

Centre for Institutional Studies

# Research Report

## THE FIGHT FOR PEACE ACADEMY UK: AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT

Alice Sampson

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Alice Sampson

Centre for Institutional Studies  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of East London  
4-6 University Way  
London  
E16 2RD

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I would like to thank Luke Dowdney, Marigold Ride and all the staff and young people at Fight for Peace for their co-operation in collecting and collating data and for participating in the research.

Alice Sampson

October 2009

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

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FFP works to overcome division and violence and to promote the potential of young people in disadvantaged communities.

FFP has a strong ethos informed by clear values and goals, a robust organisational structure including a culture of monitoring, self-evaluation and a vision about how FFP model can be replicated. As a result implementation failure is less likely and successful replication in other locations achievable.

The overwhelming majority of young people find the boxing, martial arts and gym attractive; these activities improve their body image, enables them to channel their aggression and gives them an adrenaline rush that leads them to feel calmer after training. It is expected that participating in these sports will provide status for, and give social recognition to these young people.

The FFP 'brand' encourages and promotes participation in boxing and martial arts competitions and the extensive use of T-shirts with a FFP logo worn by staff and young people which fosters a sense of pride and belonging. These ambitions and feelings encourage young people to continue attending.

The FFP model provides a continuity of support for young people; they can move between attendance at the open access programme and the intensive programme for offenders and those with critical and complex problems. All young people have to attend personal development classes and all young people are encouraged to perform to a competitive standard.

Through the implementation of the five pillars prevention model the following key changes in young people have been identified from self-completion questionnaires:

- for the open access programme (n=100): 90% said that they feel fitter and 70% say that they feel better about themselves; 86% say they are less likely to disrespect others and 84% say that they are less likely to be part of a gang or commit a crime (81%)

- for the intensive programme (n=12): 10 young people say that they feel more confident, 9 that they feel better about themselves, 9 that they are more likely to respect others and 8 to cooperate with others; 9 say that they are more likely to respect rules, 8 that they are less likely to carry a weapon and 10 that they are less likely to commit a crime

Other providers of services to young people who use FFP premises and FFP professional trainers and youth workers, an Ofsted report, and a local police officer spoke highly of the quality of services provided by FFP staff and the positive changes they have observed in very disaffected young people. The Ofsted report commented on the impact of FFP's work as follows:

*'As a result of this partnership they [the students] make good gains in physical fitness and in developing a good sense of personal responsibility and improve behaviour....the academy staff present excellent role models that the student can empathise with and aspire to'*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The Centre for Institutional Studies, at the University of East London was commissioned by Fight for Peace Academy (FFP) to undertake an independent evaluation between July and September 2009 to assess the impact of the programme on the lives of young people and the capacity of the organisation to replicate the FFP approach to overcome division and violence and to promote the potential of young people living in disadvantaged communities.

The research is small-scale and took place over a short period of time and therefore provides a 'snap shot' of the impact of the programme at one point in time, September 2009<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore FFP planned to 'phase in' the five pillar model and the FFP programme has not been fully implemented and therefore the research findings should be considered as indicative of the work-to-date and potential of the programme. The size of the FFP premises limits the amount of physical activity young people can do, the activities for the youth leadership pillar are not fully in place and there are insufficient numbers of young people at competition standard to have competitive FFP boxing teams. Participating in boxing competitions and holding boxing competitions is intended to raise the profile of the project, and enhance the status of the young people within their local community.

### 1.1 Fight for Peace

Fight for Peace is an international not-for-profit organisation which started in the Complexo da Marè favela in Rio de Janeiro in 2000 and using the same ethos and working principles, set up in East London in 2007.

The mission statement of FFP is:

“Fight for Peace uses boxing and martial arts combined with education and personal development to realise the potential of young people in communities that suffer from crime and violence.”

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<sup>1</sup> The research started in July, FFP was closed during August and further research took place in September 2009.

And has a clear set of desired outcomes:

- Prevent youth crime
- Reintegrate youth back into society
- Reduce poverty of opportunity
- Foster social inclusion

To achieve these outcomes FFP has a five pillars preventive model designed to counter potential risk factors defined as poverty/inequality of wealth, lack of economic options, social marginalisation, violence, family groups, lack of leisure facilities/boredom. In East London the five pillars are boxing and martial arts, personal development, social action, access to labour market and youth leadership. Each pillar is designed to challenge established patterns of behaviour and alter the decision-making process of a young person to give them the knowledge, confidence and self-esteem to reject potential risk factors associated with living in East London. Together the five pillars provide a holistic approach chosen for its perceived ability to change the decision-making processes and behaviour of young people in all aspects of their lives.

The following activities are undertaken for each pillar:

- Boxing and martial arts: professional trainers are used and young people entered for competitions
- Personal development: includes sessions on drugs, sexual health, gangs and crime
- Social action: includes outreach work, contact with parents/carers, meetings with local residents and other community groups
- Access to labour markets: includes numeracy and literacy work, job application and interviewing skills, careers advice, work placements
- Youth leadership: youth council, leadership courses, being FFP 'ambassadors' at public meetings

FFP is located in the south of the London Borough of Newham in a ward with severe localised poverty and an increasing population. Newham is one of the most ethnically diverse places in England and Wales with Asian/Asian British accounting for 36% of the population, 33% are white, 25% Black/Black British and 4%

Chinese/Other<sup>2</sup>. The borough has consistently been one of the most deprived boroughs in London, has higher proportions of young people who are not in education, employment or training and a lower proportion entering employment or government supported training, than the rest of East London<sup>3</sup>. Compared to other London boroughs Newham has a greater proportion of young people under the age of 25; 40% compared to a London average of 32%<sup>4</sup>. Youth crime is a serious problem, with the workload for the Newham Youth Offending Team 52% above the London average<sup>5</sup>. These data show that FFP is located in an area where there are high levels of need and in an area where there is a high proportion of young people.

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<sup>2</sup> London Borough of Newham, *Focus on Newham, Local people and Local Conditions*, London Borough of Newham, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> London Borough of Newham, *Focus on Newham, Local people and Local Conditions*, London Borough of Newham, 2007. More recent statistical data was requested but was not available in time to be included in this report.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.newham.gov.uk/News/2006/August/Leadingworktostopyouthcrime.htm> Accessed 8 April 2008

<sup>5</sup> London Borough of Newham, *Focus on Newham, Local people and Local Conditions*, London Borough of Newham, 2007.



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## 2. THE RESEARCH

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The following data have been collected and collated to inform the findings of this research:

Secondary data was collated including project monitoring data for the period between January and June 2009 and documentation on FFP as an organisation. Case files were examined and two young people's stories were selected and analysed to illustrate the types of young people attending the programme and receiving one-to-one support. The researcher attended and participated in meetings where staff discussed developing monitoring data and approaches to self-evaluation.

To develop the self-completion questionnaires the researcher met with staff in small groups to discuss the theories and mechanisms of change which inform their work. At the meetings a set of process or intermediate outcomes were identified and these were incorporated into the questions. The questions include the possible impact of particular activities as well as changes which may occur with the wider context of attending FFP such as informal conversations and the ethos created by FFP as an organisation with a strong 'brand'. The questions are carefully worded to ask young people about the effect of attending FFP on their attitudes and behaviour since many other factors can be expected to be influencing the decisions young people are making.

The self-completion questionnaires were administered to young people attending the FFP open access programme during the third week in July 2009 (the questionnaire can be found in appendix A). These young people participated in physical activities - boxing, martial arts and the gym - and attended personal development classes. All the young people who attended during the third week in July, and who had attended FFP for at least two months, completed a questionnaire. Whilst it cannot be certain that the 100 young people are a representative sample of all those attending FFP, it can be reasonably assumed that this was a typical week and that the responses are likely to be representative. All 100 questionnaires are used in the analysis but not all the questions were completed by the young people. Of those who completed questions on their personal characteristics (85), 76% are

male, just under half are 11 to 16 years and just over half are 16 to 25 years. The majority said that they are Black African (48%), 14% said that they are White British and 14% Dual Heritage, 13% Asian, and the other young people said that they are Black British Caribbean, and White European and a few did not specify their ethnicity.

Twelve young people who received intensive interventions at the time of the research also filled in questionnaires. One young person answered a few of the questions whilst the other eleven completed them all.

To take into account low literacy levels the self-completion questionnaires were worded as simply as possible and clear instructions given for each question and the young people were required to tick boxes in response to the questions. The questionnaire was piloted and as a result of the pilot the questionnaire was shortened as there was some evidence of 'questionnaire fatigue'. Young people completed the questionnaires at FFP. A random selection of completed questionnaires was checked for consistency and it was found that a young person either routinely reported change or no change, suggesting that the findings are reliable. Throughout the report the percentages of the findings have been either rounded up or down and therefore the totals do not necessarily come to 100%.

In addition, four members of the youth council out of a possible eight completed a questionnaire. Partners who use the FFP premise and staff were sent self-completion questionnaires by email and three out of five responded. A local police officer was interviewed.

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### 3. FIGHT FOR PEACE AS AN ORGANISATION

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Three particular aspects of FFP are identified to assess its strength and weaknesses as an organisation delivering services to young people. The first aspect is 'research informed' to find out the reasons why FFP selected a particular geographical area and how they intend to deliver services, the second is the organisational structure to find out if there are procedures and practices in place to deliver a consistently high quality service over time, and the third are theories of change which underpin the practices of the organisation and explain how their work is expected to bring about changes in young people. Each is discussed in turn.

#### 3.1 Research informed

Developing social interventions from an evidence-base has been championed by the current government and several programmes have arisen from research findings on the premise that such programmes are more likely to be effective, and evaluations of these programmes have been supported by central government to enable them to improve their performance and for lessons to be learnt for the future<sup>6</sup>.

FFP has a clear ethos and preventive action plan which arose from ethnographic research undertaken in a violent and disadvantaged neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2003. This research identified how and why young people joined gangs and armed groups and developed a set of inter-related interventions to reduce the risk factors and enhance protective factors to enable young people to choose alternative life-styles<sup>7</sup>. A further international study took place which compared the experiences of young people involved in organised armed violence across numerous countries including South Africa, Northern Ireland, USA and El Salvador and which found similarities amongst the experiences of young people, common environmental risk factors and influences, and shared personal

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<sup>6</sup> See for example; Rutter, M (2006) 'Is Sure Start an effective preventive intervention?', *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 11,3, 135-141; Edwards, A *et al* (2006) 'Working to Prevent Social Exclusion of Children and Young People: final lessons from the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund'. Research Report 734. London: Dept. for Education and Skills.

<sup>7</sup> Downey, LT, 'Children of the Drug Trade: A Case Study of Organised Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro', Viva Rio/ISER, Rio de Janeiro, 2003'.

vulnerabilities<sup>8</sup>. As a result of these studies the FFP model is designed to offer real alternatives to risk factors through its five pillar prevention model; each pillar addresses specific risk factors and offers protective alternatives, combining to give a holistic approach to preventing division and violence<sup>9</sup>. The pillars are boxing and martial arts, personal development, social action, access to the labour market and youth leadership, and each pillar offers young people opportunities to change their behaviour and to reach their potential. The five pillar approach is the FFP model which is replicated across countries.

Further information was gathered in the London Borough of Newham in 2007 and a series of consultations with young people and with local organisations identified violence by young people aged 12 to 16 years and drug-related violence as problematic behaviour amongst older young people. The five pillar prevention model was adapted to suit the needs of local young people and east London; for example, a gym was set up in addition to boxing and martial arts equipment and mentoring introduced.

### **3.2 Organisational structure**

Within the academic literature there are many debates about how best to implement a programme to reduce or prevent crime but there is a general consensus that many social programmes suffer from poor implementation and many fail<sup>10</sup>. However research studies have found that where an initiative has clear goals and procedures this improves how the delivery organisation functions which increases the chances of successful implementation<sup>11</sup>.

There is a wealth of documentation that can be drawn on that outlines the philosophy, goals, working principles and practices of FFP. This information has

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<sup>8</sup> L. Dowdney, *Neither War nor Peace: International Comparisons of Children and Youth in Organised Armed Violence*, Viva Rio / ISER/ IANSA, 7Letras, Rio de Janeiro, 2005,

<sup>9</sup> See for example Farrington, D (1996) 'Understanding and preventing youth crime', Report for Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Sutherland, A *et al* (2005) 'Role of Risk and Protective Factors', Youth Justice Board. These reviews of research studies demonstrate the value of developing prevention practice from a risk-protection perspective which adds credibility to the FFP approach.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Ormerod, P (2005) *Why most things fail*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd; Pease, K (2006) 'Mindsets, Set Minds and Implementation' in J.Knutsson and R.V. Clarke' *Putting Theory to Work*, Crime Prevention Studies, Vol. 20. Devon: Willan Publishing.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, Rein, M (1983) *From Policy to Practice*, London: Macmillan.

been developed with staff and is readily available to sessional staff and volunteers as well as to new staff. An organisational and development strategy 2009-2012 outlines the management structure, monitoring and evaluation practices, a programme of work in which each intervention has clear objectives, targets and outcomes and a timetable for development is outlined until the end of 2012 and beyond<sup>12</sup>.

During the research period staff were involved in workshops and discussion groups fine-tuning the purpose and direction of the organisation with the support of an organisation 'What If!' that specialises in assisting new organisations to be successful. The five pillars model is being transformed into practice manuals to enable FFP managers and staff to replicate its ethos and practices in other locations.

Developing a clear organisational structure with the intention of replicating similar projects is being driven forward by the founder and director of FFP with a commitment which reflects his vision for the organisation. Integral to the FFP 'brand' is the FFP logo on the shirts worn by staff and young people which creates a sense of belonging and pride. During the research period it was clear, through the workshops and discussions with staff that every opportunity was being made to learn from the experiences of implementing FFP in Rio and London to ensure that a robust model of FFP can be successfully replicated. The strong motivation and drive to replicate the FFP 'brand' and intervention model is taking place with assistance from a company that has experience driving forward innovations and with input from the staff. With FFP staff 'What If!' identified five values which underpin the FFP model;

- *Embracing*: 'we don't judge, we except everyone'
- *Champion*: 'we're prepared, and committed to the fight'
- *Solidarity*: 'we always work with a sense of unity and respect'
- *Inspiring*: 'we look to realise the best in everyone'
- *Fearless*: 'we do the distance, and we're unapologetic about what we do'

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<sup>12</sup> This can be requested from L.Dowdney, FFP founder.

### 3.2.1 Youth Council

Integral to the organisational structure is the youth council which was set in 2008. The council comprises of eight young people and is an activity related to the youth leadership pillar.

Four young people completed a questionnaire and they had all attended four council meetings. They have all received training, although only one young person considered it very helpful, but, nevertheless, they all feel able to carry out their tasks. Three out of the four young people are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and they all feel that the council can make a real difference to FFP. All the council members communicate with other young people about their council work and they feel that their best achievements in the last six months include the creation of a garden, starting a gym session on Mondays and getting rid of plastic cups. These changes suggest that the wishes of the young people are taken seriously by staff and indeed, the four council members feel that staff take the issues they raised seriously. Furthermore the young people feel able to say what they feel at meetings and think that the council members work quite well as a group. Three out of the four young people said that their position has made them feel better about themselves, and feel that other young people at FFP respect them more.

These findings suggest that, overall, the youth council is working well and it is providing an opportunity for young people to influence what happens at FFP.

### 3.3 Theories of change

The intention of evaluations which identify the theories of change that underpin social interventions is to explain changes which are due to the interventions, rather than to take into account changes which may have happened anyway or happened due to other new experiences or particular 'events'<sup>13</sup>. Identifying the mechanisms of

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<sup>13</sup> Connell, J and A. Kubisch (2002) *Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects and Problems* in *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives Volume 2: Theory, Measurement and Analysis* by Karen Fulbright Anderson, Anne C. Kubisch, and James P. Connell (eds), The Aspen Institute.

change explains the outcomes of a social intervention. These mechanisms are ‘not the programme activities per se but the response that the activities generate’<sup>14</sup>.

It was apparent from the meetings with staff that they have a clear understanding of the responses they are hoping to gain from young people. For example, participating in boxing and martial arts generates an adrenaline rush which leaves young people feeling calmer after training. This ‘calmness’ enables young people to listen and to learn, and from this learning they acquire new knowledge which they can use to think about things differently including themselves and their families. This in turn can lead young people to make different decisions and take different actions such as participating less in anti-social behaviour<sup>15</sup>.

Other processes of change to overcome division and violence were also identified by staff, for example:

- Respectful attitudes towards the FFP programme, peers and staff and an understanding that respectful behaviour is expected outside the FFP Academy
- Respect for rules to learn how to compete in sports which have strict technical rules and regulations and to use this appreciation of the value of following rules in other situations such as at school, at home and in the streets

It is hypothesised by staff that the mechanisms of change which enable young people to reach their potential include developing:

- Listening and social skills
- Motivation, confidence and ambition

The vehicle for change is boxing and martial arts and this is the trademark of FFP Academy; these activities are designed to attract young people who are disaffected, vulnerable and have few, if any, positive relationships with adults. Boxing and martial arts combine risk and protective factors by providing an opportunity for young people to channel their aggression, gain status amongst their peers and in

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<sup>14</sup> Weis, C (1997) ‘Theory-based Evaluation: Past, Present and Future’, *New Directions for Evaluation*, 76:46. See also Sampson, A (2007) ‘Developing robust approaches to evaluating social programmes’, *Evaluation*, 13(4).

<sup>15</sup> Sampson, A and S. Themelis (2009) ‘Working in the community with young people who offend’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(2): 121-137.

their local community, to learn self-discipline, increase their confidence, improve their physical fitness, and increase their ambitions by training to a high standard and preparing for competitions.

The philosophy of FFP is to provide an open, friendly and inclusive setting to which young people and staff feel proud to belong. Creating a sense of belonging encourages young people to attend the project, and to feel able to disclose their problems to staff.



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## 4. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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Two types of interventions were assessed; the open access programme and the intensive programme, and two stories to illustrate the types of young people receiving one-to-one support are described. The services other organisations contract FFP to deliver are also assessed.

### 4.1 Open access young people

This section reviews three aspects of the FFP programme for young people attending the open access programme; attendance which is an indication of the attraction of the programme, indicators that measure if young people are making, or not making, progress towards intermediate outcomes such as confidence and relationships with peers and adults, and self-reported outcomes – a decline in divisiveness, and violent and criminal behaviour.

#### 4.1.1 Attendance

One of the challenges working with young people who often experience difficulties at home, at school and in the street is to attract them to activities and then to maintain their interest and involvement. This is particularly pertinent to the open access programme because attendance is voluntary.

The findings from the self-completion questionnaire show that participating in physical activities to get fit is attractive to over three quarters (78%) of the open access young people and demonstrates the attractiveness of boxing, martial arts and use of a gym. Just over a third said that they attend FFP to make friends (35%)<sup>16</sup> and with an average of 203 young people attending each month between January and June 2009, there are plenty of opportunities for young people to form friendships. These opportunities are likely to encourage these young people to continue to attend.

Approximately three quarters of the young people said that they would not be attending other activities, or doing sport, if they were not attending FFP and just

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<sup>16</sup> Some young people said that they are attracted to FFP for the sport and as an opportunity to make friends.

under a half (45%) said that they would be 'hanging about on the streets'. Others said that they would be 'at home' or at a 'friend's house'. Thus, during one week in July, due to FFP activities, 45 fewer young people were 'hanging about on the streets' in the local area.

Just over half of the young people who completed a questionnaire have strong positive feelings towards FFP and are likely to return regularly; over half (53%) said that they are 'proud to come' and enjoy FFP (52%), and a quarter said that they feel that they belong to FFP. Just under a third (30%) have less strong positive feelings but recognise that attending 'is something to do'.

The FFP monitoring data illustrates the popularity of the FFP programme; the average number of young people attending between January and June 2009 was 203 a month, with an average of 30 new people attending each month between January and March. Young people, particularly aged between 16 and 25 have been identified as suffering disproportionately from many types of disadvantage, have high levels of drug-taking and are most likely to be victims of violent crime and perpetrators of crime, and typically have difficulties accessing services<sup>17</sup>. For these reasons FFP talk to new recruits and to existing members every month to discuss any problems they may have. Of those attending the open access programme, staff identified 21% as having critical and complex issues between January and March and 41% as having critical and complex issues between April and June<sup>18</sup>.

These findings suggest that FFP is offering a positive service which young people do not consider to be stigmatising or threatening. This offers the potential for the project to engage with young people who have been labelled as 'hard-to-reach' either because they are marginalised within their community, overlooked, or unwilling to engage with community projects<sup>19</sup>. It is also possible that the use of

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<sup>17</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) *Transitions; Young Adults with Complex Needs*, London. See also MacDonald, R *et al* (2005) 'Growing up in poor neighbourhoods: the significance of class and place in the extended transitions of 'socially excluded' young adults', *Sociology*, 39, 873- 891.

<sup>18</sup> There is likely to be some double counting in these calculations. The average number of young people attending for each quarter was used to calculate the percentage of young people with critical and complex issues. This is a useful estimate in so far as it indicates levels of need and demands placed on staff time by young people attending the open access programme.

<sup>19</sup> Doherty, P *et al* (2003) 'On Track Thematic Report: Assessment, Referral and Hard-to-Reach Groups', Research Report 475, Department for Education and Skills.

professional boxers and martial arts staff as well as youth workers and the aspiration to train young people to be competitive will attract young people in a way that other social interventions for young people living in highly disadvantaged areas have not been able to. For example the Youth Inclusion Programme had a problem of engaging the 50 most at-risk in similar types of neighbourhoods with an average engagement rate of 32%<sup>20</sup>.

#### *4.1.2 Building confidences, positive relationships and social skills*

It has been argued that it is most important for projects like FFP to create an environment which encourages young people to talk about their problems and the reasons for their difficult behaviour<sup>21</sup>. Since young people attend the open access programme voluntarily it is easy for them to keep their problems private. It is therefore a challenge for staff to build trust to encourage disclosure. Clearly, without disclosure staff cannot work with young people to resolve their problems and enable them to move forward and reach their potential. However, it often takes time and patience to build trust, particularly with disaffected young people<sup>22</sup>.

The findings from the self-completion questionnaire revealed that only one person said that they did not have any problems; one out of hundred young people. This high prevalence of problems indicates the potential value of a local project for these young people. Whilst a quarter (23%) said that they did not feel able to talk to staff about any problems they have, almost two thirds (64%) of the young people said that they could talk to staff about any problems they have and 12% said that they sometimes could or were not sure. Thus just over three quarters of the young people are open to disclosing their problems, and it is possible that with a higher staff/young person ratio the disclosure rates will improve further.

Another factor that creates a respectful and trusting environment is where young people feel able to express any concerns they may have about the project and the

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<sup>20</sup> Morgan Harris and Burrow (2008) 'Evaluation of the Youth Inclusion Programme phase 2', Youth Justice Board.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, Smith, D and I. Paylor (1993) 'Reluctant heroes: youth workers and crime prevention', *Youth and Policy*, 57: 17-28.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Sampson, A and S. Themelis (2009) 'Working in the community with young people who offend', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12,2: 121-137.

staff. Many of the young people said that they did not envisage having a problem with the activities or the staff (41%). For the other young people only four feel that they are unable to complain to staff, whilst the rest (92%) said that they could or thought they might be able to in the future. Feeling able to complain gives young people a 'voice' and is a safeguard against the project causing them harm. These findings suggest that there are open and respectful relationships between most of the young people and staff.

One intention of FFP is to work with young people to change their perceptions of themselves and how they relate to other people in their local area so that young people can develop more positive relationships which, in turn, will build their confidence and motivation to make positive decisions about their future. The findings from the questionnaires show that participating in FFP has enabled nearly two thirds (64%) of the young people to think differently about going to school and that some are thinking differently about their future (22%) and what they would like out of life (12%). Some young people said that they are thinking differently about their family (19%), their friends (14%), and their health (11%).

There is stronger evidence to show that young people are improving their social skills; of those who responded (78), 86% said that coming to FFP has made it 'a lot easier' or 'a little easier' to make friends, and of those who responded (82), 95% said that people treat them differently since coming to FFP. These findings suggest that young people feel more socially accepted.

With respect to personal changes the overwhelming majority feel fitter (90%), and of those who responded (62), 29% said that they did not feel stressed before they came to FFP and all the other respondents (71%) said that coming to FFP has helped them feel calmer 'most of the time' or 'some of the time' which suggests that these young people are working towards controlling their anger. No one said that FFP makes them feel less calm. Similarly no one said that attending FFP has made them feel worse about themselves and of those who responded (67), 70% said that they feel better about themselves and 30% said that they feel 'about the same'.

The findings related to the process or intermediate indicators show that the overwhelming majority of young people on the open access programme are making progress as a result of attending FFP. A minority of young people 'feel the same'

and this is consistent with the findings that not all young people feel ready to discuss their problems with staff. This will take time and emphasises the importance of retaining young people through the provision of activities which they find attractive. As described earlier, many of the young people are attracted to the boxing, martial arts and use of the gym.

#### *4.1.3 Getting in and out of trouble*

The findings suggest that the FFP open access programme does have a positive impact on the behaviour of some young people. Young people were asked if coming to FFP has stopped them getting into trouble at school (23 young people agreed), at home (22 young people agreed) and in the streets (18). This is compared to a smaller number of young people who said that they still get in trouble at home (6), at school (4) and in the streets (11)<sup>23</sup>.

Young people responded to a series of questions about FFP outcomes; 71 young people said that they feel they are less likely to be a victim of crime<sup>24</sup>, 61 said that they are less likely to commit a crime, 53 said that they are less likely to be part of a gang, 48 said that they were less likely to disrespect other people. The programme seems to be more effective at changing some of these issues, rather than others, although the overwhelming trend for each issue is positive: for example, of those who responded to each question, 86% said that they are less likely to disrespect others and 14% said that attending FFP has not made a difference to their disrespect for others; 81% said that they are less likely to commit a crime whilst 19% said that attending FFP has not made a difference; and 84% said that they are less likely to be part of a gang and 16% said that attending FFP has not made a difference. None of the young people said that they were more likely to be part of a gang, more likely to commit a crime or to be a victim of crime as a result of attending FFP.

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<sup>23</sup> Note: many young people attending the open access programme will not necessarily be 'in trouble' even though they are living in a high risk environment.

<sup>24</sup> Research has found that the strongest predictor of violent offending is being a victim of a crime (Wordes, M and M. Nunez (2002) *Our vulnerable teenager: their victimisation, its consequences and directions for prevention and intervention*, National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the National Centre for Victims of Crime).

For some of these young people who are known to the police and the youth offending team it would be possible to corroborate their self-reporting with data from the police and youth offending team to ascertain if they have offended, or offended less often, during the time they have attended FFP. However, this was not possible within the time constraints of the research period. The self-report findings show however that between 84% and 86% of the young people are making progress towards becoming more tolerant of others and feeling less inclined to commit crimes.

## **4.2 Intensive interventions**

The intensive intervention programmes are the pathways programme and the casework and mentoring activities. These interventions offer young people more supervision including one-to-one sessions for emotional and practical support, lessons to improve their numeracy and literacy skills, in addition to the physical activities and personal development sessions which the open access young people participate in. Most young people are referred to the FFP intensive programme by the youth offending team and young people who attend the open access programme are also referred by FFP staff. All the young people attending the intensive programme have been assessed by FFP staff as having at least one 'critical' issue, and typically three. The most common critical issues are emotional well-being, self image and personal relationship problems, and difficulties related to a lack of basic numeracy and literacy skills, and to the areas within which they live.

### *4.2.1 Building confidences, positive relationships and social skills*

The intensive programme is designed to work with young people to reduce risk factors associated with offending and to increase their protective factors. A short self-completion questionnaire was designed to ask young people about the intermediate outcomes the interventions are designed to impact upon. The intermediate outcomes are those which indicate if a young person is making an improvement and if they are less likely to become involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour, although they may not break the habit of offending immediately. Research has shown that programmes for similar types of offenders, most notably the ISSP, achieve small changes in young people; for those who

completed an ISSP programme high risk attitudes towards offending fell by 9% and high-risk thinking and behaviour fell by 13%<sup>25</sup>.

The overwhelming majority of the 12 FFP young people who responded to the questionnaire showed an improvement in factors that mitigate disaffection and enable them to progress. The initial assessments of young people found that these young people often had difficult and negative relationships which undermined their sense of self-worth and well-being. They could be intolerant and were often angry. After participating on the 12 week course and attending one-to-to sessions the findings from the self-completion questionnaires show that most young people are more likely to respect others (9), listen to others (7), co-operate with others (8), and accept other people who are different (8), to make friends more easily (8), and have better relationships with their family (9) and with adults (7).

Building positive social relationships is a two way process and about half the young people feel that other people have changed their attitude towards them suggesting that people can identify tangible changes in these young people. The young people said that more people listen to them (6), treat them with respect (7) and understand them (6). These improved responses to young people are likely to increase the confidence and sense of well-being. The other young people who completed the questionnaire did not report any changes in the intermediate indicators; for example five said that people treat them with respect and six said that people understand 'about the same'. None of the young people thought that these factors have got worse since they have been attending FFP.

Improvements in a further set of indicators suggest that young people are now more likely to better themselves through an improved sense of self-worth. The overwhelming majority feel more confident (10), better about themselves (9), and feel better about being a young woman or a young man (8) and these positive changes have enabled the young people to feel more motivated (9), more ambitious (9), and feel happier about life (7).

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<sup>25</sup> Atkinson, H *et al* (2004) '*ISSP the initial report*' London: Youth Justice Board.

#### *4.2.2 Getting in and out of trouble*

Changes in other factors such as being less impulsive, getting bored less frequently and being less angry can be expected to protect young people from becoming involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour. The majority of young people said that they are more likely to respect rules (9) and are more likely to think before they act (8). Just over half are bored less often (7) and calm more often (7). The other young people feel that these factors have not changed since they joined FFP, and three young people said that they feel bored more often.

With respect to outcomes many of these young people have made some progress. Of the 11 young people who responded to the question, 10 said that they are less likely to be a victim of crime, although one thought that they are more likely to be a victim. All 12 responded to the question about being part of a gang; one young person said that since coming to FFP they are more likely to be part of a gang, 8 said that they are less likely, and three said that attending FFP has not made a difference. Most young people said that they are less likely to carry a weapon (8), and three said that attending FFP has not made a difference, and none said that they are more likely to carry a weapon. Similar improvements are apparent for committing crimes; 10 said that they are less likely to commit crimes, and one said that attending FFP has not made a difference and one did not respond to the question.

Data made available by the youth offending team (YOT) in September 2009 for the 24 young people who they referred to the intensive FFP programme between September 2008 and July 2009 shows that three young people re-offended during the programme and three young people have since re-offended, giving, at the time of the research, what may be considered to be a low re-offending rate (25%). This re-offending rate is consistent with the findings from the self-completion questionnaires which found that a small minority said that attending FFP has not made a difference to them. The findings also show, however, that the intensive programme successfully engaged with most young people and that the changes reported by these young people are largely positive. By comparison, an early study



on the effectiveness of the ISSP found that of those who completed the programme 76% were reconvicted<sup>26</sup>.

FFP's own monitoring records show that almost three quarters of the young people known to the YOT on the intensive programme (73%) have either completed a course or are continuing with the programme and that seven of these young people are now in education, training or employment.

#### *4.2.3 Opportunities to continue*

The research findings suggest that retaining many young people who have completed an intensive programme is likely. This continuity of support in a familiar environment is a possible key strength of the FFP model. Intensive programmes for young offenders typically have a clear end at which point young people have to leave and re-offending rates by participants on these programmes is high. An evaluation of the ISSP found that 91% of those who attended the programme were reconvicted at least once within the two year follow up period<sup>27</sup>.

The research findings from this study show that many of the young people receiving intensive interventions form an attachment to FFP, and for some this is a strong feeling. Of the 12 young people who completed the questionnaire, half are proud to come to FFP and enjoy FFP, and five young people feel that they belong to FFP. Four said that 'it is something to do'. All of the young people identified tangible benefits from participating in the boxing and the gym which is likely to encourage them to continue attending; they all feel either 'a lot' or 'a little' fitter, 11 are positive about boxing, and 9 feel positive about using the gym. Some of the comments written by young people on the questionnaires highlight how they like to be physically fit and how this helps their well-being:

*'I like boxing because it improves your mental and physical appearance'*

*'I do like it. It keeps my mind off anything stressing, keeps me fit and it does push myself'*

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<sup>26</sup> Atkinson, H *et al* (2004) 'ISSP the initial report', London: Youth Justice Board.

<sup>27</sup> Gray, E *et al* (2005) *ISSP Final Report*, London: Youth Justice Board.

*'It releases my anger easily, it's fun'*

### **4.3 Working one to one**

Another aspect of the work at FFP is the conversation FFP staff have with individual young people every three months where they 'profile' their problems and seek solutions. This work is less visible than many of the activities that take place in the sports hall or in a classroom but it is nevertheless an integral part of the FFP programme.

Those with identified complex problems meet with staff more often. Between January and June 2009 the average number of young people seeing a worker each month was 11 and on average they met with a FFP worker one and half times a month. The monitoring data also shows that the workers have an increasing workload with an average of just over two new young people starting one-to-one work each month over this period.

The two case studies presented below have been collated from case files (with some details changed to ensure anonymity) to give an insight into two different types of young people receiving additional support. One is an example of those who are young and vulnerable, and the other is an example of those who are older young men and repeat offenders known to the youth criminal justice system.

#### *4.3.1 Young and vulnerable*

This case study illustrates how young people are able to bring a young aggressive and violent person to the project, how they are then supported by staff, and through this support and participating in junior boxing, the young person is able to develop positive attachments and have fun despite his problems at home, at school and in the street.

George

Young people attending FFP told the staff that they were worried about George who is 10 years old, often hungry, hangs around with older boys. Staff encouraged them

to bring George to the project. George arrived looking thin, un-kept, and in ill-fitting clothes; he did not make eye contact with staff, did not listen to them and was disruptive, but he came back and a worker talked to him on his own. The worker visited his home and his mother gave George permission to attend FFP and to participate in the junior boxing. George attended regularly and expressed a wish to attend everyday. His behaviour improved, he formed good relationships with the staff and seemed 'much happier'. George started to smile.

The extent of George's problems is not untypical of young people attending FFP. George was violent at school, stole money from staff, and had been excluded for several days. His relationship with his parents had broken down and there were accusations of violent behaviour by the parents and George. George was described by a worker as being 'beyond parental control'. He had no toys or books at home, received little attention from his parents and was often unsupervised. FFP staff visited George's parents to discuss his reluctance to return home after FFP classes finished. FFP staff also attended a series of meetings at his primary school and child protection meetings with the result that George was taken into foster care. Since George has been in care his behaviour at school has improved and he is achieving academically. Once he was taken into foster care George was no longer able to attend FFP but George wishes to return to FFP as soon as he can.

#### *4.3.2 Macho and repeat offending*

This case study illustrates how an offending lifestyle is attractive to young men. Offending gives them a 'buzz', and the money enables them to buy drugs and to impress young women. But these people can also be driven by anger and the consequences of this anger are destructive for families and friends and how beneath this bravado is an uncertain, worried and unconfident person. Through the boxing young men are able to improve their body image and to learn to be self-disciplined and calmer, their aggression is channelled through participating in sport and in this way the FFP programme offers a positive alternative for young people.

Kevin

Before he was 16 years old Kevin had committed several street robberies and was known to the youth offending team. On the last occasion he was with a friend and

'spontaneously' took a bag from a woman to get £15 to buy some drugs for the evening. As well as the money he enjoyed the 'buzz' of offending. Kevin took drugs, smoked cigarettes, and likes his 'fast' lifestyle; he considers himself to be very bright and attractive to young women and does not want to change his lifestyle. Kevin is an angry young man; he expresses his anger at home where he is violent and on the street when he is with friends. His relationship with his family has broken down and his mother is distraught.

Kevin was referred to FFP by a YOT worker and at FFP he has intensive one-to-one case work, takes personal development classes and participates in the boxing. Kevin likes boxing because his body image is important to him and through the boxing he has increased his muscles. Boxing also enables him to channel his anger and staff are working with him to be less impulsive and aggressive. Through the one-to-one work Kevin is beginning to understand how his aggression impacts badly on his friends and family and how this behaviour and his criminality will make it difficult for him to realise his goal of getting a place on a painting and decorating course at the local College. At the time of the research FFP staff are continuing to work with Kevin to address his deep-seated anger problems.

#### **4.4 Impact in the local community**

One of the weaknesses of this study is that the links between the project and the local community have not been fully explored. A community police officer was interviewed however and he gave positive feedback about the value of FFP in a neighbourhood where there are '*minimal services*' for young people. The police officer has visited the project on numerous occasions and when he and his colleagues find young people 'hanging around' on the streets they encourage them to attend FFP. He explained how he has noticed that young people wear their FFP shirts outside the FFP building, and he is impressed with the structure of the programme, the forward thinking and the up-to-date equipment and in particular the 'I can do' ethos. He has observed that young people seem to have a pride in belonging to FFP which is different to his experience of other youth organisations. In fact, in the borough the police and local authority have imposed dispersal orders outside youth club venues, whereas the young people from FFP disperse at the end of sessions without causing problems in the community.

The police are hoping to work with the FFP youth council leaders to set up a young person's local panel to give young people a 'voice' within the local community in the same way that the police and local authority work with adults who are members of neighbourhood panels.

#### **4.5 Delivering services to young people attending other programmes**

FFP has contracts with other local service providers and three of the five providers responded to a questionnaire. All three said that there are insufficient sports premises in the area which are appropriate for disaffected and often disruptive young people. In fact two out of the three organisations said that they would not run the course if they could not use the premises of FFP and their staff. All three organisations rate the training given by FFP staff very highly commenting *'all the staff at FFP have been non judgemental and have built positive working relationships with our students'* and *'they are very good at building relationships with disaffected young people... the boys listen to them.... The staff are enthusiastic, have high expectations for behaviour and achievement and are excellent role models'*.

Using boxing as a tool to engage with young people and combining this with the personal development sessions to discuss drugs, guns, bullying and healthy living is considered by all three organisations to be an excellent approach for socially and educationally excluded young people. At the time of the research one of the organisations had a three day Ofsted inspection and the inspection report makes very favourable observations about the high quality work by the FFP staff and the positive impact that they have on a group of very disaffected young boys aged 14 to 16 years:

*'As a result of this partnership they make good gains in physical fitness and in developing a good sense of personal responsibility and improve behaviour. This provision also helps students, especially boys, gain confidence and self-esteem. The emphasis on physical fitness is also helping the boys to adopt healthier lifestyles'*.

The report goes on to comment:

‘.. the PSHE programme is excellent and really helps to boost self-esteem and improve behaviour. This is most clearly seen in the cooperation with the Fight for Peace academy. Many boys, in particular, benefit from this excellent partnership, as the academy staff present excellent role models that the student can empathise with and aspire to’<sup>28</sup>.

#### **4.5 Concluding Comments**

The findings from this small scale study provides a ‘snap shot’ of the work at the FFP Academy, its impact on the lives of young people and gives an indication of the potential of programme. The main findings suggest that the FFP approach is attractive to young people, and that the ethos of the organisation and the continuity of support delivered by staff who have positive relationships with young people and high expectations of what young people can achieve, will encourage them to continue attending during difficult periods of their lives as they move into adulthood.

The robust organisational structure and the drive to replicate the FFP model in disadvantaged communities have resulted in an organisation with a clear set of values, a strong image, and a well-articulated purpose. The emphasis on monitoring and the development of self evaluation enhances the possibility that replicating the FFP model in new locations will be successful.

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<sup>28</sup> Ofsted Inspection report ‘New Directions KS4 PRU’ reference number 134919, September 2009.

Appendix A



**PLEASE ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS HONESTLY. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.** The questionnaire is confidential.

**ATTENDING FIGHT FOR PEACE**



Why do you come to Fight for Peace?

Tick ALL the boxes you agree with

Sports	Make Friends	Get Fit	Something to Do	Keep out of trouble	Any other reason? Please tell us



If you were not at Fight for Peace, what do you think you would be doing?

Tick ALL the boxes you agree with

Hanging about the streets	Other sports	Other activities	At home	At a friend's house	Something else? Please tell us



How do you feel about the Fight for Peace project?

Tick ALL the boxes you agree with

I am proud to come	It is something to do	I feel I belong here	I come because my friends do	I enjoy it	I'm not sure	Another reason (Please write reason below)

## ATTENDING FIGHT FOR PEACE AND THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU



Has coming to Fight for Peace made you think any differently about?

**Tick ALL the boxes you agree with**

Going to school	Your future	What you want out of life	Your friends	Your family	Your health	Yourself	Anything else (Please write below)



Has coming to Fight for Peace stopped you from getting into trouble?

**Tick ALL the boxes you agree with**

Yes, at school	Yes, at home	Yes, in the streets	I didn't get into trouble before	No, I still get in trouble at home	No, I still get in trouble at school	No, I still get in trouble on the streets



Since coming to Fight for Peace I am **more** or **less** likely to:

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

I am more likely to be part of a gang	I am less likely to be part of a gang	Attending FFP doesn't made a difference



Since coming to Fight for Peace I am **more** or **less** likely to:

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

I am more likely to commit a crime	I am less likely to commit a crime	Attending FFP doesn't made a difference





Since coming to Fight for Peace I am **more** or **less** likely to:

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

I am more likely to be a victim of crime	I am less likely to be a victim of crime	Attending FFP doesn't made a difference



Since coming to Fight for Peace I am **more** or **less** likely to:

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

I am more likely to disrespect other people	I am less likely to disrespect other people	Attending FFP doesn't made a difference



Since coming to Fight for Peace I am **more** or **less** likely to:

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

I am more likely to carry a weapon	I am less likely to carry a weapon	Attending FFP doesn't made a difference



Do you feel fitter because of coming to Fight for Peace?

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	No, not at all	No, I feel less fit	Don't know



Do you feel safer in your local area because of coming to Fight for Peace?

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	No, not at all	No, I feel less safe



Has coming to Fight for Peace made it easier to make friends?

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	No, not all	No, it's harder



Do other people treat you differently since you have come to Fight for Peace?

**Tick ONE box ONLY**

Yes	Sometimes	No, not all



Do you feel that you can talk to the Fight for Peace staff about any problems you may have?

Yes	No	Sometimes	Maybe when I've come for a bit longer	Not sure	I don't have any problems



Has coming to Fight for Peace helped you to feel more calm?

Yes, most of the time	Yes, some of the time	No, never	I didn't feel stressed before	The project makes me feel less calm



Has coming to Fight for Peace made you feel:

Better about yourself	Worse about yourself	About the same



What are your three favourite activities?

Tick 3 boxes ONLY

Boxing	Capoeira	Gym	Muay Thai	Personal Development	Talking to staff	Meeting up with friends	Something else

### FUTURE OF FIGHT FOR PEACE

Tick the boxes which you agree with



Do you feel that you can say if you do not like the activities, or if the staff are making you upset or feel bad about yourself?

Yes	No	Sometimes	Maybe when I've come for a bit longer	I do not have a problem with the activities or how the staff treat me	I'm not sure



How can Fight for Peace be improved?

*Write your thoughts here:*

**Information about yourself.** Please tick **ONE** box for each question.

I am

Female	Male

**I am**

Under 16 years	16 years and over

**I am**

Asian	Black African	Black British Caribbean	Mixed race	White British	White European	Other Ethnic group. Please write which group

**Thank you for filling in this questionnaire, your answers are very important to us. This is your project and we want you to be able to tell us how to improve it.**

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