



OVERVIEW

The Unique Course (for girls) and Identity Course (for boys) is a ten week programme for young people aged 12-18. Each session is two hours long and can be incorporated into the school day, after school club, or evening session. There are places for 10 young people per course. The course is aimed to raise self esteem and aspirations within young people who are identified as being vulnerable or 'at risk'. This can be through things such as anti-social behaviour, sexual exploitation, involvement with gangs or youth violence, low self-esteem and confidence, poor attendance in school and risk taking behaviour. The course looks at issues such as Identity, Dreams and Aspirations, Friendship, Sexual Health and Relationships, Drugs, Alcohol and Personal Safety, Guns and Knives, Community Cohesion, Self Esteem, Image and Role Models. As part of the course, the young people get to take part in a professional photo shoot, and at the end of course they are invited to take part in a graduation celebration where they receive their certificates.

Over 1200 young people across South Yorkshire have completed the course in schools, youth clubs, community centres and pupil referral units. The course aims to help young people make positive decisions for their lives and to promote healthy relationships for themselves, and their groups, schools and communities. The course can be tailored to meet the needs of the young people within the group, and many young people who have completed the course have made major changes to their lifestyle choices.

There is a primary school version of each of the courses, Little Miss Unique (for girls) and Junior Identity (for boys). These courses are for 8-11 year olds, and are often run as transition groups in preparation for secondary school. A very good example of this is where 3 primary schools who were feeder schools to the same secondary school, each chose four girls (making a total 12) to do the course together. This was an excellent way for the girls to get to know each other and prepare for the transition into Year 7 and a new school.

The Empower Course has been developed through consultation with women in Darnall. We found that many of the parents, particularly mothers, of the young people taking part in Unique and Identity, wanted something similar for adults. The pilot took place at Darnall Family Development Project with 11 women, and has recently been evaluated very positively. The 10 week course covered issues such as Identity, Self Esteem, Stress and Pressure, Parenting Skills, Friendship, Dreams and Aspirations and Making Positive Choices. This course has been completed across Sheffield, and a recent course has also been completed in Scunthorpe.

GRADUATION

At the end of the course, we have an evening where the young people are invited to celebrate finishing the course, and share with friends, family, teachers, etc, how they have found the experience of being on the course. The young people will receive certificates for completing the course.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

The course can be tailored to suit the needs of the young people or women in the group. If you would like additional, specific topics to be covered within the course, please contact Jody who will be able to discuss this with you. We are able to take some topics out and add others in, if you require this. Additional topics can include subjects such as anger management, attendance at school, youth violence, sexual exploitation, family, communication skills, teenage parenting, or any others of your choice.

QUOTES FROM UNIQUE, IDENTITY AND EMPOWER PARTICIPANTS

“This has been the best experience of my life”

“I have never stuck at anything before, but I have proved that I can stick at something, and I’m glad I did”

“I’ve never got a reward or a certificate for anything. I am really proud of myself”

“The Unique Course has made me realise that it’s ok to like myself, and to accept that other people like me too”

“People just used to think that I was bad. They didn’t even want to know why I acted like that. Being on the Unique Course has given me a chance to talk about things and try to help me work stuff out”

“I never used to think that I fitted in anywhere, but I’ve loved the Unique Course and it has made me feel amazing. I now know that it’s ok just to be me. I don’t want it to end”

“The Unique Course has helped me to learn to accept people. I used to have issues with people who were different to me. I’ve learnt that it’s because I didn’t give them a chance and I judged them. The course has helped me to learn that people are different, and that I need to accept it”

“Before I did the Unique Course I used to think I knew everything and that I was really cool. I’ve realised that I was doing stupid stuff and that I was hurting myself and other people around me. The course has helped me to talk about stuff and I am making an effort to change now”

“The course has helped me so much. Everyone is so supportive and even though the course has finished, we have learnt how to support each other and we now know what real friendship is”

“As a 32 year old mother, I’m supposed to have got everything sorted out. My head was a mess before I came on this course. The Empower Course has given me somewhere to go and talk about things. It’s not counselling, but just being in a group and being able to be honest is great. It’s good to know I’m not the only one going through stuff”

“There isn’t anything else like the Empower Course. There are so many courses you can go on to learn first aid and maths, and all those sorts of things, but this one is special. You get support, you get to learn things. It’s two hours a week just for me. There aren’t many courses for women where you feel like part of a family”

“I have seen an incredible difference in the girls from my school who have taken part in this course. For some of them it has been the change we have been hoping for, for many years. We were really worried about some of the girls, and that is why we chose them for the course. While they were on the course we could see something changing within them. They have blossomed and grown. We only wish that we could put all our students through the course.” (Head teacher from a Sheffield secondary school)

“Before the course began I knew a lot of the girls as I saw them in the community. When the course started they were very wary of me, and a few of them still called me “Piggy” etc. Through the Unique Course I have been able to get to know the girls, and they have got to know me. We have built up a mutual trust and respect which I don’t think we would have ever done if it wasn’t for the course. When I see them in the community now, they often come up to me and talk to me. This has had a really positive impact on them and their peers, and has improved our relationship within the community. I would definitely recommend the course as a way of building up good relationships with young people in a community.” – (Police Community Support Officer who supported a Unique Course)