



HAVE A TALK,

TAKE A WALK,

BUT DON'T RUN FROM

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Slogan created by students, New River College

Don't Run From Your Mental Health Impact Report

Commissioned by young people. Developed with young people. Offered to young people.

Delivered by Big Ideas. Co-produced with students at New River College, Islington.

Funded by the Young Grant Makers, part of Islington Giving, and the Cripplegate Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

Young people in Alternative Provision are rarely asked to shape the resources made for their peers. Mental health materials for schools are usually made by adults, for young people, rather than with them.

Don't Run From Your Mental Health was different. It was commissioned by young people, developed with young people and offered to young people. The Young Grant Makers, part of Islington Giving, funded it with the Cripplegate Foundation.

We co-produced the resources with students at New River College, a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Islington. They drew on their own lived experience to write, script and star in two short films. They created the slogan and chose the local services for a signposting poster. Their resources were then taken into mainstream secondary schools across Islington, so students from a PRU led the conversation with their peers.

AT A GLANCE

2

short films written,
scripted and acted by
students, drawn from
their own experience

1

workshop day to devise,
write and film

4

local support services
chosen by students for
their peers



A New River College student during filming

WHAT WE DID

CO-PRODUCTION THROUGHOUT

We ran a one-day workshop at New River College to facilitate and enable the young people to produce what was meaningful to them. The students told us that acting out scenarios helped them think through how to respond to difficult situations, so drama became the format. They built two scenarios from their own experiences, then wrote, scripted and acted in both films. Their voices shaped every part of the final resources.

THE FORMAT

Students chose drama and scenarios

THE STORIES

Drawn from their own lived experience

THE MESSAGE

Their own slogan and their pick of local services

"I learned how to work with scenarios and dialogue – script writing. Working through scenarios was a problem-solving exercise. I think this is something which can help other young people make good choices. It shows you how to prioritise mental health."

STUDENT, NEW RIVER COLLEGE, ISLINGTON

THE FILMS

In each film, a central character responds badly to a moment of crisis. The film then shows a more positive way through, modelling choices the students themselves use to look after their mental health.



Watch the films

big-ideas.org/have-a-talk-take-a-walk

THE SLOGAN AND POSTER

The students created the slogan “Have a talk, take a walk, but don’t run from your mental health”, which we used throughout the programme. They also chose the four Islington organisations they felt were most useful to their peers, and these became a signposting poster. The poster was distributed to schools in Islington.



The Time to Talk Islington poster, designed by students at New River College

LIFT

KOOTH

MIND

BRANDON CENTRE

TAKING IT TO THEIR PEERS

The resources were made for young people in Islington’s mainstream secondary schools, and we took them there through digital events and assemblies. The students’ films set up scenario-based challenges, encouraging pupils to make positive choices and seek support when they need it. Young people from the PRU were leading the conversation, not receiving it.

IMPACT

FOR THE STUDENTS

The project gave students in Alternative Provision a voice in mainstream school life, and a positive contribution to make to it. When we interviewed the students afterwards, many said they were already using their slogan in daily life. They also built skills in scriptwriting, dialogue and problem-solving.



It took courage for me to take part in this project... I get camera shy and I had to read out loud. But it wasn't that bad, and my confidence levels went up."

STUDENT, NEW RIVER COLLEGE, ISLINGTON

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS ISLINGTON

The workshops meant the students' films had impact across the borough. Young people from the local PRU took the lead and connected with their peers in mainstream schools nearby.

FOR FAMILIES AT HOME

Andi Silvain, headteacher at School 360 and a member of the Big Ideas advisory board, found the films powerful for engaging parents and families at home. She told us that the boys' film in particular shows the value of resources rooted in lived experience: because young people wrote the script, the films give teachers insight and a way to start conversations with parents.

LEARNING

We followed the students' lead. Drama was their idea, and it let them draw on their own experiences while speaking through characters, a safe way into a complex topic.

Lived experience is what makes the resources work. Feedback from a London headteacher shows that because young people wrote the script, the films give other young people insight, and a way to talk with parents and families. It is a use we now want to build on.



From the students' Time to Talk Day campaign image

CONCLUSIONS AND LEGACY

The two films, the slogan and the poster remain available to schools in Islington on request. They were made by young people in Alternative Provision, from their own lived experience, for their peers in mainstream schools.

Co-production made the difference. The students chose the format, wrote the stories and decided which services to recommend. The project shows that young people in Alternative Provision can lead positive change across a whole borough when they are given the tools and the time, and it gives us a one-day model that can be repeated anywhere.

“ I used my own experience and what I’ve learned for this project. You have to surround yourself with good people and to never give up. If you want young people to open up about this subject then you have to understand them, let them speak, hear them out.”

STUDENT, NEW RIVER COLLEGE, ISLINGTON

WHAT NEXT

We want to take this approach beyond Islington. There are two ways to get involved:

ADAPT THE EXISTING FILMS

Online digital workshops for schools in a new area, using the resources made in Islington.

RUN A PARALLEL PROJECT

Young people in your area create their own mental health resources, followed by digital workshops for local schools.

To talk about a programme in your borough, contact Dr Virginia Crompton, Founder and CEO, at virginia.crompton@big-ideas.org.

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