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## NEWS

## The Big Read



Element Society CEO Chris Hill at their premises on Leopold Street in Sheffield

# Placing young people at centre of battle to reduce youth violence

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**E**arlier this month, 13 groups and organisations from across South Yorkshire received a total of £200,000 from the Violence Reduction Fund to run projects aimed at preventing violence and crime among young people.

The funding will help three of the awarded groups to make Sheffield's communities safer.

The Violence Reduction Unit was set up in October 2019 and this year was the third time local groups were invited to bid for funding for projects. By taking a 'public health' approach to violence,

the unit aims to tackle the root causes of violence and not simply dealing with it after crimes have been committed.

From employment advice to knife crime workshop to community activities, programmes supported by the 2021 funding will be run from September to March next year.

One of the groups who received the latest round of the funding is Element Society. The youth-led charity will provide workshops for young people aged 14 to 16 to learn about how to build healthy relationships as well as how to identify and handle sexual harassment and domestic abuse.

Matthew Brewer, Brand Manager of the Element So-

ciety, said: "The reason we decided to focus on healthy relationships is that we think it will help tackle the problem in a long-term and holistic way.

"For example, a young person might not know what it means to have a healthy relationship if they live in a household where domestic abuse is commonplace. We want to educate them to prevent them from thinking violence is acceptable.

"What we do with our projects is that we'll invite a group of young people in who are interested in the subject. Supported by our staff, they will carry out research and then produce a workshop with activities they designed, which will benefit people in schools,

colleges or from referral units."

"With the help of the Violence Reduction Fund, we will be able to have trained councillors at our workshops to offer group or one-to-one support, which will be a great resource for those in need.

"We try to involve young people into our decision-making as much as possible because we want to make sure these projects we run are needed and wanted by people."

This youth-led approach is echoed by another charity awarded the funding this year, the StreetDoctors. The national charity will run a peer-mentoring programme across South Yorkshire for 24 young people from 16 to

25-years-old who are at risk of involvement in serious violence.

A team of Sheffield-based young healthcare volunteers will provide emergency first-aid training and share their insights into careers in the health and social care sector.

Sarah Bloxham, Partnerships Manager of the StreetDoctors said: "What this grant will enable us to do is to reach out to communities and groups who don't usually have the ability to commission us to deliver these sessions. More than often, we've found young people in those settings are more likely to be exposed to violence and crime."

The 12-week programme will see participants gain

practical lifesaving skills as well as an understanding of the impact of violence.

She added: "We will also talk about the medical consequences of violence so young people can more of an idea of what happens you are stabbed, which is certainly not just death-or-glory like some might think. Ultimately, we want to encourage them to make safer choices.

"The programme is designed to put young people at the centre of the solution so they will be able to take home something useful and teach their peers about it."

Besides local and national charities, community groups in the city are also an integral part of the Violence Reduction initiative in South Yorkshire.

**NEWS**



The Hubb is a grassroots community initiative based in Sheffield

Hubb Youth on Abbeydale Road is a grassroots community project and the group has received funding to deliver early intervention programmes in one of Sheffield's most deprived areas.

Hadeel Mohammad, a lecturer at the Sheffield College and one of the co-founders of Hubb, said: "Our programme is an early prevention scheme, and we want to show these kids that there are so many sports and activities they can channel their energy into. For example, if we have a young person who's an aspiring boxer, they are going to be interested in the next training session, the next fight and not what's on the street."

"With the recent funding, the first part of our plan is about sports. We will book venues so young people can take part in swimming, horse riding and archery. Secondly, we are going to run social events such as games and crafts. We will also invite guest speakers who can inspire and be the role models for young people."

The Hubb now has 40 to 50 children and young people who regularly come to their sessions. Hadeel said



A peer-mentoring course is run by StreetDoctors, a national charity

he is hoping to reach out to more as Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

He added: "I think the reason why some young people in this area go down the

slippery slope is that they didn't get to spend quality time with their families and the community. I believe if you are not part of the solution, you are part

of the problem. So I really want to build a community where young people can have a sense of belonging, be around good people and do good things."



StreetDoctors runs a programme across South Yorkshire