



Presentation given by two of the prisoners involved in the Mental Health: Young BME Prisoners Project

Prisoner one:

I became involved in the project for a number of reasons. What originally interested me was the BME prisoners were given an opportunity to voice our opinions and share our experiences with people taking a wholly objective approach into the group discussions and talks. These people were not only working from within the establishment but outside agencies who I felt we were a valuable entity. As people working beyond the walls of prison it would seem they have a greater ability and chance to be heard by those whom may be able to make change.

As a lifer having being in prison from the age of 17, these changes would most defiantly be welcomed. It would improve life itself and that those yet to reside at Hindley prison In the future. This brings me to my next reason for wanting to participate in the project. When considering the potential for change what immediately sprung to mind was if my contribution and involvement could perhaps help someone wanting to reform their lives in the future. This would bring to me great satisfaction having seised an opportunity to give something back.

Prison life is hard as it is (and that is for everyone, not just BME prisoners) without the excess stress of for example feeling secluded because you are the only Asian or Black boy on the wing. It doesn't ever really take much to knock you off point with what you're doing, be that trying to better yourself or simply trying to stay out of trouble. But if say for example having more BME prison officers could contribute towards and improve ones sense of comfort and in turn make them feel happier or simply ensuring that all religious/ cultural foods are being provided daily and to a satisfactory standard could help one feel more included – all of which we all know has the potential to positively impact on ones well being and mental health, thus making some ones life in prison easier. Then it is my belief that in turn this could assist someone in staying focused and motivated in maintaining a more positive attitude.

I am therefore fully in support of the recommendations that have been made on part of this research project and believe them to be the way forward for a change for the better.

What I learned from this project was academic skills such as developing a questionnaire and handling data in a fully confidential manner, interview skills, mentoring type skills and about mental health together with community research. I was also awarded a university certificate and achieved 20 points towards a degree. I must also say that, I enjoyed being part of this project and it brought me a great sense of achievement.
Thank you for listening.



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Prisoner 2:

I took part in this project within Hindley prison, as a researcher. My role was to conduct one to one interviews with as many BME – young adults who were residents of the prison at the time of this project. I initially became involved due to curiosity and an interest in the subject of Mental Health and also from information I ascertained from the earlier participants. Once I had become aware of its purpose and what the project aimed to achieve, I felt almost obliged to contribute to the development of the movement by conducting the wing based research.

Through my participation, I gained a certificate awarding me 20 points in “Community Research” – which was useful for me as I am also currently a distance learning student through “The Open University”. However my knowledge of mental health prior to engaging in this project was quite limited, a better insight into the area of Mental Health and themes associated with it including “stress”, “well being” and “depression”.

Although I have been in custody for quite some time, I was actually very much unaware of H.M.Y.O.I – Hindley’s Mental Health Department and what services they provided to the whole prison population. Thus from this my knowledge and awareness was also increased which enabled me to direct young adults (who were looking for that extra support) to the prisons mental health team or at least inform them of its presence and the services they provided. So in that respect I am able to help an individual at some stage through their journey, then being a part of this research project was worth it. Furthermore, I enjoyed working in collaboration with the team (POPS & UCLAN) and also the meeting of all the interviewed young adults around the prison establishments.

In concluding, I truly hope that through this learning process for all who took part in this development, changes for the better will be made. Also that the voices of those who were interviewed and who were genuinely experiencing any form of difficulty – will be acknowledged by people who are in a position to act and make these changes a reality in order to help individuals in prison who suffer when they should not be.

Thank you all for listening.