

Community Based Core Skills Courses for Vulnerable Young People

Break Out

The course is aimed primarily at **ex offenders and those at risk of offending**, but we also work with anyone who has been involved with the Criminal Justice system and is **finding it hard to settle into mainstream education**, or paid and voluntary work. Each course is 10 weeks long and during the weekly sessions **we work on team building, communication skills, job skills, IT, letter writing, CV building and we also have done some hill walking too**. The last group was full of 'footballers' so we now have an ex offenders football team on the go but for some strange reason, and I can't think why, we are finding it difficult to find teams that want to play us.

Some of the learners have **gone onto full time studying through the college**, some have gone onto **paid employment**, and others are now **working with me in a voluntary capacity as mentors**. One of our learners is about to start college after the summer to do social care. The Break Out group **showed him just what he had to offer and how well others take note and listen** to the things he has to say and the powerful message he was able to deliver to vulnerable young people about positive life choices.



Dynamics

The Dynamics group works with disadvantaged young men, aged between 16 and 25. The main purpose of the course is to **improve confidence and self esteem so that learners can begin to make positive steps** towards employment. Each course is different as the content varies greatly to meet the needs, expectations and interests of the group, but **core skills especially working together are central** to the work. Each session lasts for 2-3 hours a week and courses last for 8-10 weeks depending what each learner has got out of it and what they want from the course. This flexible approach allows learners to **take part in many diverse activities** ranging from bush craft, to environmental art and to develop at their own pace and build the social skills necessary for them to make the **next steps towards further education or employment**.

A young autistic adult recently joined the course. He was unable to engage with learning in a mainstream secondary school as he **found the school environment overwhelming**. The curriculum was too restrictive and the social demands of large groups too challenging. He had been a school refuser since second year, rarely attending, preferring to live a solitary life behind doors. The different approach and the emphasis on basic social skills which allow us all to rub along together and the group support engendered over the ten weeks **empowered the learner to make realistic choices about his future**. He was encouraged to follow his interest in music and he is **now at college studying to be a sound engineer**. He has taken up the guitar and is confident enough to perform. It is possible for him to keep in touch with staff through the project so the support is continued for as long as he needs it. In fact, he has joined the walking group and as a volunteer, he has **taken a key role in organising events which gives him the opportunity to develop other skills**.

