

Somerset Youth & Community Service

Curriculum Development Grants 2017-18



Charltons Senior Youth Club

£180

Martial arts project to focus on improving mental and physical health

The group had said they would like to take part in some form of self-defence / martial arts. There was an incident in October with one young member carrying a knife into school and this seemed to affect the young people in the group greatly. Consequently we contacted a local group in Somerton that runs an MMA club every Thursday; this gave the young people the chance to carry on this activity if they wished outside of the club. The sessions ran for 1 hour for 6 weeks.

The first session was an introductory session to self-defence. Nine young people took part and all thoroughly enjoyed. We looked at the basic understanding and self-discipline of this art and how to safely block an attack. The young people were shown how to use their voice as a block and how to calm a situation down rather than turn to violence straight away.

The second and third sessions focussed on knife crime as this was one of the aspects that had the group concerned in the first place. They were taught how to defend yourself if someone comes at you with a knife at different angles and how to block these without hurting you and the others involved, the young people enjoyed using the rubber knives.



Their confidence started to show and they were using what they had been taught by the instructor; how to stand to make yourself stronger, using your voice to distract and putting up your hands to show you don't want any trouble. We discussed how self-defence can improve street awareness and how it can build your own self confidence.

In week four each young person was given a white t-shirt to wear and red pens were used in place of the rubber knives. The young people took it in turns with the pen to see how well they could block. At the end you counted how many dots you had on your t-shirt. This was really enjoyable and the young people did really well there were a few red dots though! This showed them where they went wrong and what to do next time.



Week five was focused on gun crime; the young people were given fake guns to use and taught how to defend themselves if someone is using a gun. This was an eye opener as you don't see many young people with guns around this area but this led to discussions later about the rate of gun crime in this country and others.

The last session was going over what we had learned and evaluating the self-defence classes with the young people, they were also reminded that the club runs every Thursday in Somerton in the hope they will carry this or another form of this art on. Young people's feedback was really positive. Many found that they had learnt how to use their bodies to be stronger, how to block and defend themselves against a punch, knife and a gun, how to make sure what you are doing is within the law. They showed more confidence in every aspect but also taking part in something new. It's helped many with their mental health as a lot of young people in this group suffer with anxiety and depression, having the confidence to take part in something new and show up every week has really improved the group's confidence.