

# **Intergenerational community service placements for young offenders in Camden 2009-2011**

**Collaborations between Camden adult  
social care services and Camden children,  
schools and families, Reparations young  
offenders scheme**

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## **Crabb'd age and yoof...**

If young and older people seldom meet each other  
then they may not feel a natural human empathy  
for each other...

All of the intergenerational work we do in Camden bringing together young and older people who would otherwise probably not meet is “**myth-busting**” and all of it helps to **diffuse fear** of each other and older people’s fear of crime.

## Caversham Cooks!



**Bridge the Gap drama project**

## Lauriston Lodge 'Tree of Life'

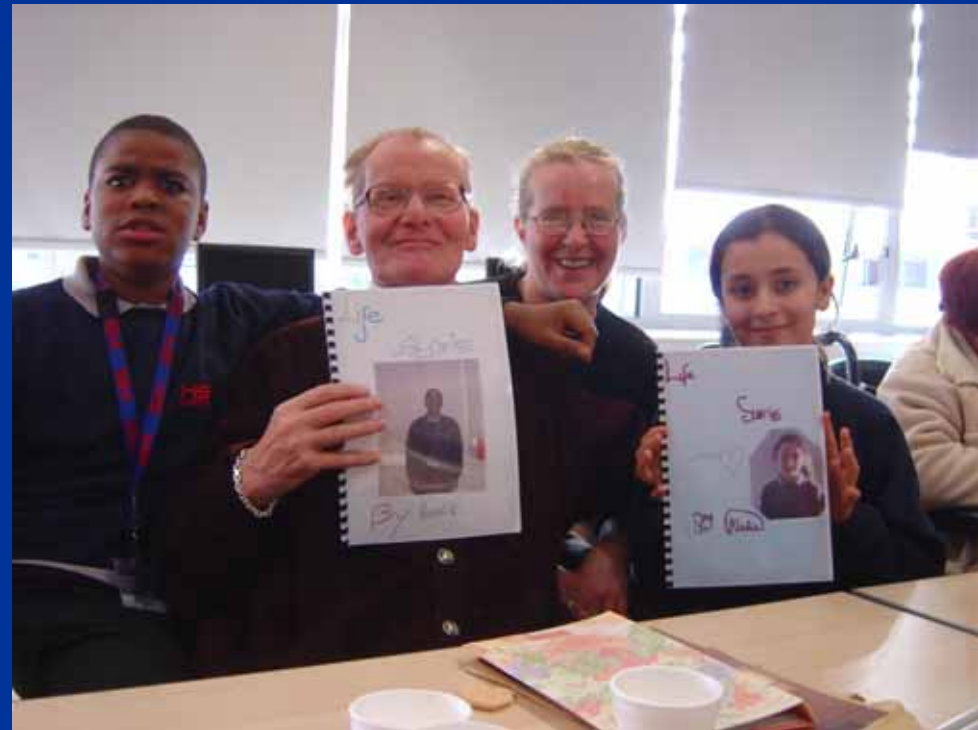


Learning  
Photoshop at  
South Camden  
City Learning  
Centre



**Holborn  
'In Our Youth' drama  
& video project**

## **Haverstock Letter Writing Project**



# Making the Nature mosaic at Richard Cobden Family Learning Centre



Alongside these generic initiatives, there have been a number of intergenerational initiatives in Camden specifically targeted to diffuse fear of crime.

Since September 2009, Camden adult social care have collaborated with Camden Youth Offending “Reparations” team arranging intergenerational community service placements for young offenders in settings with frail older people.

# Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre



Initially we ran a **six month pilot project**. Small groups of 3 to 6 young people came to the **Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre**, a day centre for older people in Chalk Farm.

# Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre



The Centre members range from active elderly to very frail older people.

The Reparations young people are generally 13 to 17 years old, mainly boys.

The programme of work we arranged for the young people was a 50/50 mixture of manual work with activities which brought them into informal social contact with the older people:

## **Manual work**

gardening  
scrubbing window sills  
picking blutak off walls  
sweeping leaves  
clearing lunch tables  
polishing wood  
painting doors

## **Social contact**

bingo calling  
chatting  
listening  
serving tea  
reading to a blind person  
shared learning  
music session



## Totem Mosaic Project Easter 2010

A group of young offenders spent a week at the Centre assisting the older people to **design and make mosaics for a “totem pole” sculpture** in daily workshops run by the local holistic health and arts group **Creative Health Lab**. The tree trunk totem pole was donated by Camden parks department.



This participant used to love playing the violin

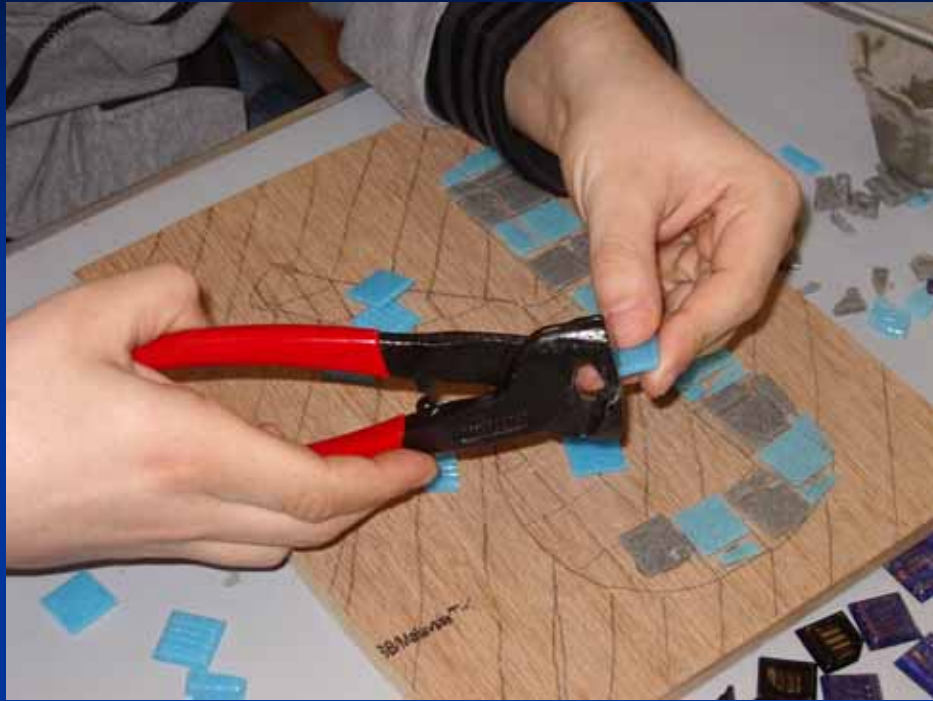




The young people prefer not to be photographed so we only have photos of the artwork produced.











This participant is a  
retired bus driver

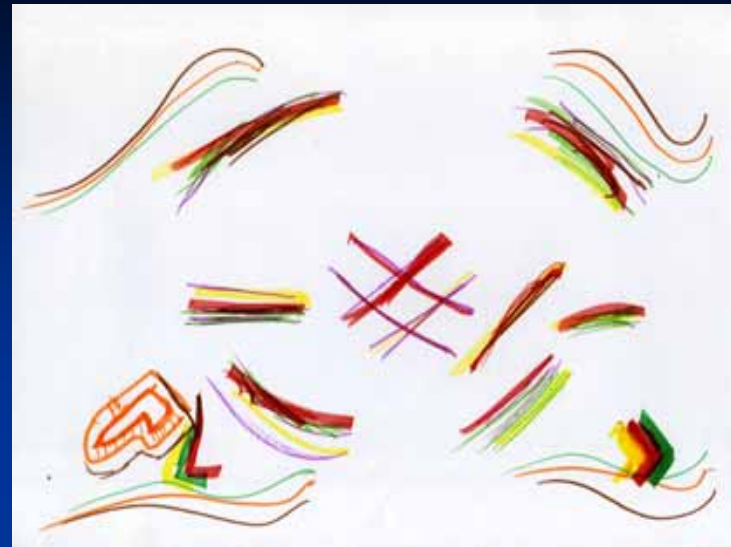


At Easter 2011, we extended the intergenerational Reparations placements to

**Age UK Camden**  
**Great Croft Resource Centre**  
in Kings Cross

We used the same template of manual tasks and social contact.

This produced some interesting comments and spectacular artwork.





“Today was not as bad as I thought. I think old people are intolexual and interesting to speak to.”

- A young person

“Thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the boys – very pleasant individuals who rose to the challenge of learning to play bowls. Very polite too.”

- An older person

# What have we learned?

## 1. Get all the staff on your side

Staff may be **apprehensive**. All staff – including care, catering and maintenance staff – need to understand who the young people are and why they are there. This makes the placements safer and diffuses any resentment that the young volunteers are encroaching on their jobs.

# What have we learned?

## 2. Not what you might expect

We assumed that the young offenders would be loud and aggressive. In fact, the young people tend to be **quiet and withdrawn**, especially at first. When they do begin to talk, they are polite.

We decided not to announce to the Centre users that a group of young offenders were coming to visit. Some of the older people worked it out. If Centre members asked, we told them the truth.

# What have we learned?

## 3. Careful planning and risk assessment

Risk assessments helps to allay fears but also to flag up and evaluate any genuine risks.

The Reparations team choose young people whose behaviour will not pose a known risk to the older people. The young people are supervised by Reparations staff, generally on a ratio of 3:1.

At the beginning of each placement, the Centre manager gives an introduction to what the Centre does so that the young people understand where they are.

# What have we learned?

## 4. A series of short, varied tasks

A series of short tasks works better than one long one. Some of the young people have a short attention span.

# What have we learned?

## 5. Feeling useful and valued

The young people respond best when the tasks we are giving are clearly useful and obviously beneficial to the older people. The older people are quick to thank the young people for helping them and spending time.

# What have we learned?

## 6. Mix of manual work and social contact

This **50/50 mixture of tasks** is crucial to this work. The older people see that the young people are helping. The young people feel rewarded for their work with more relaxed social activities.

Also, because part of the work is **physically hard** and the Day Centre venue is unfashionable, other young people (who have not offended) do not get a message that aberrant behaviour is rewarded with a programme of fun activities.

# What have we learned?

## 7. Swings & roundabouts

Of course, **not everything has worked**. We expect this.

But, putting the peaks and troughs into context, over 18 months, there have been **no serious incidents of inappropriate, behaviour, violence or theft** but lots and lots of **friendly co-operation, relaxed social interaction and laughter** and some very positive comments from the young and older people.

# What have we learned?

## 8. Modifying behaviour

Reparations supervisors commented that most of the young people “behaved better” and “often seemed calmer in the company of the older people” once they felt at home.

These troubled young people and frail older people seem to sense a common vulnerability in each other and respond to this with a kindness and humanity.

# What have we learned?

## 9. One tool in the box to combat fear of crime

Our intergenerational community service placements need to be seen in context as just **one of many complex factors** which may affect the lives of the young and older people. There is no quick fix for fear of crime or anti-social behaviour.

# What have we learned?

## 10. Changing attitudes

It is unlikely that these young and older people would ever have met or talked to each other in the normal course of their lives.

Being able to chat and share activities together is a new and revelatory experience for them.

These placements give both groups the chance to interact closely but safely with people whose lives and viewpoints are seemingly very different from their own and to find that in some ways they are not as different or frightening as they thought.

- **Older people have commented:**

*“The boys did a good job in the garden clearing up and watering.”*

*“Thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the boys – very pleasant individuals who rose to the challenge of learning to play bowls! Very polite too!”*

- **Young people have commented:**

*that they “learnt new skills”, “helped to improve the environment”, “worked as a team”, “made new friends” and obtained “insight into an area of work”*

After one placement, a young person expressed interest in future volunteering and maybe pursuing a career in social care.

**“Old people are okay. They can joke.”**



**“A nice bunch. It’s good they helped us.”**

## With thanks to:

- The Youth Offending Team of Camden children schools and families, especially Monica Morris-Jarra and Tracey D'Souza
- All the members and staff of the Charlie Ratchford resource centre and Great Croft Age UK Resource Centre for older people
- All the young people who took part
- The promoting independence group, Camden adult social care
- The social cohesion team, Camden culture and environment
- Creative Health Lab, especially Rokiah Yaman and Nina Gebauer



**Thank you for listening!**

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2011



Approved  
Intergenerational  
Provider

AIP



**Camden**