



## **Racism – Working with Young People in Wigan**

The workshop was attended by young people from the Rafiki Motswako group which was originally set up as a group for young people from visibly BME communities but has now been extended to other minorities such as young people from Eastern Europe.

### **Rafiki Motswako**

- Works with 15-19 year olds to provide a safe space where young people can come together and discuss important issues.
- Researches important issues for young people in Wigan and nationally
- Links to refugee action, helps people facing deportation
- Looks at language issues, access to doctors/health/mental health and legal advice

It was pointed out that the range of ethnicity in Wigan is very diverse – much more so than in Bolton or Manchester. 52 different languages are spoken!

The workshop focused on the young people's experiences of accessing services, education and communities.

### **General points noted by the young people included:**

- Different cultural norms in schools – before coming to Britain had been used to standing up to address teachers as a sign of respect.
- Seems to be less discipline here – back chat to teachers, people not doing homework, basic manners sometimes not observed.
- Facilities in schools much better
- Acceptance at first was good but then fell apart a bit. Experiences of crime and racism.
- Meeting as a group helps because problems at home/school can be discussed openly and solutions or coping mechanisms can be found.
- Helps to build up confidence in reporting. Young people do report crime and the police treat them well.

### **Issues discussed under accessing services included:**

- Awareness – people can't access services they don't know exist!
- Difficulties around which agency takes responsibility for a variety of communities.
- Language barriers
- Difficulties in agencies accessing funding in order to be able to provide for all young people.



#### **Issues discussed under education included:**

- The language barrier can mean isolation from peers or increased risk of bullying through lack of understanding. Can also mean pupils struggle when teachers use slang or speak with a very strong accent. Sign language had been used as a partial solution. Additional English lessons would improve skills.
- Discipline – students in British schools are able to address teachers much more freely but sometimes seem to abuse this.
- In some countries you only progress through the school system when you are ready, not according to age.
- From experience, there is not really a set procedure in schools to deal with racist incidents. Action only taken when physical abuse was threatened.
- Schools could offer more support and a more pro-active approach to ensuring new pupils fit in – one of the hardest things was identified as going into the education system.
- There are a lot of skills and qualities to be passed onto children in the British education systems.

#### **Issues discussed under communities included:**

- Sport provision that meets the needs of other cultures.
- Isolation within the community of less well established communities.
- Outdoor activities through groups like connexions help build relationships with other young people.
- Community events can bring together all areas of the community.
- Bad press can be very harmful – community groups should counter these messages with good news stories.