

Summer Mix 2011: Supporting Vulnerable Young People

Lewis (11) has been working with the Youth Service's Streetwise team since March 2011. He was referred through his local PCSO because of concerns about his behaviour in school, anti social behaviour at home, domestic abuse concerns and health related issues.

He lived at home with his mum and 19 year old brother, who was alcohol dependant and had no contact with his father.

Initial contact with Lewis was difficult due to the chaotic nature of the family lifestyle, with Lewis often being involved in family disputes in the early hours of the morning in which the Police were regularly called to attend.

Lewis was put on a child protection plan at the end of May 2011 because of escalating ASB in the family home and Lewis's behaviour in school, which culminated in him being put on a reduced timetable of 2 hours a day because he could not cope with groups. In June the family were issued with an Eviction Notice from their private landlord. Due to past housing issues, being housed in a LA property was not an option so the family faced being made homeless.

At this time Lewis was supported by his lead youth worker to register for Summer Mix courses. He selected Comic Design, Drum Lessons for Beginners, Sailing Taster Sessions & RYA Junior Powerboat Level 1

The Summer Mix courses happened at a most appropriate time for Lewis. On day two of his drumming course the family was evicted. Lewis was understandably withdrawn and emotional, however, with support he attended the course without knowing where he would be living later that day. Lewis emerged at the end of the course smiling and excited about what he had learnt that day. He was talking about how much he had enjoyed himself and how much he was looking forward to the final day when he would get his own set of drumsticks! The significance of his family situation only then dawned on him.

Lewis was eventually placed in B&B with his mum. With support he did attend the remainder of the Summer Mix courses which gave him a positive outlook, something to look forward to, someone to listen to him and support him and somewhere he could be an ordinary young person without the constant worries of his current family situation. The activities provided him with a creative escape, excitement and reinvigorated his motivation to be part of the outside world despite his immediate problems.

Several practical issues needed to be supported to secure his attendance e.g. lack of money to pay for transport, lack of food to provide a pack lunch and not being able to get up in the morning due to the chaos of his family life.

Lewis is now living in a new home with mum and he has had a managed transfer to a Special Educational Needs school. He remains on a Child Protection plan and continues to engage with the Streetwise team. Lewis is already looking forward to seeing the Summer Mix 2012 brochure.

The courses that Lewis attended helped him to find a sense of confidence and self esteem. He met and befriended new people his own age and tried new skills. This opportunity also gave him a focus to take his mind off the chaos and traumatic experiences going on around him and enabled him to be an ordinary 11 year old boy for part of his summer holidays.