



Youth Participation Programme Case Study

Young Women's Empowerment Workshops

with Eaves Housing and The Spark Project

Context

Eaves is a London-based charity that provides high quality housing and support to vulnerable women. Eaves approached Feminist Webs housed at ICA:UK to design and deliver a series of empowerment workshops for young women in March 2010. The workshops were delivered at two London women's hostels and at Lambeth College. ICA:UK partnered with The Spark Project – a newly formed social enterprise working to provide time and space to explore, challenge and promote women's well-being towards self-flourishing and social change. Together we designed a programme for six 2½ hour workshops to be delivered by The Spark Project.

Process

The purpose of the workshops was to *create time and space for young women to reflect and become more self-aware. To use this as a base for young women*

to feel empowered to understand themselves at their best and enhance current support networks towards future opportunities.



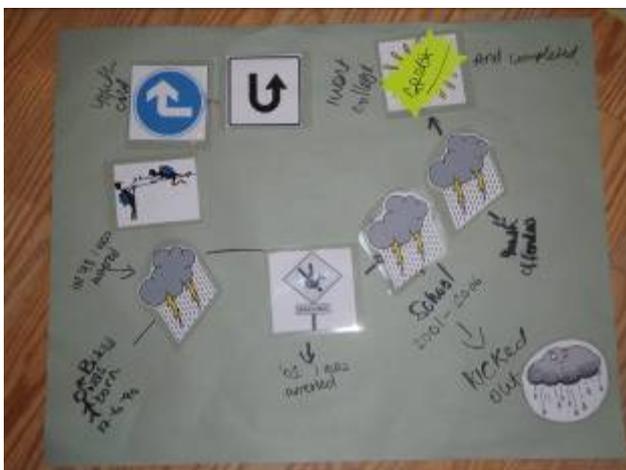
The workshops main outcomes were

- 1. Increased self-awareness resulting in an appreciation of the qualities they hold and assertive communication skills towards enhanced confidence and self-esteem;*
- 2. An understanding of key issues and shared exploration of opportunities through support services. Identification of personal positive support networks;*

3. *Discover education, employment and training opportunities. Culminating in commitment to the first steps towards aspirations.*

The training team facilitated a series of activities to best suit the young women who turned up on the day. These included

- a personal journey map which highlighted significant moments, people, challenges, passions and learning from the young women's lives. The young women were also asked to pin point on the journey where they felt most resourceful. By identifying positive behaviours shown at that point, the young women were encouraged to realise they were capable of these behaviours again future situations (Outcome 1);



- masks for the young women to create fictional characters. Different issues and situations were projected on to the masks by the young women. Other masks were

used to represent the positive and negative networks surrounding the character. The young women chose to either act out these roles or stay disassociated from the mask. In either case the young women discussed issues and situations surrounding the characters and explored passive, assertive, and aggressive communication between them (Outcome 2&3);



- postcards for the young women to write a goal on and the first steps they could take to achieving this. These were then sent to the young women a month after the course (Outcome 3).

The activities were accompanied by informal conversations with staff from Eaves who provided local relevant signposting information such as leaflets for local housing support services, youth clubs and sexual health provisions.

A key to the workshops success was the flexibility of the training team as we didn't know how many young women would attend or the situations they were in. These situations ranged

from struggling with finding permanent living accommodation, to balancing college work with bringing up a baby.



Outcomes & impact

The workshops successfully achieved all of the outcomes set out:

Outcome 1:

"...people did leave with improved self-esteem because they'd learnt more about themselves. And a lot of positives came from learning about themselves and understanding and hearing from other people. So I think they left feeling sense of elevated" [Eaves worker]

"Role play how you'd actually act"
[Young women from Lambeth College]

"To stand up for yourself" [Young woman from Lambeth College]

Outcome 2:

"...today I've had at least five people ask my 'now what's at Eaves, do you do this or do you do that, or where can I go for this'...and if they didn't get it from us they got it from each other! I think that worked really well" [Eaves worker]

"[Hostel] is like 'stop', then go forward and take a look" [Young woman living in a hostel]

"[The workshops] help us face things of real life" [Young woman from Lambeth College]

Outcome 3:

"Emotional and financial stability to be independent has been quite a theme"
[Trainer]

"Independence and being self sufficient have been key words batted around today" [Eaves worker]

"More determination is the key" [Young woman living in a hostel]

"Push self to succeed" [Young woman living in a hostel]

There were other significant themes to come out of the workshops, such as

-the importance of a women only space;

-the young women's feelings of inclusion, accessibility and safety within this space;

-the power of informal and experiential learning;

-a great level of depth to discussions due to the methods used.

The workshops also had a significant impact on the staff from Eaves. One member of staff commented –

"We used some of your activities in a workshop we did and we wanted to learn more... I'll tell you something else- it's given me my thirst back for training!"