

Estate education

HIGH HOPES FOR FUTURE



PEPYS AND BOUNDS: High-5 participant Alan Clark, 24, with mentor Nadine Wright and, inset, Andrew Brown
MAGNUS ANDERSSON/30166/6

LIFE on one of Lewisham's most deprived estates can be a struggle for young people.

Poor grades and even lower expectations have left some on the Pepys estate in Deptford with little hope for the future. High-5 is a new programme trying to give them a second chance to make a success of their lives.

Corporate IT specialist turned motivational trainer Andrew Brown, 35, is running the council-funded course.

His not-for-profit company, Elevating Success, has been helping young people in the borough for 18 months.

Mr Brown said: "More than 80 kids in the borough have been through one of our programmes and so far half have got jobs or into college."

"Some of them are very far from achieving those aims when they join. They may have dropped out of school before GCSEs and many would have been hanging around doing nothing for months."

"Once they have stepped through the door here they have made the choice that they want to do something for themselves."

"They still face serious difficulties, there is a whole big cycle involved in getting out of relying on benefits and for some young people that is massively challenging."

"To come on a course like this they have to have faith in making

a big change in their lives and we want to help them reach their potential."

Last week at the Riverside Youth Centre in Grove Street, in the heart of the Pepys estate, Mr Brown and his mentoring staff were running confidence-building workshops.

Working in teams, young people were given 40 minutes to design a new English currency system – and then stand up and give a presentation about their ideas.

The public speaking, leadership and team work skills used in the exercise were new experiences for most of those taking part.

The programme, which builds work place skills, is funded through the council's Lewisham Youth Services and backed by Lewisham Homes.

It is also working in partnership with the London East Connexions Activity Agreement which helps unemployed young people who are also out of education and training.

Mr Brown said: "We make sure no one leaves the course without a CV and they are also given the chance to meet college reps and local employers."

"We help out with filling application forms. You would be surprised how many people have difficulty reading and writing, which presents so many barriers."

"We can do one-to-one coaching and mentoring if needed. Originally we were training 16- to 19-year-olds."

"But we never turn anyone away if they come with the mind to work and with the attitude to make a new start."

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'Mum's really proud of me'

ANGELA Elworthy, 18, who lives on the Pepys estate, has found the course has helped her face up to her fears.

She said: "At first I wouldn't leave my house because I was having lots of panic attacks, stress and was very anxious."

"A friend told me about this place and said it would be ideal to build up my confidence and help me get to where I want to be. I'm hoping to get rid of my panic attacks, build confidence and study beauty to level two. When I first came here I was so shy and didn't want to speak. I've come out of it after the first three weeks and feel comfortable enough to talk to people and give my opinions."

"High-5 is helping me do my CV, they've set up an email address for me and are helping me get into college and find out how much it will cost."

"My mum's really proud and happy to see me leave the house. She said she has seen a real change in me."

"Living on the estate here is all right, since I've been here we have had some trouble, but it's calmed down since some of the neighbours moved. We hardly get any trouble now, just maybe kids throwing eggs on Hallowe'en, just normal stuff."



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SUCCESS: Participants in the High-5 programme

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'I've learnt to be confident'

NICOLE Zulu, 16, who lives on the Pepys estate, joined the course after her mum received a letter about it.

She said: "My mum thought it would be good for me to join and made me come down."

"I thought it would be boring, but I like it."

"It's helped me improve my CV and I've learnt to be more self-confident, better at talking in front of a group and socialising."

"I've been living on the estate with my mum and sister for about a year, although I've been in this area

my whole life. "It's all right, you get used to it – the people and just the way it is around here."

"You just do what you do and try not to watch other people. There were a lot of teenagers last year causing a lot of problems, but it's calmed down, and most of those kids have gone off to college."

"I want to do an office job, I'm not sure in what industry yet, but I don't want to work in retail. Maybe in a travel agent's because I like computers and picking up phones."



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