

## The Basingstoke Peace Project 2020 Report

In July and August 2020 the Youth Commission and Hampshire Cultural Trust worked in partnership to raise awareness of knife crime and promote positive activities for young people.

Within Hampshire, Basingstoke is an area facing a high level of knife crime. The Youth Commission has been working closely with the Violence Reduction Unit to both identify the drivers of violence, and interventions that could help prevent young people taking a path that leads to violence. Hearing concerns from the community, this project was led by local resident and serious violence team mentor for the Youth Commission, James Bowman.

The Basingstoke Peace Project aims to raise awareness of the consequences of knife crime and promote positive activities for young people. Hampshire Cultural Trust (HCT) developed a series of positive, creative sessions with the aim to give young people a safe space for discussion, as well as opportunities to learn new skills and value their voice and contribution within the final artwork. Artist Jono Retallick worked with young people designing a piece of art that incorporates their personal reflections on knife crime and represents peace. The individual artworks contributed to a sculpture which will tour to various locations, including schools, and will act as a discussion piece as a positive focus for young people.

### Activity

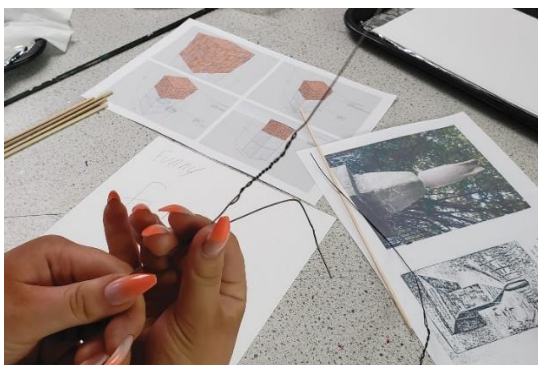
**Ashwood Academy, Basingstoke (Group 1):** July 2020, 4 x 2 hour workshops

- 4 x young people aged 14 – 16 years
- 10 x young people aged 14 – 16 years independently contributed during the week

**Milestones Museum, Basingstoke (Group 2):** August 2020, 4 x 2 hour workshops

- 2 x young people referred by Youth Offending Team (YOT)
- 8 x young people referred by YMCA Basingstoke

Each young person learnt new sculptural skills and through this creative process they explored and shared personal reflections about knife crime. They then moved on to focus on personal strengths and messages to inspire other young people. Young people and staff were provided with resources and materials by the Youth Commission to inform the conversations. Both support staff and young people took part as equals in the workshop creating a safe space for discussions. Participants added their carefully chosen words or mark onto 144 tiles ready for casting to create the final sculpture.



## Outcomes

### Group 1. Ashwood Academy

Young people were referred by teachers and 4 attended all workshops. It was held within Ashwood Academy as it remained open to vulnerable young people throughout the lockdown measures. Each student was asked to fill in a self reflective questionnaire before and after the workshop.

The group feedback reflected that it was a positive experience taking part in the workshops and working with an artist. The opportunity to connect with their peers was a significant factor. This may correlate to the timing of the workshops where there was a significant lack of positive activities for young people.



*'It's taken some of the students up until the final session to think of something positive about themselves and share this in front of each other. When they started to play with materials they relaxed and helped to let their guard down and actually start sharing what they wanted and why they chose words. What it meant to them'. Jono Retallick, artist.*

*'It was interesting watching the students try to find positive words to describe themselves. I definitely think they will thrive from and enjoy the process'. Steve (teacher and pastoral care)*

### Group 2. HYOT and YMCA Basingstoke

Young people joined an artist in the Education Room at Milestones Museum independently but with support from the partners. The quantitative methods of collecting data was adapted to use more informal methods including informal self-reflections using creative outputs as stimulus, support worker feedback and informal questionnaire for case study.

Positive relationships were built between individuals and the relationships with the artist created a positive space. All participants said that they enjoyed the workshops and contributed to the sculpture, showing great pride when seeing the final casted sculpture. One young person also agreed to be interviewed by a BBC reporter to talk about knife crime and confidently shared his own experience and views on tackling it.

*The sessions were very calm and relaxed and the young people responded positively by engaging with the activity in different ways but were happy to work in their own way, and often without a break!*

*The activity itself was very accessible and the time given to thinking and talking was equally valuable. One young person said that they felt they had made a good relationship with the artist. Another young person really enjoyed making their own work and being supported to do it. To see young people voluntarily attend positive activities during the summer holidays was so encouraging and they themselves said that they were bored and wanted something to do. Lorna Digwell, Wessex Dance Academy/YOT*

### Creative Outputs – 144 tiles (ready to be cast)

*Young people's words and meaning*

**Family:** *Life and love – the most important things you have. Life – you only have one, Love you need, and family are there at the end.* Participant, YMCA Basingstoke

**Split Second:** *Things can change in a split second. Because a life can be taken. It's that quick and that moment can have consequences.* Participant, YMCA Basingstoke

**Mindful:** *'I wrote mindful because it's something that I would like to be better at, something to work at'* Participant, Ashwood Academy

**32:** *'32 words were written and covered over on this tile leaving it blank'*

### Comments and Feedback

*"It was great to visit the project and see first-hand how it is helping young people deal with difficult and complex emotions. The project also provides education and materials which help to inform young people about the consequences of knife crime and serious violence. I really enjoyed talking to the young people involved in the project and taking part in the workshop session"* MP Maria Miller

### Youth Offending Team Reflections

*I will pass this [positive comments] on to Lewis as it is always good to hear good news. I am sure he will be pleased with the feedback. When I met with Lewis last week he was enjoying the project and quite eager to attend.* Wayne Phillips, Restorative Justice Officer, YOT

As part of the [Youth Commissions Big Conversation](#) young people also had the opportunity to contribute and give their views and solutions to tackling serious violence through:-

- Completing Big Conversation feedback cards
- BBC News South East report on project
- Conversation with MP Maria Miller





## Case Study

Ben joined the session at Milestones Museum for two afternoons (2 x 3 hours sessions) supported by staff from YMCA Basingstoke. After the sessions, he discussed the workshops and his reflections supported the observations in the workshops. In the first session, he was a bit apprehensive but as the group settled into the workshop he engaged in the creative elements of the workshop and discussions.

*Not being a people person I found it a little difficult but I did engage and talk, but I had only days before actually had been waving a knife about in anger, and my support worker Gina (support staff) said I should go and I'm very glad I did.*

In the second workshop, he was more confident in discussing his ideas and what he had made with the artist. In one conversation with the artist and support worker he explained how his lived experience of knife crime and volunteered personal reflections on the word he chose.

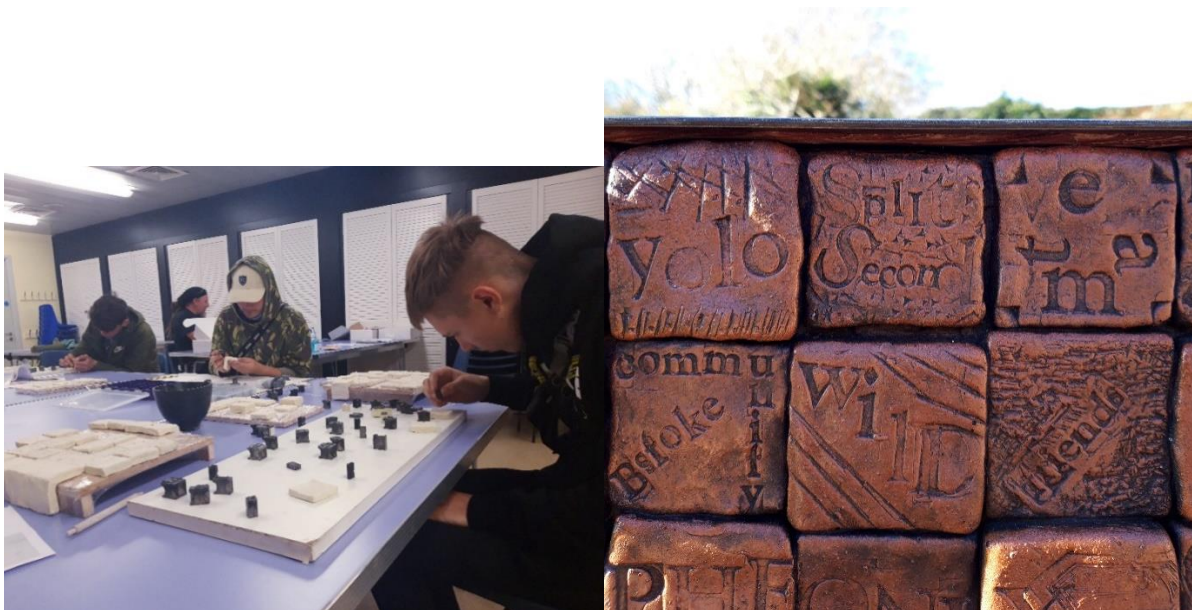
*Split second was actually my block! And the reasoning behind it was the fact that using a knife changes everything in a split second things could end in arrest, prison, even death.*

Although this was a difficult subject he showed a great deal of pride in his skills as he helped to arrange the tiles and offering support to others in the group by talking through their ideas. In a supported, relaxed, environment he gained confidence to talk about his experiences which was a positive step for him. In conversation with his support worker afterwards he was asked whether he looked differently at knife crime now than before he took part in the sculpture project and said

*Kinda of yes and no, personally I don't carry a knife anymore. But young people carry knives through fear and peer pressure - as a just in case but unfortunately ends bad either way.*

When asked whether he thought others should take part in and learn about the dangers of knife crime whilst making a sculpture he suggested:

*I think that it was good to interact with people and discuss the subject, although I think that this sort of thing should start in primary schools as it's the next generation that we need to think differently.*



## Reveal/Conceal (2020)

Sculptor: Jono Retallick. Materials: Cast Iron Clay with Concrete (Base)

Created by young people aged 14 – 24 years old from Ashwood Academy Basingstoke, YMCA Basingstoke, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Offending Team

Basingstoke Peace Project in partnership with Youth Commission and Hampshire Cultural Trust and supported by Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

