

# A tough love programme that works: *Our track record*



## **The Programme**

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Youth at Risk delivers intensive programmes in areas of deprivation all around the UK which involve local people in helping transform their most disruptive and excluded young people. The work helps them take responsibility for themselves, take control of their lives and gets them on the road towards becoming thriving, contributing members of society.

## **The What**

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Since 1992 Youth at Risk has been working with young people and the adults who support them across the UK. It's been involved in conflict resolution in Belfast and Kosovo and has carried out acclaimed work in prisons. It's worked in schools to raise standards and with business leaders to create opportunity and enterprise. It has worked with an international ballet company and a Premiership rugby club, and coached young people on the Channel 4's 'Orchestra United' and the BBC's 'Goldie's By Royal Appointment' – all in the campaign to transform the lives of young people.

## **The How**

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Youth at Risk's tough love approach is about the long haul, demanding an enormous amount of the young people in an intense and emotionally demanding set of psychological and physical challenges, followed by months of support and supervision by local volunteers.

## **The Why**

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Our vision is of a successful future for all young people as part of society. We believe that if we stop thinking about young people as problems (unemployed, drug user, criminal) but support them to realise their strengths and talents, all young people can achieve their potential and become prosperous, thriving and contributing members of society.

## **What They Say**

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*"The Youth at Risk training was challenging, different, pertinent, and impressive. It sees young people as possibilities – this is excellent and rare; the commitment and experience-base of its staff; its exceptionally well developed links with the community and business."*

— Institute of Criminology,  
University of Cambridge, 2009

*"Youth at Risk sets out to show young people that they are worth something; that in one way or another they are capable of achievement that deserves and earns the respect of others. Youth at Risk is an inspiration to them and has been an inspiration to me."*

— Lord Phillips,  
ex-President of the  
Supreme Court of the  
United Kingdom

## What we do

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Youth at Risk's programmes are based on challenging the young peoples' perceptions and beliefs about themselves and the world in which they live. We pose a series of questions, the responses to which lead them step-by-step to the realisation that what was done to them in the past was not their fault, that they have the potential to make something of themselves and that they have it within their power to change.

This process takes place in rigorously run intensive group workshops facilitated by our highly skilled trainers. It is an intense and emotionally demanding experience for the young people, as our belief is that only by getting them to confront the root causes of why they think, feel and act the way they do can they come to terms with their past, clearing the way for them to transform the person they are for the future. The breakthroughs in thinking which occur mean that new goals become possible. These are set into action through follow-up training days coupled with regular high-quality one-to-one performance coaching from local volunteers.

We call it Tough Love: clear rules, strict discipline — but absolute compassion.

## Our Work With Communities

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*Our Community Transformation Programme (CTP)* has seen us working with over 2000 'at risk' young people in ten local authority areas across England.

Using the principle that 'it takes a whole community to raise a child' we trained and supported over 1800 adult volunteers and professionals to help us transform the lives of young people.

The programme raised the critical awareness of young people — 96% reported having a greater understanding of what it took to keep their word and 92% became more focused on their futures. It empowered the young people to change — over 90% of the most at risk improved their relationships with family and

friends; and it created "potential long term improvement in resilience factors that will help young people deal with challenging situations in the future" — 78% of the young people improved their ability to work with others and 73% reported they had begun supporting others.

We also had some major successes in changing behaviour. 65% of young people who were NEET (not in employment, education or training) at the beginning were positively engaging in education, employment or training by the end. In one area there was a 75% drop in the number of young people receiving a criminal conviction; in another, the number of young people receiving a first time conviction fell by 95%.

In recent years, too, Youth at Risk programmes have developed a track record of kick-starting activities in communities. At the end of a recent programme, for example, the young people organised and ran a children's football tournament while others helped organise a music event at a Community Festival. Elsewhere young people have gone on to organise youth nights, take part in mentoring schemes, produce newsletters and fundraise for a variety of causes.

## Our Work With Local Networks

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We have trained staff from a considerable variety of partner agencies to support us in our work, including: schools; social services; housing associations; the police; Connexions; Youth Offending and Education Welfare Teams; Leaving Care and Looked After Children Teams; Drug and Alcohol Prevention Teams; family intervention services; and a huge range of voluntary and community organisations. Jaded professionals have been "reinvigorated" by our training. In the CTP 86% of adults reported an improved ability to work with young people and 91% reported improved aspirations and motivation.



*"Some of the breakthroughs I saw... it would take me two years to reach some of that."*

— Youth Worker

*"Inspirational."*

— Young person, Southend

*“It raised my aspirations. It really motivated me to think ‘I can do more with my life.’”* – Youth Worker

Almost half the adults we worked with were parents, local residents or volunteers. Parents in particular, found the coaching very valuable in helping develop their parenting skills.

**90%**

**reported improvements in a range of personal skills, behaviours and motivations.**

**88%**

**improvements in their relationships and**

**94%**

**improvements in their aspirations and motivations as well as their confidence**

In a cohort of young mothers 50% applied for new more suitable housing for themselves and their children while of another, where all had previously dropped out of school, 66% participants went back into education.

### **Youth At Risk In Schools**

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Our key schools programme, Coaching for Success, has been running since 1999. Most recently, as part of the National Challenge programme we worked in 29 schools nationwide and with almost 1100 Year 10 and Year 11 students. Of these:

**87%**

**reported increased aspirations & motivation**

**85%**

**reported increased confidence**

**78%**

**improved their behaviour**

For all the pupils we worked with, initial indications show 65% are likely to have achieved an improvement in their GCSE grades.

Evaluators noted when schools embraced the vision there was “an improvement in school performance, and a tangible change, particularly around discipline and behaviour and also the general ‘vibe’ of the school.”

In one cohort all of the pupils on reduced timetables at school due to their behaviour were all back full-time and all achieved 5 A\*-Cs while the school’s fixed-term exclusions reduced by 75%. In another, all year 11s on the programme improved in at least one grade in one subject and all year 10s improved at least one grade in two subjects.

### **Sports and arts projects**

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Our Ballet Hoo programme saw Birmingham Royal Ballet, Channel 4 and four local communities come together to transform the lives of young people from the inner cities through classical ballet.

Following the subsequent television broadcast the Daily Telegraph commented, “As an exercise in the transformative power of art and creative endeavour, it’s wholly laudable,” while The Independent described “...a ground breaking programme... the project is all about overturning preconceptions... a testament to the transformative power of art.” More formally, IPSOS/MORI has highlighted it as “an example of good practice in developing ‘adult to adult’ relationships with young people – to encourage them to develop positive attitudes, giving them the power to make decisions and judgements and enabling them to undertake constructive goal setting”. Our Field of Dreams programme used sports as a means of engaging and developing young people. In partnership with Saracens RFC it saw all of the young participants increase their self-confidence, communication skills and ability to set and review goals.



*“I have had all the help I could wish for. I feel more in control and a stronger person now. I can stand up to my children and we have a happier household now.”*

– Mother

*“When you give young people the responsibility to reflect on themselves, this empowers them. I’ve not seen this before.”*

– Deputy Head

*“Teachers have massively changed in their aspirations. This is inspirational stuff and is just what we needed to reinvigorate our staff.”*

– Senior Leader at an Academy

## Enterprise Programmes

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Alongside the personal development training common to all Youth at Risk programmes participants in My Life is My Business explored the concepts of 'entrepreneurship' and how these related to the way they lived their lives. We were able to use the advice and support of business leaders, including Rod Aldridge OBE, Mike Parton (former Chief Executive of Marconi), David Cruickshank (Chairman of Deloitte & Touche) and John Scott (Lazard & Company) to develop an enterprise, formulate a business plan and secure venture capital.

The young people's business ideas have included the creation of personalised T-shirts, dog-grooming, re-cycling gym equipment, baking celebration cakes, computer upgrade and repair, and website and graphic design.

Around a third of the NEET (not in employment, education or training) young people on the programme had no or only the most basic of qualifications and partners were surprised to learn that the young people already had creative business ideas of their own. Of those who entered the entrepreneurship phase 50% started full-time college courses and all of the remainder remain committed to working on their venture.

## Volunteers

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A key part of the Youth at Risk approach is the use we make of volunteers. From a range of backgrounds that include the caring professions, teachers, the self-employed through to lawyers and businessmen from the corporate sector we now have over 2000 adults on our National Practitioners and Volunteers Network.

## Conflict Resolution

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Our work in Northern Ireland, Kosovo and with the Windsor Fellowship is testament to the power of our approach, creating commitment to living together in groups previously divided by politics, religion or culture.

Our 'Kosovo Conflict Resolution Programme' worked with representatives from the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian communities at both community and political levels. As a result of the programme the two factions worked together on pilot projects to create community cohesion.

An independent evaluation of our West Belfast Communities Project by Oxford University concluded that *"The West Belfast Youth at Risk pilot programme has demonstrated that it is possible for even the most alienated and disaffected young people to radically change the direction of their lives and begin to make a positive contribution to their community. The young people who participated in the programme were believed to be beyond help. Intervention by statutory agencies and the local community had made no impact."*

## Further Information

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For more information about Youth at Risk's approach and impact, go to [youthatrisk.org.uk](http://youthatrisk.org.uk)

See Youth at Risk on Youtube at [youtube.com/user/YouthatRiskUK](https://www.youtube.com/user/YouthatRiskUK)

Or e-mail Ellie Garraway  
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*"Fabulous, moving, heart breaking, and wonderful and most importantly it works!"*

— Volunteer Life Coach