

**AN EXTRACT FROM**

# **THE SALMON YOUTH CENTRE EVALUATION**

**BY THE *INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON***

**2009-2011**



# ABOUT

## About the Salmon Youth Centre

The Salmon Youth Centre in Bermondsey has been reaching out to young people in inner city London for over a hundred years.

We provide personal, social, educational and employment development opportunities for young people in South London.

The centre is open five days a week. Our activities include one-to-one work and a wide range of youth clubs, including sports and arts clubs, study groups, training for young volunteers, Duke of Edinburgh Award, and trips and residential.

Salmon is a place where young people can have fun, feel safe and valued, can talk in confidence to youth workers about anything, and ultimately discover meaning and direction for their lives.

We welcome hundreds of young people every week. Our doors are open to all young people, from all backgrounds, between the ages of six and twenty-six.



## Purpose of the Evaluation

We commissioned the *Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning* at the *Institute of Education* to conduct an evaluation of our work with young people. The overall purpose was to provide information on and to assess the effectiveness of a youth work approach in helping young people make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood.

“The Salmon Youth Centre is one of the best resourced buildings for youth work in the country, along with one of the most experienced, committed and knowledgeable teams of staff.”

Institute of Education



## The Salmon Model





# VICKY'S STORY

**“When I started at Salmon, I would never have believed I would change so much...”**

**Vicky has some learning difficulties and a complicated family background, which have sometimes made it difficult for her to ‘fit in’ and make friends. At Salmon however, she found that it was different: “People give me respect, which didn’t happen when I was at school. They encourage me to do my best. I’ve got friends here.”**

At first, the youth centre was a place for “Tricky Vicky” to show off her football skills, run around, make new friends and let off steam, but as months past, she started to become interested in taking greater responsibility.

Initially Vicky started to volunteer with the youngest age group at Salmon, the 6-9’s, with over a hundred children coming to the centre to enjoy a huge variety of games and activities.

As Vicky matured and developed skills like leadership and empathy, she also learned how to plan and evaluate sessions with other youth workers. More recently, she has taken on the voluntary role of Sports Assistant, where she has become an integral and dependable member of the team: always on time and always willing to lend a hand. *“At first, I didn’t know how to relate to people, because they were really horrible to me through school, but at Salmon, people are different.”*

Now, she often leads entire sessions on her own, like 10–14’s Football Training: *“it’s been a laugh, but they don’t like doing the drills!”* Because of her commitment and potential, Salmon supported Vicky through her FA Level 1 football coaching award, which at first was out of her comfort zone: *“Salmon staff were polite and encouraged me to*

*try new things, but without pushing me to do it – letting me work at my own pace and showing me that I could be independent.”*

The responsibility that she enjoys at Salmon has been an important part in showing her that she has the skills and ability to leave home and start a life of her own. She is now living in Bromley and enjoying her freedom, although still comes back to Bermondsey to volunteer at Salmon and keep an eye on her mum!

Vicky is now in a new phase of her life, living independently and applying for sport coaching jobs, but it has been a long and determined journey for her: *“When I started at Salmon, I would never have believed I would change so much... I’ve had to learn to keep calm – which I could never do when I was younger! I was a monster when I was little – lashing out at people without reason, but now I notice that I have changed and prefer the person I have become!”*



**“Salmon staff were polite and encouraged me to try new things, but without pushing me to do it.”**

*Vicky enjoys using Salmon’s Multi-Gym*

# EVALUATION FINDINGS ABOUT THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people:

- » enjoy going to the Salmon Youth Centre and are comfortable there;
- » like their peers and the staff;
- » feel safe and trust the adults from whom they can also receive advice about personal problems;
- » engage in activities that keep them healthy.

Attending Salmon has made them **more confident, responsible, independent** and **cooperative**. Above all, attendance has made them more sociable.

Many young people attend the Salmon Youth Centre for more than one year.

Asking what they would do if they didn't come to Salmon the young people reported that they would be bored, just hang out on the street, playing computer games or "getting fat".

**“Even if you come and you don't do any activities, it's still good to be here, cos you're not just on the streets gallivanting, in bad places and stuff.”**

Salmon Member

## ASPIRATIONS

**Most of the young people who attend Salmon for a year or more tend to have high aspirations for continuing in education.**

## EXERCISE

**The most popular reason for attending Salmon is to play sports.**



**“They give you responsibility, like you can have grown-up chats with the staff, and make you feel like a grownup...”**

**“I'm more excited, more happy, I've improved on my courage, persistence and cooperating – I'm starting to help...”**

**“It's made me more confident...”**

**“It's made me more like a people person...”**

**“You come here, and there's a lot of people, so you get along with everyone...”**

**“And no-one really judges you...”**

**“You don't feel shy...”**

**“All a big family really.”**

Salmon Members



# EVALUATION FINDINGS

## WHAT STAFF MEMBERS THINK

For staff members it is a priority to **build relationships** with young people, to help them to **fulfil their potential, talk to them, share a Christian vision** and **contribute a measure of stability** to their lives.

Staff members are generally confident that they are making a contribution to helping to bring about change in the lives of the young people who are attending the youth centre. These include:

- » Changes in behaviour
- » Confidence
- » Respect and attitude
- » A preparedness to engage with new things
- » Learning new skills
- » A widening of social circles

“Youth work” is seen as being more than simply “working with youth”. It also implies “voluntariness”. When young people become involved in youth work it is expected that they do so voluntarily, of their own free will.

### CRIME

**Young people who report greater attendance at Salmon are less likely to have been given a warning from the police in the last twelve months.**

### ADVICE

**Nearly all of the young people have approached a staff member for help or advice about anger or stress, family issues, bullying, other school problems or relationships.**

### CHOICE

**No young people say they come to Salmon because their parents told them to.**

## STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSE



**“The Centre is a significant part of the local community infrastructure, involved in local authority decision making, having good relations with the local MP and councillors and making a significant contribution to support for young people in the local area.”**

Stakeholders who were involved in the evaluation included representatives of the local authority, Trustees, members of other youth centres in the area and consultants who have been involved with the centre.

Stakeholders are very positive about Salmon's impact in Southwark and in Bermondsey in particular. They reported that the centre:

- » Contributed to a reduction in crime by working directly with those involved in gang culture and drug abuse;
- » Effectively encouraged young people to get involved in exercise and sport;
- » Planned and offered activities that encouraged healthy eating.

One stakeholder gave the example of a man who came out of prison last year and is now studying at level 3, largely as a result of his continuing involvement with Salmon.

It was thought by many stakeholders that the Salmon Youth Centre was an exceptionally strong advocate of an enlightened approach to youth work.

# SALMON'S MUSIC TRAINEES MEET KHERON

**“ I have become more tolerant of others. ”**

**19-year old Kheron grew up in Bermondsey. From the age of nine, he had a keen interest in music. He was not shy to share his talent in singing and rapping with his friends in the classroom, even though his teachers did not always appreciate this.**

Kheron started attending the Salmon Youth Centre from a very young age. He enjoyed taking part in activities, attending trips and meeting new friends.

As he approached his teens, he started getting involved with friends that spent their time on the streets and were involved in gun and knife crime. This had a bad influence on him and Kheron feels fortunate that he did not get caught in any street dramas.

At the age of sixteen, Kheron came back to the Salmon Youth Centre aiming to become a young volunteer. Volunteers are required to attend weekly meetings and volunteer in clubs. Kheron found it hard

to commit, as he wanted to spend all his time in the music room. This was where he felt most at home.

Last year, Kheron was offered a Music Trainee position. He now gets paid to teach music to his peers. Kheron enjoys performing to others and has been involved in D:Session, a Salmon event where young people get the opportunity to showcase their talents. Kheron believes that these opportunities have helped him to build confidence and promote his music.

At the moment, Kheron attends college studying a national diploma in Music Production with the aim to go to University. Kheron believes that a lot of his drive and determination over the last two years are down to the help of some of the Salmon staff members. He has also learnt a lot during Salmon residential: *“I found that the residential helped me to get my mind right and be more tolerant of others.”*



## & DAVID

**“ A year ago, my friend Paris told me about the music studio at Salmon, so I came to see it. I had been working in an office and hadn't been able to make music for a really long time so I was pretty impressed with all I saw there and the opportunities I found at Salmon.**

**Salmon has a great family atmosphere. Everyone round here knows each other and it's easy to get on with people, because of that positive atmosphere.**

**The strengths of the music trainee apprenticeship is that there are industry professionals and they are always ready to help you. You can ask a question and have it solved straight away.**

**Since being at Salmon I have got more assertive. I now know that if I set my mind to things I can do it. I've also learnt to really listen and hear sound in a new way. ”**

David, 21



## OUR MISSION

THE SALMON YOUTH CENTRE IN BERMONDSEY AIMS TO INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE TO REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL, TO CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE AND DISCOVER MEANING AND DIRECTION FOR THEIR LIVES.

## OUR VISION

OUR HOPE IS THAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE MAY RECOGNISE AND RESPOND TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, WHICH IS THE BASIS OF OUR WORK, AND WHICH WE BELIEVE GIVES TRUE MEANING AND DIRECTION FOR LIFE.



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Patron: The Lord Carey of Clifton  
former Archbishop of Canterbury

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