

HIGH-5 COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

There were a number of memorable events that occurred on the High-5 programme delivered to Lewisham Youth Offending Service's clientele who attended 21 April – 3 June 2009: The first of which was a visit to Canary Wharf organised by Elevating Success.

During a group discussion, it became apparent that a number of the young people had never heard of Canary Wharf, let alone visited it. What followed was a conversation about boundaries and the personal restrictions that individuals put upon themselves – both physical and mental - by respecting the notion of 'Ends' – a term used by gang members to describe a designated geographical area with territorial rights. Those who 'dared' to travel beyond their 'Ends' without the protection of fellow gang members could find themselves vulnerable to attack.

A key element of the High-5 programme is to build individuals' confidence in all areas of their lives – even if it merely meant navigating the streets. With this thought in mind Elevating Success offered the clientele a chance to visit Canary Wharf at which point the young men jumped at the opportunity. However, one of their concerns was that they would be conspicuous because of their urban clothing. With part funding from Youth Offending Services, Elevating Success purchased trousers, shirts, ties and shoes for four individuals and set out for the business district.

The resulting visit was a resounding success. The learners felt confident and 'invisible' for the first time in a while - blending into an environment without suspicion being levelled at them. Upon return, the young men were taken back to the YOS offices to collect their belongings with the option of changing back into their clothes – not a single individual chose to do so, preferring to remain 'suited and booted' instead.

The impact of this visit cannot be underestimated. The immediate result was that when Funda Drummonds went into his local job centre a week later and saw a job advertised in Old Street, he decided that he could confidently travel beyond his 'Ends'. He attended interview in the clothes acquired for the Canary Wharf visit and was subsequently offered the job!

However, the ultimate moment for all participating on the course was the strength of feeling expressed by Jin Yuan Zhang at the closing Graduation Ceremony. "This course has been the best thing that has happened to me since I came to England."



Graduates of the June 2009 High-5 Programme

(From left to right: Viett, Moh (staff), Funda, Philip and Jin)