

Developing shared expectations and ground rules

with the Beacon Centre 'Youth Voice' group in Salford

Context

Following a number of changes within the organisation and the participation group at the Beacon Centre in Salford, ICA:UK was invited to help to develop a shared set of ground rules that everyone could agree on, and do some work on establishing common expectations and implications for when ground rules were not adhered to.



Process

The process drew on the methods of ICA's "Technology of Participation" (ToP), including elements of the ToP *Focused Conversation* method and the ToP *Consensus Workshop* method.

Over four sessions of a couple of hours each, the young people and staff of the Youth Voice group gathered and worked through the following tasks.

The group did some icebreakers and team builders to boost morale, such as a quiz about leadership and a matching up exercise. They then undertook a ToP Consensus Workshop to draft some key ground rules that everyone agreed upon.

exercise on consequences to rule breaking

The group tested some of these rules using imaginary and real life examples of situations the group may find themselves in where rules get broken. They created a traffic lights model (over) for how to address issues - with green rule breaking resulting in low level consequences, and red being the most serious. Lots of discussion was had when people were working out where each example should go.

Their next task was to generate two sets of expectations - the first was what young people could expect from staff, and the second was what staff could expect from young people.

They then had a ToP Focused Conversation to explore the significance of these expectations.

The young people did some skills training sessions using the ToP Focused Conversation method to help them work through conflict and issues in a positive and constructive way, and exploring other ways of running successful groups, and developing public speaking skills.

Outcomes & impact

The sessions marked a turning point for the group in terms of how they talk to each other and how they can overcome difficulties together, as well as setting realistic and firm boundaries to make the environment positive and effective.

Beth and Claire who are youth workers for the group made the following comments:

“ICA got everyone up and standing, including the young people, when they were learning skills to communicate more effectively. Everyone was involved, which was great. Some who were initially resistant really enjoyed speaking. We liked the section on anti-discrimination. It was nice that people worked in groups with people they wouldn’t always work with, and it gave some of them the chance to work as a team with people they don’t often talk to very much. As a whole everyone enjoyed it and took to it.”

The group has now successfully transitioned into a new leadership and management model and is now supported through the youth service. This was Beth’s comment on the impact:

“The dynamic of the group has changed over the sessions and has been positive. Let’s keep it going!!!”

We then decided what actions were serious, moderate or mild and what the consequences should be...

Serious breaking of rules

- Not listening to safety rules
- Being directly or indirectly cruel or hurtful
- Serious, aggressive physical contact, fighting, violence
- Bringing a weapon or illegal drugs into session/ on a residential
- Stealing possessions
- Drinking in or before coming along

- Racism sexism etc
- Name calling
- Arguing
- Getting angry

Consequences

Suspension or asked to leave the group (temporary)
Report to police if law broken
Losing bigger treats e.g. residential
Speak to other agencies to offer the YP support

Moderate breaking of rules

- Throwing food
- Hiding someone’s shoe
- Not focussing on the task and messing around week in week out when we are aware of the purpose of the group

Consequences

Do workshops in group to address issues. Strict conversation re consequences and harm actions could cause. Lose treats. Have time out of session. The person must apologise

Mild breaking of rules

- Not listening during an icebreaker
- Mild arguing
- Occasional messing about
- Mildly offensive comments

- Occasional interrupting
- Constant burping/farting (unpleasant personal habits that are ‘in your face’)
- Accidentally losing people’s things
- Not tidying up after one’s self
- Not being responsible for communal tidying e.g. litter, food waste, pots.

Consequences

Have conversation about consequences of their actions. Send out non-verbal messages in the group that it’s not ok, (positive peer pressure). Remind people about the rules and aims of the group. Have peer mentors