

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Youth Ink at the heart of the Community

Who we are?

Youth Ink at the Heart of the Community is a registered Charity.

We are unique in that all our work is co-produced and delivered by ex-service users. As such, we have experienced many of the problems we are trying to solve. Our mission is to engage others with experience of the system in order to create safer communities.

Youth Ink founded by Mifta Choudhury following his experience of the criminal justice system from the age of 13 and spent more than 13 years in custody, Mifta was the recipient of the 2018 Butler Trust Award (<https://www.butlertrust.org.uk/mifta-choudhury/>), for outstanding work and best practice in the field of criminal justice and as an employer of ex-offenders.

How we work: Youth Ink Approach

We do this because we have come from the same experiences, from care, poverty, criminality, abuse, addiction. This is the unique and most important element of the process. We are also positive role models for the young people, providing inspiration in their own lives. Just taking part is itself an intervention.

Youth Ink's work aims to get young offenders and ex-offenders thinking about the role they want to take in the wider community, outside the prison and young offenders, probation services.

What do we do?

In order to achieve our aims, Youth Ink is primarily engaged in three activities. Firstly, we offer *proven products which elicit the user inclusion*. These products include *Peer Support Navigator Network Scheme, Our Journey (Lived Trauma) and Our Story*. They are creative, effective and tested models, developed upon informed by services users and services in direct collaboration with Youth Ink and the Criminal Justice sector.

1. The Youth Ink Peer Support Navigator Network Scheme what is it?

The aim of all our work is rehabilitation & health, of young offenders and ex-offenders but we believe that this only happens when there is real collaboration between those providing services and those who use them.

Our **Peer Support Navigator's (PSN)** are trained young service users who have an understanding through some of their own lived experiences of the issues faced by young people. The **PSN** will themselves have experienced difficulties in their lives and have developed ways of resolving some of the issues that often confront young people in relation emotional wellbeing/mental health, education/employment, housing, and offending. Some of the **PSN** will have experienced the criminal as well as the social care system and have come out strong on the other side. **PSN** will be able to help

young people by connecting with them in ways that are very personal in nature, genuine and demonstrating empathy.

How does it work?

Youth Ink's Peer Support Navigator Network model enables young offender the opportunity to be part of network which seeks to create positive communities, by self-reflection, self-reflecting learning through volunteering alongside professional ex-service users to co-produce effective youth justice services for the community.

At Youth ink we believe to create devise and deliver effective programmes and create safer communities, we need the help of the people for whom they are intended. When it comes to designing delivering and evaluation of services, former and current recipients of those services are the best resource we have. This is what makes Youth Ink so unique – we use the expertise of rehabilitated offenders to help others on the path to rehabilitation.

We aim to prevent offending and for those who have already offended, ensure that they are effectively rehabilitated and offered proper, practical support so that they do not return to crime. By helping others who are on the same journey and showing them how to change, we are of inestimable value to the criminal justice system, to young people in danger of entering it and to society as a whole. An improved system means a reduction in crime and it means money spent preventing crime will be better spent.

We are called Youth Ink at the Heart of the Community because we believe at the heart of our community are those who use or have used the criminal justice system and can articulate best how it can be improved. At Youth Ink we believe that the criminal and youth justice systems have the potential to become effective and rehabilitative if there is collaboration with the people inside them. And we believe that only people like us, with our own histories of abuse, chaos, violence and crime, can build the special relationships necessary for effective collaboration and therefore service improvement.

The development of the 'Peer Support Navigator Network' scheme is at the heart of our philosophy because such platforms are a means of direct collaboration, communication with the most disengaged incarcerated offenders and those most disengaged ex-offenders in our community.

Common worries/concerns

Isn't it a risky business letting ex-offenders engage with young offenders?

Risk is managed via enhanced risk assessments throughout all aspects of our work. We believe that, properly managed, the outcomes far outweigh the risk.

Youth Ink 'Peer Support Navigator Network Scheme' youth provision is committed to safe working practices across all our work and is managed by Senior Managers experienced in Social Care and YOS Practice.

Contact Details/Questions

Feel free to get in touch and ask more questions!

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