Case Study: The knock-on effect of Community Philosophy

Young people adopt the approach modelled by trusted youth workers.



I have used a lot of the tools and skills I picked up on Graeme's Community Philosophy Facilitator Training course. This has had a really positive effect, and people in my team were intrigued. They wanted to find fresh ways to work with young people, so I organised for Graeme to come and do some in-house Community Philosophy training designed especially for us.

We learned a lot, and it's had an impact in all kinds of ways. For example, we run lunchtime drop-in sessions in local schools for young people to engage with youth workers. We put philosophical questions on the table (we call them 'thunks'!) Something like, *'If a table doesn't have any legs, is it still a table?'*

At first, students think it's a bit weird. But they soon realise that we're genuinely interested in their ideas and opinions. It's a brilliant way to bring them into discussion with us about other issues.



This kind of informal Community Philosophy is a great way for young people to flex their critical thinking muscles and develop confidence and resilience.

We model what good communication, decision-making and problem-solving looks like, and they then apply the same approach to other issues.

One young person was experiencing racist bullying and, as well reporting this, we examined 'racism' more broadly in a group session. The conversation turned to 'borders', and the young people interrogated their own understanding of what this concept means. One young man, who had arrived in Norwich from Afghanistan, shared the impact 'borders' had had on his life.

There's a sort of innate confidence that comes from practising this stuff – for all of us. My team are much more comfortable with the idea that we don't have all the answers; and we're not afraid of conversations when this is the case. I've realised I don't need to leap in and change stuff.

The young people have developed a similar attitude: they trust the process too. They've got used to communicating in a way where they listen to each other. They're confident in applying the values of democracy and tolerance, and finding solutions for themselves, and now do this naturally.

As youth workers, we have many opportunities to carve out spaces where those principles can flourish – whether it's discussing 'big issues' with young people or having an impromptu chat with colleagues during a tea break. Working in this way can have a massive impact on society; if people are genuinely consulted and heard, then change can happen for the better.

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