**14th September 2022 – VCSE Conference**

**Seldom Heard Young People Workshop**

**Willows Suite, AJ Bell Stadium**

**Facilitator:** Michelle Warburton

**Panel Speakers**:

Elizabeth (Warm Hut)

Simone Spray (42nd Street)

Rhyse Cathcart (Early Break)

Sophie Sheehy (Salford Foundation)

**Elizabeth**

Elizabeth works with a youth group, who were asked what their worries were. The young people wanted to change the way education portrays African people in society. They wanted to take away the negative view of African people, and celebrate the thing they have achieved, which they believe will help to tackle racism. When the young people arrived in the UK they were greeted with ignorance, and people questioning them, they want people to be more aware of the positive things black people have achieved. They want these things to be celebrated all year round – not just in black history month (October). Michelle explained several city leaders have pledged to help implement these changes and are working with Warm Hut on these issues.

**Simone**

42nd Street works with 11-25 year olds, around mental health and wellbeing. They want to give young people voices, and especially engage young people who wouldn’t usually access mental health services for a variety of reasons. There are groups looking at issues for: LGBTQ+, neurodivergent young people, young women, Orthodox Jewish young people, care leavers, and several other groups. Young people need to talk about these issues to people like them, for example young black men want to talk to other young black men; like peer support. A young person can self-refer; they don’t need a medical or parental referral; we empower them throughout the whole process. We give them power in the moment to make decisions and have choice around the services they are offered. We are about to set up a new campaign group/social action group/peer group around the cost of living crisis, and how that will impact on their mental health and wellbeing. We are concerned about 18-25 being left out of these conversations and being hard hit. If anyone wants to get involved in these conversations contact Simone.

**Rhyse**

Early Break is a young person’s substance misuse service and also works with families and young people with emotional health issues. We work with under 21s and do transitional support work with under 25s, especially around care leavers and those who fall into gaps regarding service provision. We have a co-produced piece of work with Salford Foundation (STEER), working with young people on the cusp of organised criminal activity. We looked at the impact of substances on the brain; and we know that young people with substance misuse can struggle to access support due to this dual diagnosis. As a follow-on, we are doing some city-wide work starting next week; support and training for those working or volunteering with young people. We are also doing some work with Salford CVS looking at trauma and trauma-informed practice. It’s important to look at the language we use, and how that can empower or stigmatise, for example around labelling young people with disabilities. Katrina (Salford CVS) can assist with queries about this work.

**Sophie**

Sophie gave a brief overview of all the services Salford Foundation offers. Salford Foundation has one of the only 18+ women’s centres, which supports young women through different issues and life stages such as probation. We also have a targeted men’s support called the Shed. From a funding perspective, we are supporting young people at risk of perpetrating violence. The mentors work alongside the young people and ask what will help them. A lot of the time the young people don’t know, because no one has ever asked them. STEER gives people the opportunity again, and shows them they are not defined by their actions or friends. STEER has really grown since it was started in 2017, and benefited from community support and collaboration with Early Break and Salford CVS.

**Questions**

* (Geoff Fletcher from Salford Deaf Gathering): What provision does the deaf community get in these services? Do they get the same support? Where would you go now if someone with a hearing impairment approached your service?

Simone – we would be interested in doing peer research so we are ready for young people with hearing impairments to access our service. We don’t currently have any workers who can use sign language.

Elizabeth – would look to the use of positive role models, to inspire young people to want to achieve in education.

Sophie – We aren’t good enough, we are a 61 staffed organisation and only one person can do sign language. I’d like to take that point away, if a young person came to our door, our response would be reactive.

Marzena Teszka-Kutera (Together Family Centre) – Her daughter was really excited to learn sign language in school, so why don’t we teach them basic works in school?

Michelle – Voluntary organisations are saying we want to be better, and we can do better. This was raised at our Seldom Heard event, some groups said they want better accessibility, a number of city leaders pledged towards this, to source or fund these services.

Mike Thorpe (The Broughton Trust) – It should go to the top of the agenda for our forums.

* (Daniel Blackman from Dad Matters) – Do you have any advice on how we can engage young fathers?

Rhyse – Be yourself and try to get along with them

Sophie – Identification in a mentor is important, but there are similarities other than age. All we want is to be heard and cared for – which takes time. It’s about perseverance.

Simone – I would put you in contact with some people who are awesome at this work in 42nd Street. You need to know how to deal with rejection and also give the young men some time on their own as that’s what they want too.

Burt Shepherd (Access to all Areas) – At school some teachers are bullies, and that rubs off on the children and we see that on the playground. In the community I’ll sometimes ask children what they’re doing and they’ll swear at me. It needs to be looked into, I think sometimes parents tell children not to associate with certain children because of their race. It can also be mental.

Rhyse – Children aren’t born with prejudice, it’s learnt. This links back to prejudice in language, for example what is ‘feral children’? Is that poor parenting? Stigma is a label, and some of that stems from fear. When you speak about teachers being bullies, are they playing up in school because they have a parent who’s ill, and if they get kicked out of school they can see the parent? It’s about understanding the behaviour and child development. Sometimes teachers don’t have much knowledge about child development and they’re doing the best they can. Maybe under our trauma training we could look at CDP training to support teachers.

Elizabeth – Warm Hut does work with the council around hate crime, which involves working with parents and the child. You can tell when children think something is wrong but they have to listen to their parents.

* I would like to see from a youth point of view some inspiring youth role models I can share with young people. Role-models of young people supporting other young people. We don’t share enough of the positive stuff. We want to know more about how to engage more youth, so would be great to see more youth role models.

Mike Thorpe – Some young people are worried to go out for fear of having violence perpetrated against them, we use language; ‘gang of youths’ v’s ‘groups of old people’. People of all ages have the same anxieties and fears, even if younger people might not show it and come across as carefree.

Erimna – Sometimes as adults we forget we were once children, we used to hang around on street corners. Socially, some things have changed, for example technology and social media. This also links to the language we use. Prejudice, bias and social cues are learnt from adults and the people around us. It might not be directly said to children, but they overhear conversations. We talk a lot about and support single mums; what about single dads? Socially, the man is supposed to be the breadwinner, and when they aren’t doing that, they are shunned, I’m talking generally here. It is not a society who supports young men who are fathers.

Kathy – I think we have the best young people in this generation. Me and the people I were at school with are nowhere near as amazing as the young people now. Having grown up with instant access to information, they are pragmatic problem solvers, lateral thinkers. They struggle to fit into the society we have built, which shows they are sensitive. They have answers we haven’t come up with, even though we’ve had twice as long on this planet. It would be to our advantage to change this power inbalance.

**Practical Actions**

* Deaf children should be treated as equal in education, and receive the support they need to be citizens who can contribute to society. We should support with breaking down barriers so young people with hearing impairments can access services. This issue to be discussed in the next VOCAL forum.
* Participants to consider how they would respond to a hearing-impaired person trying to access the service, and implement training/support to ensure they are prepared and not reactive.
* Simone Spray to link with Daniel Blackman and provide support around engaging with young men.