

LEAH

Peer Researcher



Leah began her journey as a Peer Action Collective (PAC) peer researcher after seeing the role advertised on social media. Since then, she has gone from strength to strength whilst working with Parkside High who deliver the project in her local area. Along with four other peer researchers, Leah is involved in designing and conducting research about young people's experiences of violence.

Prior to joining the PAC Leah already had a relationship with Michelle, the operation manager at Parkside High, who explained:

"With Leah being a local girl and the daughter of one of my close friends, I was aware of some of the boundaries she faced over her final years in mainstream education. Leah was unfortunately one of our many young people that had been permanently excluded from secondary school".

After being excluded from school, Leah continued to find herself in various situations on the street, including witnessing and being involved in some incidents of youth violence. However, Leah has a strong support network around her, who have helped her make a number of positive decisions such as enrolling onto a hairdressing college course and getting her part time job as a peer researcher.

Since becoming a peer researcher she has shown tremendous dedication to her role, as Michelle highlights:

"She has smashed everything that we have thrown at her over the last few months – especially in areas where she doesn't sometimes feel a 100 percent comfortable".

Leah's role involves facilitating workshops, interviews and focus groups with local young people to explore their experiences of youth violence. However, she has consistently gone above and beyond this, by supporting other peer researchers who are less confident and recently by volunteering to be the 'tech lead' of her group, which involves her overseeing the mobile application that is used on the project to conduct research. By Immersing herself in the project and with the strong support provided by the staff and fellow peer researchers at Parkside High, Leah has already been able to make great progress in areas such as reading and organisation skills.



Leah's motivation to be a peer researcher comes from wanting to work with young people who have had similar experiences to herself and a desire to make changes in her local community. Leah wants to continue doing this beyond the PAC project, and has recently shown an interest in working with Parkside in an apprentice role which would be centred around youth work.

Michelle summarised Leah's involvement on the project so far:

"If I could speak on behalf of all the Peer Researchers and the Parkside High crew – I would say we are so happy to have her being part of the fantastic growing young team and she's an inspiration to so many young people that have been in her position".



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