



OFF THE FENCE



**PROGRESS REPORT
FOR THE BEER-HARRIS
MEMORIAL TRUST
2020-21**

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The Trustees of the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust so generously supported us over the last year. It's been a momentous year and we are grateful that we are still here to provide the critically important services that your funding has allowed us to carry out.

A REMINDER OF OUR CORE MISSION

'Resisting poverty. Empowering people. Restoring hope'. Off The Fence is a charity founded in 1997 with a vision to end poverty in all forms around Brighton and Hove. We work in three areas: homelessness, via emergency outreach to those living on the streets from our homeless centre, Antifreeze, which provides emotional, spiritual and practical assistance for exiting homelessness. We support women facing financial, health, domestic crisis' and more at the Gateway Women's Centre, and we have a Schools & Youth team which provides a programme of fun and creative activities in schools, to help young people access the tools they need to manage daily pressures in healthy ways. Off The Fence offers people hope, a way forward and the opportunity to live a new, better and transformed life.

FOCUSSING ON OUR SCHOOLS & YOUTH PROJECT

Bullying, ostracism and lack of confidence is an unfortunate fixture in many of our schools. It is usually caused by lack of education and/or empathy for those who may be presenting physical or mental issues. The World Health Organisation observes that 10-20% of all children may fall into one of these categories.

Our Schools & Youth team runs a comprehensive programme in local schools to alleviate this problem.

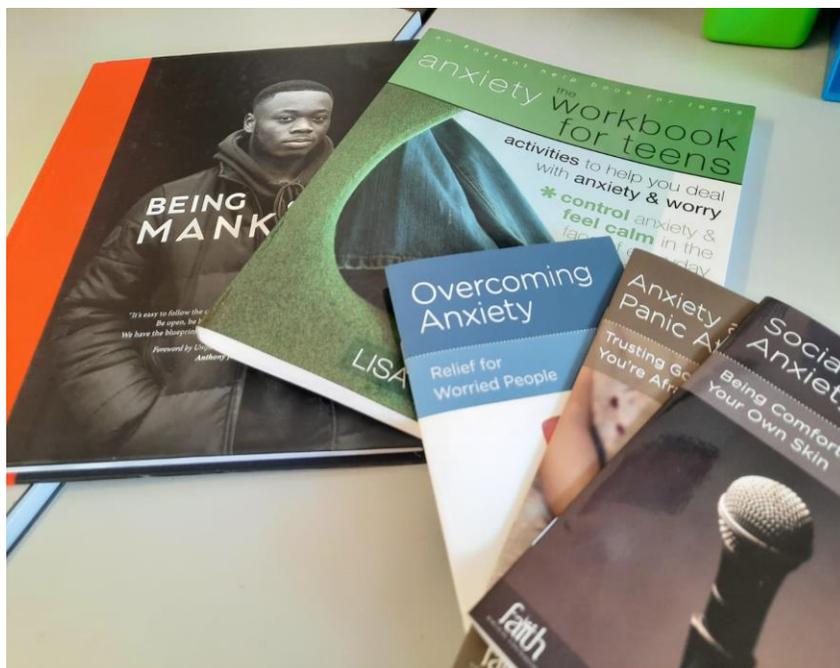
During the last academic year our team have worked closely with five local schools, making 17,000 student contacts. There were 10,000 video assembly views and 1868 students accessed Prayer/Reflection Spaces in a Box (adapted for Covid-19).



The young people we support come from varying backgrounds, with many of them struggling with school life and being in danger of being excluded or isolated, however the majority do come from lower income families. We mentor these students one-on-one, and in small groups. Over the last year, we mentored 39 students on a one-to-one basis. This met a huge need for those overwhelmed by school and life in general, and was logistically fairly easy to run in a Covid-secure way.

We work with schools in the Brighton & Hove wider area, and our team has also been asked to assist further afield too, in Worthing and Littlehampton. The common link seems to be the economic demography of the area concerned, where many of the young people, particularly teenagers aged 13+ come from broken homes or difficult family backgrounds.

The big issues encountered in our school-based work relate to identity, peer pressure, fitting in and belonging, and finding positive ways of dealing with the challenges in their lives. These, below, are some of the resources that our team have been using.



Over the last year, our team members worked closely with one of the five local schools, working with them for one whole day each week.

With Covid-19 restrictions in place, it has meant a radical re-thinking of the role of our team, as almost overnight we went from being hand-on in schools to performing our support role in entirely different ways, dependent, mostly, on a range of digital solutions, to bridge the gap.

We invested in the 'Headroom' range of practical courses for children suffering from isolation or

depression during the lockdown. We set up a teenager-friendly Instagram account with daily insights into a range of issues relevant to the age groups we serve. We purchased a complete video suite, which has enabled us to be able to record assemblies for a number of schools. We have also been working in close partnership with the Brighton & Hove City Mission, producing an ongoing series of education videos about a range of teenage issues, such as integrity and trust, which are being released to an appreciative audience via social media channels and directly to schools.

It has been a year that has pushed us out of our comfort zones, forcing us to keep evolving and reshaping the work. A year ago, we knew little to nothing about making videos, but now we can competently plan, shoot and edit.

100th PRAYER/REFLECTION SPACE

In March last year we celebrated our 100th Prayer/Reflection Space, and this is Lizzi, our Schools & Youth team Manager, about to cut the celebratory cake, with members of our wider team in the background.



This is the feedback from some of the students after taking part in Prayer/Reflection Spaces last year:

"I liked the sorry shredder, it made saying sorry easier."

"I really enjoyed the prayer space because it was calming to just sit back and understand that you don't need to worry about everything because God will always be there for you."

"it helped me let out all my anger emotion."

"I liked it because I had time to think and pray."

Feedback from a school:

"The children and staff have really benefitted from coming into such a calm environment, allowing them to create the thinking space in their day to truly reflect,

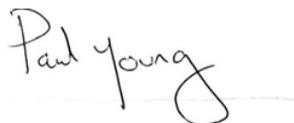
and be thankful as well as think about those bigger questions." Head Teacher.

Since we ran our first Prayer/Reflection Space in March 2013 we have now met with over 29,000 students.

Without the commitment and financial support of the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust, our many service users and clients would simply not have had the opportunity to even think about changing their lives for the better. With your support, many of our clients are now able to think more about a new and better future. For this, we are incredibly grateful and cannot stress enough the importance of the partnership.

Your support has been critical in the last year. It has enabled us to maintain services that are more needed than ever at present.

We thank you so much for working with us at such a crucial time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Young". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Paul Young, CEO
25th October 2021