



Blue Marble Training at Shoreditch Trust

You will be aware that WCB has been working with the Shoreditch Trust for the last few years supporting them to work with young people who are disengaged from education with baking as a way of re-engaging them. This case study illustrates how important our support is and how vital is the work of Blue Marble Training at the Shoreditch Trust.

Case Study (J): J is a 17-year-old male, from Hackney. He was placed in a pupil referral unit at 16 and missed a year of education due to a very harrowing past year. He was involved in activity that put his safety at extreme risk of danger and was badly beaten up by a group of young people due to some botched operations. This left J in a very lonely place and he was very reluctant to return to school. His missed year also meant that he had to take his GCSEs a year later and was slightly older than some of the other students in the unit. J generally presents with very little learning challenges, but his apathy and despondence to engagement was very apparent from session 1 of the “Introduction to Baking” workshops.

When we first met J, he made it very clear he was not interested in baking, neither did he want to be present on the programme. Over a period of the next hour, he worked closely with one of the youth facilitators and became a little more engaged. It was during this point that the PRU disclosed that J was type 1 diabetic and previous efforts to engage him in activities had proved unsuccessful. J disclosed to staff that he did not eat in public places because of his condition and so only ate what was provided at home. J’s diet was solely pasta based and he did not venture beyond this, finding most other types of food sickening. Knowing this, the team would work with J more to understand his eating patterns and ensure that most of the bakes covered managed the sugar usage and found alternative healthier. As a result, J’s engagement began to improve drastically, and he went from one of the more reluctant young people at the beginning, to the most actively involved and inquisitive.

As we reached the midpoint of the sessions, J expressed interest in baking and how he went about engaging with the programme on a more full-time basis once he finished GCSEs. We queried whether he had considered college, and he was very clear that this was not a route he wanted to go down – as adverse experience of learning in school setting, had left a particularly bad memory. We asked what had changed for J, and why he wanted to train on the programme as a potential baker. He cited the following:

“Everyone’s a bit different here with how they work with you. I think it would be good for me because it can help me with my diet and managing my sugar intake. Working with S (youth co-facilitator) was good as well. Obviously, he’s a lot closer to my age, and he’s going to be starting a new job as a chef soon, so it’s good motivation”.



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J's change in attitude towards engaging in the workshops and subsequently wanting to become a trainee, can be attributed to a number of things. 1) The team's approach to understanding the personal elements that underpinned J's ambivalence (school experience and health), and finding strategies for them, made him more perceptive to engagement. 2) The importance of introducing the peer-to-peer element to the workshops gave J a non-professional or teacher perspective. Encouragement from another young person with no perceived "agenda" gave J a different perspective on the opportunity. As covid-19 and lockdown begins to show some signs of abating, it has become more important to think about how young people will contribute to the recovery effort in the hospitality industry. Having young people who can vouch for the work that we are undertaking and support us to bring other young people like J through the door, is a great indicator for the long-term and getting more young people involved in the baking industry specifically.