How In Your Corner uses embodied ways of working to broaden the offer to improve young people's emotional wellbeing

Dr Kathy Adcock *(picture left)*, Clinical Psychologist and CEO of In Your Corner (IYC), speaks to Sophie Dunn, Assistant Psychologist at The National i-THRIVE Programme, about how their not-for-profit social enterprise combines non-contact boxing with evidence-based ideas, delivered flexibly to meet young people's needs.

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In Your Corner

IYC run group programmes for young people aged 12-18, which aim to help:

- Increase social skills and positive peer relationships, so young people feel confident and connected with others.
- Increase physical activity via sustained engagement in sport.
- Build a sense of connection to a safe, local community setting.
- To offer opportunities for skills development and sustained engagement within their local communities via a graduates offer and supported project exits.
- Develop emotion regulation skills and personal resources for coping with future challenges.

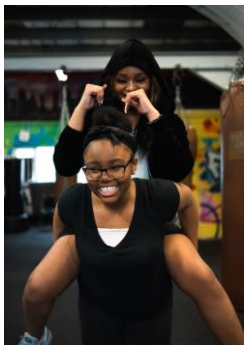
What projects do you offer?

In Your Corner started its pilot project, CONNECT, in 2017, at London Community Boxing in Peckham, South East London. IYC are also funded by North Central East London (NCEL) provider Trust to work in Camden, and by Whittington Health NHS Trust to work in Islington.

'I-BOX' is a partnership with Islington CAMHS, and this Summer (2024), Islington Local Authority's Looked After Children services will offer a pilot I-BOX group for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young Men aged 16-18. In line with principles of the THRIVE Framework and community psychology, IYC emphasises meeting young people where they are, and where they would ordinarily go. In Your Corner also undertakes schools work.

IYC also offer a weekly graduates group in some projects. These groups consolidate boxing skills and emotional wellbeing gains, with a focus on social integration and functional skills. There are opportunities for graduates to gain AQA educational units in boxing and to become ambassadors to co-deliver future projects. Other post-graduate opportunities include becoming competitive amateur boxers or recreational boxers in local partner boxing clubs.

What are the benefits of this approach?



- Accessible and acceptable for a range of groups, including young people with neurodiversity, young men and young people from Black and minoritised backgrounds, without the stigma of accessing clinic-based therapies.
- Takes pressure off waiting lists for clinic-based talking therapies, permitting this capacity to be targeted at young people who are most likely to find these useful.
- Offers an embodied way of working with physiological dysregulation and trauma which is not available in talking therapies.
- Improves physical activity levels and community integration, which can be hard to influence in individual talking therapies.
- Uses robust outcome measurement to innovate and develop practice-based evidence.

How does your offer meet a range of needs?

In Your Corner is aligned to several of the THRIVE Framework needs-based groupings:

- Advice & signposting: Based in the community, these groups are accessible and offer a choice for young people, with experienced staff supporting shared decision making.
- Getting help: Goal Based Outcomes are used collaboratively to set personalised "Boxing Goals" and "Feeling Better Goals" with young people, to ensure interventions are meaningful.

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- Thriving: Young people are supported to stay 'thriving', by building resilience and promoting health and emotional wellbeing. Graduates can stay connected to the project and community gym over time, with a focus on continuing to use the skills learnt, exits to ongoing local opportunities and sustained involvement.
- Getting Risk Support: Upon project entry, most young people present with risks to community safety, safeguarding issues and/or risk to self. This includes difficulties across home, school & community. They are often open to large professional networks, multiple and targeted services and have been offered a lot of intervention, sometimes with limited impact. However, exercise or boxing can be a route that young people are interested in, which may encourage young people to engage with the emotional wellbeing elements of the project. For graduates and Alumni, the gym can be used as a place of safety in the community, or somewhere to return to for support after a period of not attending for a while. Informed by principles of the AMBIT approach, IYC boxing coaches are trained in In Your Corner's therapeutic coaching model and existing trusted relationships with helpful adults are scaffolded by staff to support young people to feel confident to access the gym.

How does your service align with the principles of the THRIVE Framework?

- Needs-Led: This is an approach based on meeting need, and access is not based on diagnosis or severity of difficulties. We work hard to build relational trust and consider it a success if young people leave the project feeling more confident to seek help for their emotional wellbeing in future, if they need it.
- Partnership Working: Effective cross-sector working, strong links with professional networks surrounding young people
- Outcome-Informed: We are 100% committed to use of best evidence where available and developing practice based evidence where it isn't. We put considerable resource into routine outcomes and impact work, and using creative approaches to outcome measurement (e.g. the rap video Get Back Up, made by boxers in the CONNECT project).
- Reducing Stigma & Accessibility: Support is available in a timely way for the young person, in their community and offers an alternative way of accessing emotional wellbeing support outside of a clinical setting.

What has been the impact of using goal-based outcome measures?

In Your Corner continuously measure outcomes and impact so that we know that we are delivering a high quality and effective service to young people. Our outcome data is robust and we know we reach complex young people and make a difference. This also helps us to develop practice-based evidence. Young people set personalised goals for what they wanted to achieve, including Boxing Goals for their boxing skills, and Feeling Better Goals for their emotional wellbeing, rated out of 10. Example pre and post intervention data from IYC's 'Fight Connect' pilot in Camden & Westminster is below:

	Average rating pre-group	Average rating post-group	Average pre-post change	Is change clinically meaningful *
Feeling better goals	4.0	7.3	+3.3	✓
Boxing goals	4.3	8.2	+3.9	✓
Confidence	4.8	7.5	+2.7	✓
Fitness	5.5	7.5	+2.0	

**Scores above +2.45 indicate clinically meaningful change*

What do referrers think about Fight Connect?

We contacted all referrers to Fight Connect and asked for feedback.

of referrers would refer to the project again.

of referrers noticed positive change in their young people, even if they didn't complete the programme.

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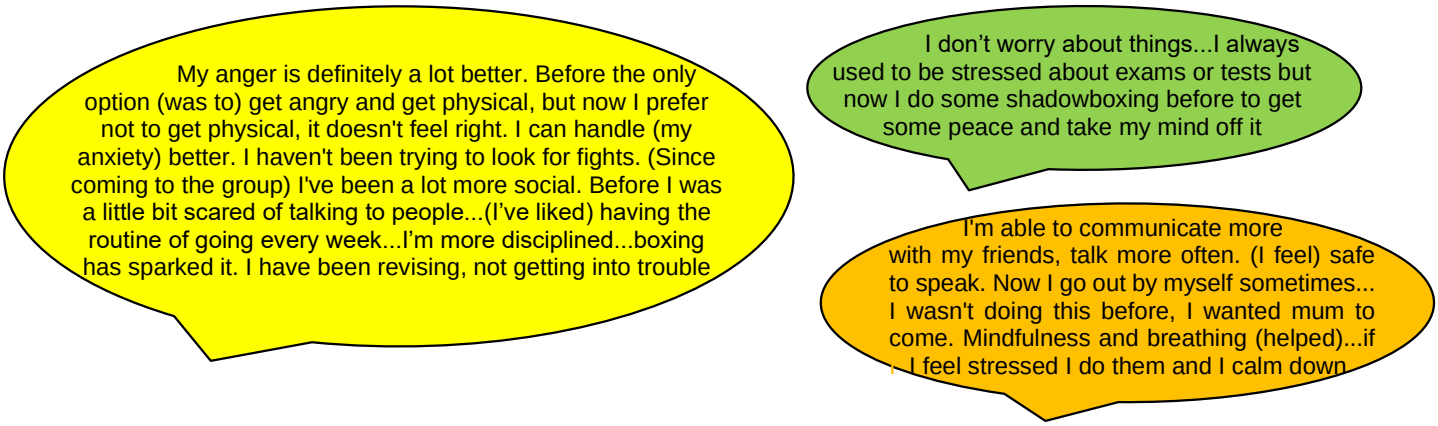
What feedback have you received from young people?

IYC are proud of their consistent evidence of positive outcomes for young people across their community projects. Examples of feedback from their Camden Fight Connect pilot includes:



What have been some recent successes and developments with the project?

- IYC have developed a new AQA award scheme unit, which includes boxing & emotion regulation knowledge and skills, so that young people can receive a qualification during the graduates programme.
- The Ambassadors programme offers an opportunity for young people to learn coaching and group facilitation skills, and to go on to co-deliver sessions with the IYC team.
- There are plans for collaborations with local peer mentoring projects so that project graduates and older adolescents (e.g. care leavers) up to age 25 can mentor younger participants.
- CEO, Dr Kathy Adcock, has recently been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to travel internationally and research embodied approaches to working with trauma using sport and movement. You can read more here.

What have been the main challenges with the project?

- As a small social enterprise, sustainable, multiyear funding is a significant challenge to project continuity in local communities.
- As IYC projects are all groups, there is a balance between each individual's therapeutic needs, and the needs of other young people in the group. It is a big ask for a young person to attend a group to learn something new with no-one that they know, and we try to support referrers to consider the balance of these factors before referring.

Finally, what are your hopes for future developments?

In Your Corner are very interested in further opportunities for collaboration and thinking together with other agencies, including:

- New partnerships with wellbeing, youth or boxing providers, particularly within inner London
- Multiyear partnership funding opportunities
- Practice development collaborations
- Outcomes and impact thinking
- Embodied approaches to working with trauma/dysregulation
- Reaching specific minoritised groups
- Coproduction

Implementation story written 2/9/24

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