

EMPOWERING FUTURES: BREAKING CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION

Post Event Report

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This report is dedicated to the young people of Croydon — empowering them to lead change, shape their future and build stronger communities.



The Youth Conference was hosted by Baroness Manzila Uddin. The conference was made possible with the assistance and dedication of Cllr Dr Manju Shahul-Hameed, the founder of Manju Shahul-Hameed Foundation for Mental Health and supported by The Phoenix Way.



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Event Details

Venue: House of Lords

Date: 14th November 2024

Time: 1:30PM – 4:30 PM

The Manju Shahul-Hameed Foundation for Mental Health was honoured to have Adam Ballard of Be Inspired, My Ends Croydon, attend the Youth Conference, where he engaged in meaningful discussions on supporting young people and promoting positive pathways for their future. We are deeply shocked and saddened by his sudden passing and our thoughts are with his family, friends and all those whose lives he touched.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Baroness Manzila Uddin and her colleagues for their invaluable support and for providing the youth of Croydon Care Council, Young London Today, Shirley High School, Mayor of London's My Ends programme, Croydon College and Metropolitan Police's Youth Engagement Team with the opportunity to hold this important conference at the House of Lords. Many thanks to Conference speakers and the round table facilitators for their time and contributions to the needs of young people in Croydon. A special thanks to Ache Abrahams (Miss World Caribbean and Americans, 2024) their presence and interest in the issues facing young people in Croydon.

Context/Opening Remarks

The Conference began with opening remarks from Baroness Uddin, setting the tone for the day by emphasising youth-led change and resilience. Baroness Uddin welcomed all participants and explained the aim of the Youth Conference is to provide vulnerable young people or those with diverse lived experiences, with the tools, guidance and support necessary to break cycles of violence, exclusion and disengagement. By emphasising entrepreneurship, intergenerational connections and experiential learning, the conference seeks to empower young individuals to pursue personal and professional growth.

This Youth Conference was conducted as part of the National Youth Commission for Mental Health, which operates under the broader National Commission for Mental Health. The National Commission aims to address the growing mental health challenges faced by diverse communities across the UK, including youth, adults, refugees and asylum seekers. Through comprehensive research, stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy, the Commission seeks to shape national mental health policies and improve access to support services. The Youth Commission serves as a dedicated arm of this initiative, focusing on young people's unique mental health needs and challenges.

The key objectives include introducing participants to entrepreneurship as a path to self-reliance, fostering meaningful dialogue between youth and professionals, further highlighting the importance of community engagement. Through roundtable discussions and partnerships with local agencies, the conference encourages young people to reflect on their behaviours, envision positive futures and access resources that promote long-term growth and resilience. Ultimately, the aim of the conference is to inspire attendees to make proactive choices, enhance mental health awareness, build connections and harness their potential for positive change within their communities.

Baroness ended her remarks by thanking the young people and stakeholders for the attendance and wished them constructive and fruitful deliberations.

Keynote Speech

The keynote speech, delivered by Enterprise Nation on 'The Power of Entrepreneurship for Young People,' highlighted entrepreneurship as a powerful tool for youth empowerment.

The keynote was followed by Roundtable Discussions facilitated by various Agencies; SLaM (South London and Maudsley), Metropolitan Police, Croydon Council, Shirley High School and Young London Today. These discussions allowed young attendees to explore themes such as overcoming Educational Challenges, Mental Health and Well-being, Pathways Away from Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and Building Positive Social Networks.

Youth Panel: Facilitated by My Ends and Business.

Lived-experience panellists shared their stories and insights, highlighting the importance of community support. The panellists included young people from Croydon Council, Young London Today, Shirley High School, Metropolitan Police's Youth Engagement Team, Mayor of London's My Ends programme and Croydon College.

Topics Discussed:

1. Overcoming Educational Challenges
2. Mental Health and Well-being
3. Pathways Away from Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
4. Building Positive Social Networks

Discussion Topics – (Ref: Appendices – Figure 1, pg. 16)

The following presents the main points deriving from discussions of the day. A full Report is available on request.

Positive Impact

- ✚ Empowerment and Confidence: Participants reported increased awareness of tools and resources for positive life choices.
- ✚ Strengthened Networks: Young people engaged directly with key support agencies, reducing stigma and building trust.
- ✚ Entrepreneurial Inspiration: Several attendees expressed interest in exploring entrepreneurship as a viable path.
- ✚ Community Engagement: Open discussions fostered a sense of belonging and collective action.

Challenges and Barriers

- ✚ Engagement: Ensuring all attendees actively participated required tailored facilitation.
- ✚ Resources: Limited availability of follow-up resources for young people to sustain the momentum post-conference.
- ✚ Accessibility: Balancing attendance logistics and ensuring inclusivity were challenging due to the formal venue.

Actions/Outcomes

The Conference identified the need for:

- a. Centralised directory.
- b. Providing more information on resources and available support.
- c. Building confidence in young entrepreneurs.
- d. Positive social networks for young people.
- e. Strengthen support for expansion of the mental health Initiatives tailored to Youth.
- f. Improve relationship between young people and authorities.
- g. Helping children with trauma and peer pressure.
- h. More integration of MHFA programs into education.

Discussion Outcomes – (Ref: Appendices – Figure 2, pg. 17)

- a. **Centralised directory:** The youth (including young entrepreneurs) has been provided with multiple ways to receive support for both their mental health and any other problems commonly faced by young people. However, these sources of support can be hard to access or even to know about, hence proving the need for a centralised platform or directory which will allow for increase knowledge and easier access to these platforms.

This platform will require:

- Inclusivity so can be used by a wider audience
- Partnership with local organisations to enhance the knowledge of the existence of such a platform.

b. Providing more information on resources and available support:

Knowledge on what platforms and types of support available is necessary to be provided to the youth in order to allow for better help and also showing that aid is available.

This can be done by:

- More distribution of information about support services via schools and newsletters
- Increasing the awareness of mental health resources through education.
- Investigate on effective advertising for mental health resources to make more of the youth aware of what support/aid is available.

c. Building confidence in young entrepreneurs: Implementing strategies in which young entrepreneurs can be supported is necessary in order to push the new generation of entrepreneurs further.

This can be done by:

- Calling out for mentorship and increased networking
- Encouraging clear planning for future steps
- Provide more information of possible funding and grants.

d. The building of positive social networks for young people: The building of social networks for young people will drive young people away from the roots of violence and neglect, improving their futures significantly.

This can be done by:

- More encouragement of early intervention and positive engagement with children that require help.
- Promoting the aid of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) in education and out of school environments.

- Prioritising the creation of safe environments for young people to further support them while the process of the school talking to the guidance counsellor takes place (it can take between 3 to 4 months).

e. Strengthen support for expansion of the mental health Initiatives tailored to Youth: Expanding the mental health program will allow for more schools and areas with young people to be supported.

This expansion can be done by:

- Engaging with more young people and parents/carers in order to increase awareness on the mental health program hence aiding its expansion
- Increasing the recruitment and training of mental health professionals to allow a greater quantity of young people to be supported at a high quality.

f. Improving relationships between young people and the authority: Improving relations between young people and the authorities will allow for less conflict between young people and those in authoritative positions such as the police, consequently causing less violence and crime.

This can be done by:

- Building trust via communication opportunities and educational programmes and initiatives
- Addressing and listening to concerns about policing in regards to young people.

g. Helping children with trauma and peer pressure: Providing good quality support to children experiencing trauma will give more opportunities to the youth in the future as well as driving them away from crime and violence.

This can be done by:

- Providing early intervention to decrease impact on children
- Create more safe environments and mentoring programmes
- Collaborate with schools and social services

h. *Integrating Mental Health First Aider programmes into education: MHFA* programmes proving good quality support to the youth and this support can be better shown and be easier to access if integrate into education.

This can be done by:

- Collaborating with mental health professionals
- Evaluating its impact on children and education as a whole
- Training and awareness sessions for both students and teachers

Policy Influence

The event laid the groundwork for advocacy through:

- ✚ Collaborating with the GLA's Violence Reduction Unit to inform policy recommendations.
- ✚ Engaging policymakers such as MPs and members of House of Lords to champion youth-focused initiatives.
- ✚ Establishing the Steering Committee for Youth Commission, ensuring young voices shape future strategies.

Delivery and Business Plan

- ✚ Follow-Up: Conduct a post-conference survey to gather feedback and measure impact.
- ✚ Steering Committee: Formalise roles and deliverables for the Love Not Hate Young Stars of London.
- ✚ Resource Development: Secure partnerships with businesses and mental health organisations to provide continuous support.
- ✚ Scaling: Develop similar events in other areas of the UK to reach a wider audience.

Summary

The Youth Conference successfully empowered attendees to envision brighter futures while fostering crucial connections between young people, community agencies and policymakers. Among the many issues and action discussed that supported the idea that entrepreneurship was one of the ways forward to young people to reach their full potential.

Mental health was identified as a major concern for young people and there a call for early detection as well as the need to promote 'The Mental Health First Aid Programme' more widely in the borough, as well as the need to education and raise awareness among professionals about the programme. The deliberations of the day also emphasised the issue of anti-social behaviour and highlighted the need for increased efforts to raise young people's awareness of available support and pathways to prevent anti-social behaviour and crime. Positive activities that provide young people with a sense of belonging and help them avoid negative influences are urgently needed in the Borough of Croydon.

This event marks the beginning of a broader movement towards breaking cycles of violence and exclusion, with a commitment to ensuring ongoing support and advocacy.

Closing Remarks

The day ended with closing remarks by Baroness Uddin, emphasising constructive discussions and engagement between young people and adult professionals. Baroness Manzila Uddin summarised the key takeaways and encouraged actionable change to make meaningful difference for young people in the Borough of Croydon.

Appendices

Agenda

1:00 PM : Arrival, Group Photo and Security

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM: Lunch and Networking

Arrival, lunch and an opportunity for attendees to connect with peers and representatives from supporting organisations.

2:00 PM – 2:15 PM: Opening Remarks

Chairperson welcoming attendees and emphasising the importance of youth-led change and community resilience.

Address from charity: Toni Letts OBE & Cllr Dr Manju Shahul-Hameed

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM: Keynote Speech & Q & A: The Power of Entrepreneurship for Young People

Speaker: Representative from Enterprise Nation

Overview: Discussing the role of entrepreneurship as a pathway to self-reliance and empowerment and their partnership with Croydon Council to support young entrepreneurs in the borough.

2:30 PM – 2:40 PM: Miss World Caribbean and Americas 2024.

2:40 PM – 3:00 PM: Round Table Discussions: Exploring Personal Experiences and Breaking Barriers

Facilitators: Metropolitan Police, Croydon Council, Shirley High School and Young London Today

Discussion Topics:

- Overcoming Educational Challenges
- Mental Health and Well-being
- Pathways Away from Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Building Positive Social Networks

Objective: To provide young people with a safe space to share their experiences and explore new paths.

3:00 PM – 3:15 PM: Feedback from the Round Table Discussion.

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM: Break

3:30 PM – 3:40 PM: Speech by SLaM (South London and Maudsley)

3:40 PM – 4:15 PM: Youth Panel: Voices of Lived Experience & Q & A

Panelists: Young person from Croydon Council, Young person from Young London Today, Young person from Shirley High School, Young person involved with Metropolitan Police's Youth Engagement Team, Young person from Mayor of London's My Ends programme and Young person from Croydon College.

Facilitators: My Ends and Business.

Overview: Young panelists share personal journeys, discuss challenges they have faced, what support are they looking for and reflect on how support from community organisations helped them make positive changes.

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM: Closing Remarks and Reflection from Chairperson

Overview: Summary of key takeaways, encouragement for attendees to use the resources and connections gained to create positive change in their lives and communities.

Expected Outcomes of the Youth Conference

- Steering Committee for Youth Commission and Love not Hate Young Stars of London
- Empowerment and Confidence: Attendees gain knowledge of tools and resources to support proactive, positive life choices.
- Increased Awareness of Support Networks: Young people gain insights into local mental health and community resources.
- Enhanced Communication and Reflection: Through open discussions, attendees share experiences and gain mutual support.
- Inspiration to Explore Entrepreneurship: Exposure to entrepreneurship as a pathway to self-reliance.
- Strengthened Relationships with Support Agencies: Builds trust and reduces stigma between young people and community agencies.
- Commitment to Personal Growth: Attendees leave with goals and strategies for mental well-being, avoiding risky behaviours, and pursuing future opportunities.

Attendees

Young people:

- Croydon Council's Youth Justice Team
- Croydon Care Council
- Young London Today
- Shirley High School
- Mayor of London's My Ends programme
- Croydon College
- Metropolitan Police's Youth Engagement Team

Stakeholders and supporting organisations:

- GLA's Violence Reduction Unit
- Enterprise Nation
- South London and Maudsley (SLaM)
- Local Businesses

Figure 1 - Discussion Topics

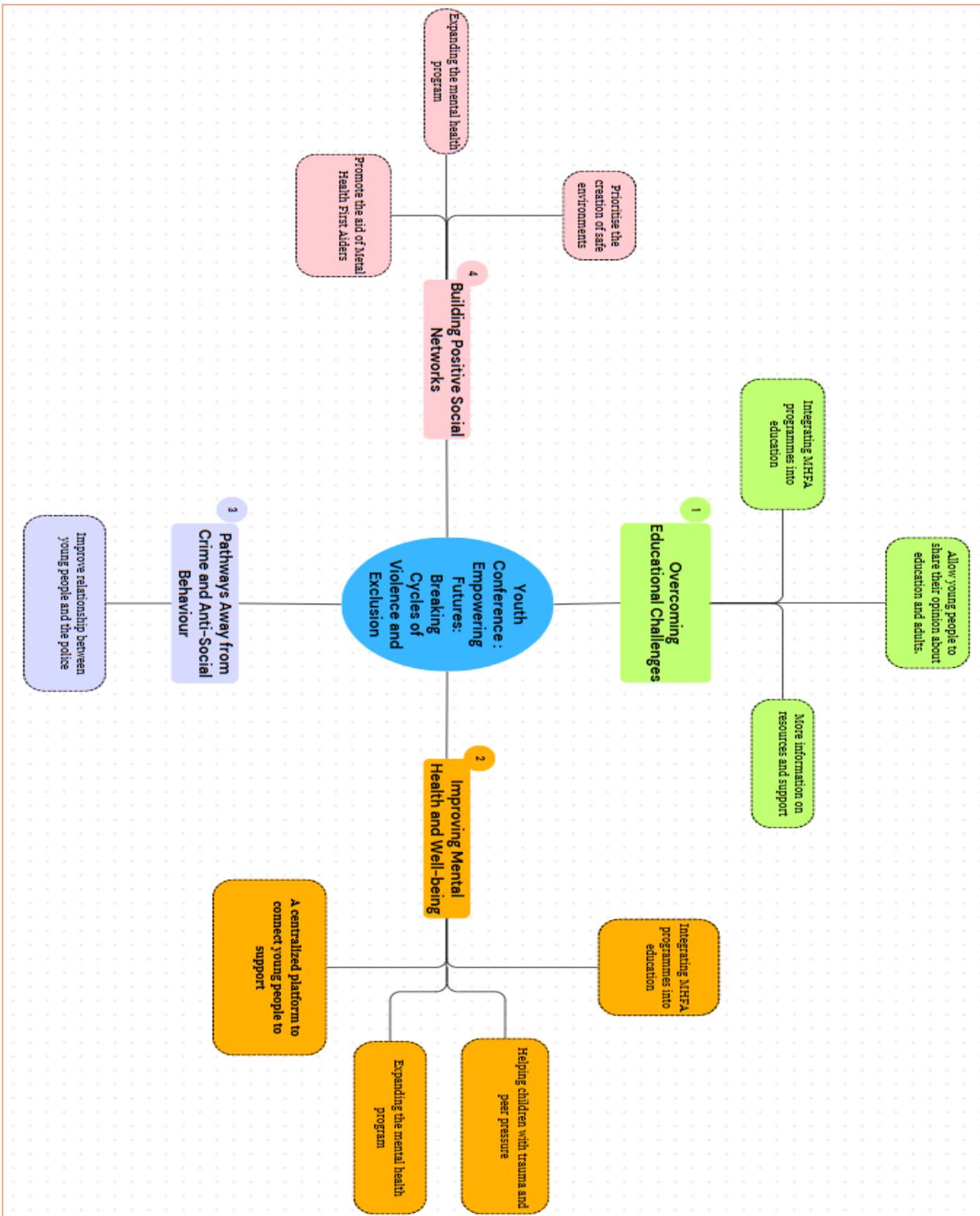


Figure 2 - Discussion Outcomes

