

Sanctuary Supported Living's summer with Dame Kelly Holmes Trust

October 2023

Whilst June signalled the start of British summertime; it also represented the start of Sanctuary Supported Living's unique partnership with Dame Kelly Holmes Trust.



Sanctuary's Community Investment team granted the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust funding to deliver responsive and tailored personal development programmes, as part of its sustainable communities programme to develop the confidence, well-being, and self-esteem of young people in supported living services in Brighton, Basildon, Hartlepool, and Weston-Super-Mare.

In August, Trusts and Grants Manager, Chloe Neilson-Hopkins, joined athlete mentor Hannah Beharry in Brighton on a Dragon's Den panel for a presentation on social action. Three young people explained their plans for a new social media page to provide an online community for young people and promote a range of activities and opportunities to socialise in Sanctuary Supported Living's foyer - their safe space.

The project was created by young people who have lived experience of anxiety and mental health conditions. Athlete mentor Hannah explained: "The lockdowns of 2020 may be over, but many young people still feel isolated. They don't leave their rooms; they are uncertain of their futures and lack direction."

The Dragon's Den aspect of the programme provides an opportunity for young people to develop their presentation skills, become more resilient and gain confidence presenting to adults they have not met before. Initially, the young people were anxious, but the more they practised, the more confident they became.

The blended support model - a mix of 1-2-1 sessions and group sessions - has seen young people stand shoulder to shoulder with athlete mentors, uncover new ways of well-being, overcome their fears, improve their confidence, and boost their self-esteem. Young people are now starting to participate in various activities, from cooking to art, meditation, and sport.

One young person said: “Before the programme, I struggled with mental health; I hardly left my room. Now, I am also socialising and seeing friends outside of The Foyer. The programme brings people together and improves everyone's mood.”

A consequence of anxiety-induced isolation is low physical activity levels and a reliance on convenience food. However, starting with gentle walks and simple exercises that can be done from their rooms, participants are beginning to realise the benefits of exercise and are actively finding ways to increase their activity levels at their own pace.

Not only is this programme improving fitness levels, but it has also shown young people how to put together meal plans and shopping lists, benefiting them nutritionally and showing them budgeting skills to help them spend their benefits money on things they want.

When asked what they liked most about the programme, one young person who had never run before commented: “Getting fitter- I went for a run the other day. It was tiring, but it felt good.”

Project Worker at Sanctuary Supported Living, Camila Frost, shared the story of a young person who dreamt of being an international footballer but needed more motivation to help themselves achieve that goal. She said: “The support of the athlete mentors has helped this young man to be present; while his aspirations may be ambitious, he's now joined the gym and a local football club and is taking the first steps.”

In the words of the young person: “I'm trying to eat better; I did some batch cooking last week. I also joined the gym.”

Our partnership with Dame Kelly Holmes Trust is helping young people get back on track with their ambitions for the future.

When asked what the most helpful part of the programme has been and why, a participant replied: “Initially, I thought it was increasing my physical activity, but I've been reflecting on this, and it's the camaraderie.”

Dame Kelly Holmes Trust created this programme following a listening exercise with 80 young people at 14 Sanctuary Supported Living centres framed around what the young people want, what matters to them most and what support they need.