area. For the last six months we have been working with young people from two local schools, Cardinal Pole Secondary and Berger Primary, to design and create a new space that they can identify with.

One of the things that drew me towards the project was the chance to experience a wide range of activities and skills. The placement offered me the opportunity to work with the youth and gain experience in a field that I wanted to work in. I currently study architecture and was interested in the urban redevelopment already happening in the community, and what it meant to those who live and work around here. There are a lot of new buildings and construction occurring throughout Hackney in which many local residents and young people have no say in. This has led to disparity among those who have been living here for a long time, and those who have recently opened businesses or moved here. I think it's important that, with all of the gentrification happening, we have spaces that we can identify with and that allow the community to gather. More often than not, areas of Hackney are being taken and made more luxurious to attract people with more money, but don't consider those who are already living there. This results in many working class or lower-income middle class families being outpriced and not considered. Being a part of creating something like the Build Up Hackney project helps to spark an interest for a stronger cultural background, where they can take ownership of a local space that is important to them, particularly as it is something the local kids have designed themselves.

One of the most gratifying things about the project was the amazing relationship I was able to build with my own community and the local young people. I had so many people pass by and tell me what a great job we were doing, and 'where will you be going next, can you come to us?' It made me realise even more how often we need projects like this to exist.

I think through this opportunity I was able to also inspire some of the young people around me to be confident in what they do. For example, many of the young people were very creative, but were not confident in their abilities to design. However, I had the chance to motivate them and show them that they can do anything if they set their mind to it. This pushed them to continue creating a design for the site as a group, and take pride in their beautiful designs.

Growing up in Hackney, we didn't have many opportunities like this exposed to us. Opportunities like this are important, because they show us that there are many things we can do and be. On the project, we had many different types of professionals: from artists, to youth workers, from architects to tree specialists. They came in and showed the kids what they did, and how they can use their jobs to help transform the local community.

One of the things I took away from this project is the power and determination of the youth to learn and transform their local area. Build Up Hackney has allowed not only the youth to do this, but also myself. Things that I didn't feel confident in before, I feel a lot more confident in now. For example, I learnt how to use different tools which I was scared to operate before, like angle grinders and circular saws. I also became more confident in leading sessions with the kids, something I couldn't have imagined myself being confident in doing before! I can positively say that the kids and I take pride in what we have created, and in the future I hope for more youth to be able to experience the same thing.

"As a lifelong Hackney resident, I've never had a say on what happens where I live, so I wanted to take part in a project transforming my local area... I think it's important that, with all of the gentrification happening, we have spaces that we can identify with and that allow the community to gather."



Personal account by Luke Billingham, Youth Worker

Written in September 2019

In 2017, I worked with two paid young people to produce Hackney Quest's major report about young people's experience of the local area, Hackney Wick Through Young Eyes (available to download free here). Funded and commissioned by Wick Award, the report found that a large number of local young people do not feel that they are informed about, involved in, or benefiting from the way that Hackney Wick is changing. In my view, the Build Up Hackney project is the ideal way to address this problem.

The report incorporated the views of over 400 local voices, and whilst some were positive about the changes they were seeing, it was more common for young people to say that they didn't think the changes were "for them". One 18 year-old who got involved in our Hackney Wick project, Daniel, said that new developments such as the luxury gym opposite his estate "are so close, but feel so far away". Young people in the area are surrounded by new shops, new housing or new workplaces which are physically proximate, but economically remote – they can't afford or access them, despite living alongside them.

We presented the report to senior decision-makers in February 2018, at a launch event hosted by the Mayor of Hackney, Phillip Glanville. The council have taken our recommendations very seriously, and some of the specific changes we asked for have now happened – for example, the Multi-Use Games Area neighbouring the Old Baths building in Hackney Wick is being refurbished, as we suggested it should. Local youth sports organisations such as Hackney Wick FC and Badu Sports will soon be able to make use of the space to provide high-quality provision for local young people.

But we didn't want to just rely on the council to bring about the changes that the report made clear were needed in the local area. We first met Build Up Foundation staff in late 2017, shortly after the report was written, and began planning a youth-led construction project in Hackney Wick. If young people are feeling that they don't have much say over change in their area, there's no better way to address that than to give them control over both the design and the construction process for a new space in their community! Build Up Hackney was born, and by the start of 2019 we had the funding, school buy-in and council support that we needed to make the project a reality.

Daniel – the same Daniel mentioned above – is now a paid employee on the project, along with Shenique, another local young adult. After a series of workshops with



young people from two local schools, we are now in the construction phase, working with young people from both schools and from Hackney Quest. During our lunch break last week, sandwiched in between washing hands, playing football, and eating sandwiches, I spoke with Daniel and Shenique about how they feel the project is addressing the concerns expressed by young people in the Hackney Wick Through Young Eyes report.

Three clear points came out really clearly from our conversation. Firstly, Daniel and Shenique both emphasised that they feel this project is helping all the young people involved to feel part of the community, and to feel that they matter just as much as everyone else, and they have a voice. This is in stark contrast to how I know many local young people feel a lot of the time: in the context of rapid change, young people are too often feeling left behind, ignored, or actively squeezed out of their local community – that they matter less than the wealthier residents moving in or the profits of the developers.

Secondly, Shenique pointed out that, even if they don't think about it consciously all the time, the young people involved in Build Up Hackney will always be aware that they've designed and built something to help their community – they'll always have in mind that they have contributed to a positive change in their area. Young people are all-too-often negatively stereotyped (as highlighted in our report), and far too many young people are internalising and acting out these stereotypes. Participants in Build Up, by contrast, know that they are playing an active role in improving their local area for people of all ages.

Thirdly, Daniel said that for him personally, the project has increased his sense of responsibility for Hackney. He feels like a young leader now, and he's helping other young people to shape the future of the area. Rather than feeling fatalistic in the face of change, he knows that he can make a difference to his community. As he put it in his blog about Build Up Hackney: "As part of the older generation and as people with a voice, our mission should be to make sure every change we make in the future is for the benefit of the next generation as much as possible. Any other purpose, in my eyes, is nothing but a waste of time."

In the longer term, I hope that this project will build the young people's sense that they can be world-makers: they can craft physical spaces (or organisations,

or ideas) which other people can benefit from and use. Too often, young people from areas like Hackney live their life surrounded by a built environment (and laws, traditions and ideas) designed and created by other people, who generally look and sound nothing like them, and whose life experience is most often utterly remote from theirs. Build Up Hackney is a great way of helping to develop young people's sense that they can have a shaping influence on the world around them. Given their talent, creativity and sharpness, I think the world could definitely do with some more of their influence!

"This project is helping all the young people involved to feel part of the community, and to feel that they matter just as much as everyone else, and they have a voice. This is in stark contrast to how I know many local young people feel a lot of the time: in the context of rapid change, young people are too often feeling left behind, ignored, or actively squeezed out of their local community – that they matter less than the wealthier residents moving in or the profits of the developers."

Project Outcomes and Indicators

	Outcome	Indicators
Young people having agency and voice	1. Young people gain practical, vocational and social skills	1.1 Young people report that they have developed problem-solving skills 1.2 Young people report they have developed skills in design and construction 1.3 Young people report that they have developed listening and communication skills
	2. Young people develop resilience, confidence and self-belief	2.1 Young people report that they overcame a challenge to complete the build 2.2 Young people feel more confident in making their ideas happen 2.3 Young people feel proud of their achievements
	3. Young people who have experienced marginalisation have the belief that they can effect change, now and in the future	3.1 During the project, young people feel that they have power to make decisions and influence the build 3.2 Young people report that they feel more able to influence change in their local area in the future 3.3 Young people report that they have developed leadership skills
	4. Young people take a leading role in a community development process	4.1 During the project, young people take on a responsibility or lead an activity 4.2 During the project, young people support and teach their peers 4.3 Young people report being able to work more independently on projects than at school
People involved and included in regeneration	5. People feel included in change that's happening locally	5.1 Local people report having changed their views on who can influence the local area 5.2 Local people report that residents feel more engaged in the community as a result of the project 5.3 Local people report feeling more able to bring about positive change in their community
	6. People feel more positive about changes in their local community	6.1 Local people feel more positive about their local community as a result of the process 6.2 Local people report feeling proud of young people, and believe that young people should be involved in decision-making about the local area 6.3 Local people feel there is a greater sense of community spirit
Stronger sense of community, now and in the future	7. People feel welcome, safe and want to spend time in their local area	7.1 Local people report that the space is welcoming and inviting 7.2 Local people report that the space is safer 7.3 Local people report that the space is cleaner and more looked-after than before 7.4 Local people report spending more time in the space and enjoying it more
	8. People feel increased trust and connection with other residents of all ages, backgrounds and genders	8.1 Local people report that they have more opportunities to meet other people through their shared use of the space 8.2 Local people report that they feel safer as a result of the project 8.3 Local people report that perceptions of young people have improved as a result of the project

1. Young people gain practical, vocational and social skills

1.1 Young people report that they have developed problem-solving skills

92% of young people report that they found a solution to a problem during the process of completing the build

1.2 Young people report they have developed skills in design and construction

100% of young people feel they have developed design and construction skills

1.3 Young people report that they have developed listening and communication skills

87% of young people feel they have developed listening and communication skills

“The Build Up Hackney project has been so special to me, because I have learnt how to be a good leader, learnt new skills and learnt I can build and how to use a saw, a spade, a drill, and all kinds of bolts and spanners.”

- Jasmin, local young person

“I joined Build Up Hackney because I want to design and build something for everyone to enjoy. Everyone gets together, they create, they agree on something and after that you go to the site and start building.”

- Reeshka, local young person

2. Young people develop resilience, confidence and self-belief

2.1 Young people report that they overcame a challenge to complete the build

92% of young people report they had overcome a challenge to complete the build

2.2 Young people feel more confident in making their ideas happen

100% of young people report feeling more confident in making their ideas happen

2.3 Young people feel proud of their achievements

100% of young people feel proud of their achievements

“In the case of somebody like her who has special educational needs and who doesn’t have a great time at school, it was extremely important to feel like she’d succeeded over there [on the Build Up project]. And it’s teamwork and it’s also following instructions and it’s getting skills. It was extremely positive.”

- Gill, local resident

“We walked past it and she said ‘*Nan, Nan, I helped do that!*’. And it makes her feel proud.”

- Bella, local older resident about the young person described above

“It taught me that the fear was all in my head and that I can do it.”

- Jayden, local young person

3. Young people who have experienced marginalisation have the belief that they can effect change, now and in the future

3.1 During the project, young people feel that they have power to make decisions and influence the build

100% of young people felt they had the power to make decisions and influence the build

3.2 Young people report that they feel more able to influence change in their local area in the future

100% of young people feel they are more able in influence their local area

3.3 Young people report that they have developed leadership skills

100% of young people feel they developed teamwork and leadership skills on projects

83% of young people report supporting and teaching their peers

“A lot of young people feel like they’re not listened to, because they’re too young to vote and therefore don’t get a say. But the project gave them the chance to finally do something permanent inside of the area, make real change for real everyday people.”

- Shenique, local young person

“There has been a restoration in confidence of locals that they, and especially young people, can influence the local area. Every time young people go past or into the space it reminds them that they belong, they matter and they can make things happen.”

- Councillor Chris Kennedy

4. Young people take a leading role in a community development process

4.1 During the project, young people take on a responsibility or lead an activity

92% young people report taking on a responsibility or leading an activity

4.2 During the project, young people support and teach their peers

83% of young people report supporting and teaching their peers

4.3 Young people report being able to work more independently on projects than at school

87% of young people report they worked more independently on projects than at school

“From speaking to young people at the opening event it was clear that they felt a real sense of ownership over the decisions that were made in designing and building the project. My colleagues who participated in the construction days as volunteers said that the young people were the ones telling them what to do!”
- Rae Whittow-Williams, Greater London Authority

5. People feel included in change that's happening locally

5.1 Local people report having changed their views on who can influence the local area

64% of people felt the project had changed their views on who can influence the local area

5.2 Local people report that residents feel more engaged in the community as a result of the project

74% of people feel more engaged in their local community

57% of people feel the project has inspired people to get more involved in their community

5.3 Local people report feeling more able to bring about positive change in their community

70% of people feel local residents are more able to bring about positive change in their community

"I think, witnessing perhaps the most under-represented members of society leading such dramatic change can really inspire others to make change, given the right support."

- Carl, local resident

"The kids built it. They won't damage it and they won't let no one else damage it either."

- Bella, local older resident

6. People feel more positive about changes in their local community

6.1 Local people feel more positive about their local community as a result of the process

87% of people feel more positive about their local area

94% of people feel the project has improved the look and feel of the local area

6.2 Local people report feeling proud of young people, and believe that young people should be involved in decision-making about the local area

83% of people felt that the project had made them proud of local young people

87% of people felt, as a result of the project, that young people should be involved in more decision-making about the local area

6.3 Local people feel there is a greater sense of community spirit

74% of people feel there is a greater sense of community spirit

91% of people would be interested in getting involved in a future Build Up project

“When we were building the project, a lot of people in the community would come down and speak to us and say, ‘you’re doing such a good job’ and ‘keep up the good work’. And the young people would tell each other ‘this person just said that we’re all doing a really good job’. And then they’d tell their friends about it too and their friends would come and take a look.”

- Shenique, local young person

“At the beginning I thought you lot were wasting your time, but obviously now I think it’s excellent.”

- Local shopkeeper

7. People feel welcome, safe and want to spend time in their local area

7.1 Local people report that the space is welcoming and inviting

94% of people feel the new space is welcoming and inviting

7.2 Local people report that the space is safer

91% of people feel the project has made the space safer

7.3 Local people report that the space is cleaner and more looked-after than before

98% of people feel the space has improved

91% of people feel the space is now better cared for

7.4 Local people report spending more time in the space and enjoying it more

96% of people use the space more

85% of people report increased enjoyment of their local area

“The fact that it’s really open and welcoming and is clearly now a loved piece of public realm with more street lighting, immediately turns a piece of land that could attract antisocial behaviour and made it a positive place to be.”
- Sarah, local resident

8. People feel increased trust and connection with other residents of all ages, backgrounds and genders

8.1 Local people report that they have more opportunities to meet other people through their shared use of the space

60% of people feel that the space has given them more opportunities to connect with others

62% of people now say hello to people from the area in the space

8.2 Local people report that they feel safer as a result of the project

74% of people feel that the project has made local residents feel safer

8.3 Local people report that perceptions of young people have improved as a result of the project

100% of people over 60 feel perceptions of young people have improved

“I don’t think people knew that space was there until now. Now we see a 25-year-old young girl on it, we see a 40-year-old there, we see a 10-year-old there. Everyone has a go at it.”

- Asin, local shopkeeper

“I think older people think kids are scary, so they discriminate against them. People think that they’re all in gangs, but they’re just bored children. So it’s really inspiring for us to see young people working hard to change our community. Everyone is starting to become more interconnected because of it.”

- Sandra, local older resident

Case Study - Harvinder, 10

Harvinder was one of the youngest members of the Build Up Hackney team. Various teachers told Build Up that he was making slow progress at school due to difficulties concentrating, and that he had particularly poor listening and communication skills for his age. They raised concerns regarding strong symptoms of suspected ADHD. Harvinder's parents were nervous about him joining the project, fearful that he would hurt himself due to his high energy, but his teachers were keen to involve him.

Project Experience

Harvinder struggled in the early stages of the project when discussions were held in a classroom environment. He always tried hard to contribute to design discussion, but his level of concentration was very short and he often resorted to running around and hiding not long into the start of each session.

When the project moved to the construction site though, Harvinder's progress levels shot up dramatically. He responded incredibly well to the physical approach to learning that the project construction site offered and was able to channel his high-energy into 'doing' rather than just 'listening'. He responded particularly well to working one-to-one with older male members of the team and made strong bonds with a number of the Build Up staff and regular volunteers. At the public opening of the project, he told people that he "enjoyed learning new skills and working with his new friend Daniel", a local older young person employed on the project as part of Build Up's Paid Project Placement Programme.

Harvinder's dedication to the project has been outstanding and his ability to concentrate through different methods of learning has been very apparent. During the summer, his family chose not to go on holiday so that Harvinder could see the project through to the end, recognising the immediate social and practical benefits their child was gaining from the project. Build Up Project Lead, Lily, noted the stark improvement that the Build Up project has had on Harvinder's listening and communications skills – "When Harvinder first attended Build Up, he found it difficult to focus his energy to express himself for more than a couple of sentences. But at the public opening of the project, Harvinder stood up on stage and communicated to a crowd of over 150 people about what the project had meant to him in a really concise way and it was just wonderful. He was like a different person!"

Outcomes

Resilient: Harvinder worked with supportive Build Up staff and regular volunteers to channel his challenging behaviour into new ways of working and concentration. He was given the platform to overcome practical, social and personal challenges and worked outside of his comfort zone in the patient and supportive environment of the project.

Practical and creative skilled: Harvinder thrived during the construction phase of the project and used the physical tasks that the project offered to support his learning style. He particularly enjoyed working with tools that required energetic movements, like handsaws and power drills.

Conclusion

Given the barriers that Harvinder faced with conventional styles of learning – difficulty listening, communicating and concentrating, with learning difficulties – he surprised his teachers and family with his ability to focus on the more physical tasks during the construction phase of the project. Focused, one-to-one sessions with supportive Build Up staff, youth workers and regular volunteers allowed him to work at a comfortable pace that enabled him to engage in the project in a way that no one had expected.

The Deputy Headteacher of Harvinder's primary school told Build Up that "Harvinder really surprised us with how much he developed confidence, especially his public speaking skills and teamwork skills". Harvinder and his teammates won an award from the council for their impact on their community. His parents, who were nervous about letting him take part in the project, proudly joined him at the award ceremony.



Case Study - Aiden, 14

Aiden was one of the eldest members of the Build Up Hackney team of young people and attended the construction phase of the project daily. Aiden faces many complications at home and, at the time of the project, he and his younger brother were being supported by social services. He has had a very difficult time in education, suffering from many years of bullying, which has led to him missing time at school, and falling behind his peers. This has impacted his confidence, especially in social situations.

Project Experience

Aiden commented very early on in the project that he didn't know how to design, but he continuously sought guidance from the Build Up staff and excelled in a wide range of skills. He then often adopted supportive roles amongst his younger peers and shared his learning with the team.

On a project Planting Day – where locals are invited to contribute to a project through planting – Aiden brought his 5-year-old brother. This was a particularly difficult day for Aiden, as members of his family were involved in a court case. The Build Up staff created an open environment for Aiden and his brother to be supported emotionally throughout the day. Aiden used the physical activities to distract him from his anxiety, working with friendly Build Up staff to first teach his brother how to plant bulbs and then later to teach adults and children from the community. Aiden later commented on how much the activities had helped him get through the difficult day.

Aiden had some outbreaks of anger during the project. A miscommunication with another teammate led to a physical encounter. The Build Up staff worked with Aiden to reflect on the event and he responded with dignity by working hard to regain the friendship of his peer by teaching him how to use tools to effectively tighten bench fixtures. The two boys remained good friends from then on.

Outcomes

Resilient: Aiden used the supportive environment of the Build Up project to help him overcome some of the challenges that he and his brother were facing at home during that time. Build Up staff supported him emotionally and the project enabled him to experience new ways of dealing with anxiety through focus.

Socially skilled: Aiden took on leadership roles to support his younger peers and shared his newly-learned knowledge of construction skills with his teammates. The project gave him the space and support to thrive in a way that a classroom setting can't offer. He responded well to Build Up staff when they encouraged him to reflect on a physical encounter he experienced with another teammate, where he responded by creating a close bond with his teammate through the employing the teaching and building skills that he had learnt on the project.

Conclusion

The Build Up project gave Aiden an opportunity to navigate some of the challenges that are common as a young person growing up in low income areas of London today. He used the safe space of the project to distract him from particularly difficult times at home and commented on the benefits of the emotional support and comfort that he received from the Build Up staff and older project volunteers. Aiden used the construction knowledge that he learnt on the Build Up project to support other peers, using teaching as a tool to reconcile feuds and to support his younger sibling during a traumatic time at home.

Local youth worker Luke told Build Up that, "Aiden has visibly grown in confidence through the Build Up project – being a part of building something new for the local community has clearly had a positive effect on his self-esteem. Since the project, I've seen Aiden communicating with more assurance, and he seems more comfortable in social situations that previously would have made him quite anxious. He is proud of his contribution to the project, as is his family, which is lovely to see!"



Case Study - Hannah, 10

Hannah is 10 years old and lives with her parents and younger brother in social housing on an overcrowded estate. She comes from an underprivileged working-class background and her parents had both been unemployed for some time at the time of the project. At the start of the project, Hannah was incredibly underconfident and rarely contributed to discussions in a group environment. She was also particularly apprehensive about working with older young people from a local secondary school.

Project Experience

The Build Up staff worked closely with Hannah and created a safe space for her to offer up ideas and voice her opinions amongst a supportive group. She responded to this very well and began to take on important roles within group work; soon she was leading presentations and contributing powerful discussion points to group debates. During the design phase of the project, Hannah was given the platform to present her design solutions to council members and local stakeholders and she communicated clearly after much practice with the Build Up staff. During the construction phase, she and an older young person from the team challenged the local council with a request for additional public lighting for their community space project and she delivered her case clearly and concisely. At the public opening of the community space, she led groups of local residents and international press around the site, describing the decisions that her team had made and how they had built the space. Her parents attending the opening and were astounded at the transformation that their daughter had gone through since taking part in the Build Up project.

In the report Hackney Wick, Through Young Eyes, Luke Billingham writes “The word “segregation” was used by one young person to describe the divisions between people of different age-groups in [Hannah’s] area”, noting that “primary-age children [are] being intimidated by teenagers”, and “Primary-age children sometimes spoke about gangs and about teenagers as if they are the same thing – there is a lot of fear of older young people”. Hannah engaged with workshops aimed at building relationships between the team members and, despite being apprehensive early on in the project about working with older students from a local secondary school, Hannah formed close bonds with older teammates and helped to bridge the gap between the different age groups.

Her parents were very supportive of her time with Build Up throughout the project, commenting on the noticeably positive effect it had on her home in evenings following the sessions. Her dad collected photos and memorabilia from the project so that he could make her a collage in her bedroom and now uses it to help trigger this positive attitude following completion of project.

Outcomes

Self confidence: The Build Up project enabled Hannah to take on important and challenging roles throughout the project, building her confidence, ability to preserve and sense of achievement. Because of this, she became a role model for other pupils in her school and acted as a change-maker on behalf of her community. She took pride in contributing to a place right on her doorstep for people in her community. The locality of the project enabled her to feel safe, which was supported by new friendships with older teammates.

Raised aspirations and broadened horizons: Throughout the Build Up project, Hannah was exposed to trades and professions that she might not have otherwise encountered, including architects, engineers, landscape architects and tree specialists, designers, council officers, builders, youth workers and local business owners. This exposure has contributed to her sense of empowerment and exposed her to a range of career opportunities available when she grows up.

Conclusion

The Build Up project gave Hannah the platform to take on leadership roles in an environment that she had formerly been particularly unconfident in and amongst older aged young people – an age group that she had noted as particularly intimidating at the beginning of the project. The Deputy Headteacher from Hannah’s primary school told Build Up, “Building closer links with local secondary schools has strengthened our Year Six pupils’ transition, especially for those involved”. Build Up Project Lead, Lily, commented on the positive effects of these relationships, noting that “It’s wonderful to know that, when these Year 6s transition to secondary school, they’ll already have friends there to welcome them into an environment that can be really scary for young people”.

The Build Up project has allowed Hannah to grow her confidence and shown her that, when she perseveres, she can have an incredibly powerful impact in and for her community. Hannah's Deputy Headteacher described her as "a local change-maker".



