

From participation to practice: how young people and practitioners build skills for navigating conflict

Coram LEAP Confronting Conflict

About the Leadership & Enterprise Programme

The Leadership & Enterprise programme supports young people and the adults who support them to develop practical skills for navigating conflict, strengthening communication, and building healthier relationships. Across a series of interactive workshops, participants explore topics such as emotional regulation, understanding needs, boundaries, facilitation, and leadership in youth settings.

The programme blends experiential learning with reflection, smallgroup discussion and practicebased activities. Sessions are cofacilitated with young people wherever possible, creating a learning environment that is collaborative, youthcentred and grounded in realworld application. Many participants join both the core programme and the Facilitator Development pathway, which gives them opportunities to practice new skills in schools and community settings.

This approach is experiential, reflective and codesigned, and creates conditions where participants can develop confidence, test out new tools, and reshape how they communicate with others.

The journeys below from Clara and Michelle illustrate how this way of learning supports meaningful growth for both young people and adults.

A young person growing into leadership

Clara joined the programme through the Lambeth Violence Reduction Unit's Young People's Action Group. Already interested in social justice, she wanted to build skills that would help her support others and navigate challenging conversations.

One tool that resonated deeply with her was the practice of separating *facts* (what happened) from *interpretations* (the meaning or emotion we attach to events). Being able to make this distinction helped her feel calmer and more grounded — whether at university, during her tutoring work, or in everyday interactions.

What made this impactful for Clara was the programme's approach: sessions created space to practise the tools with peers, reflect on what came up, and apply them to real situations. This allowed the learning to move from theory into lived experience.

Clara later joined the Facilitator Development Programme, learning alongside adults of all ages. Even as the youngest in the group, the participatory delivery style made her feel respected and able to contribute openly. As part of the programme, she delivered a workshop in a secondary school, gaining first-hand experience of using the tools with other young people.

Her journey shows how structured participation - supported by practical tools, supportive group learning and opportunities to practise can help young people step into leadership roles with confidence.

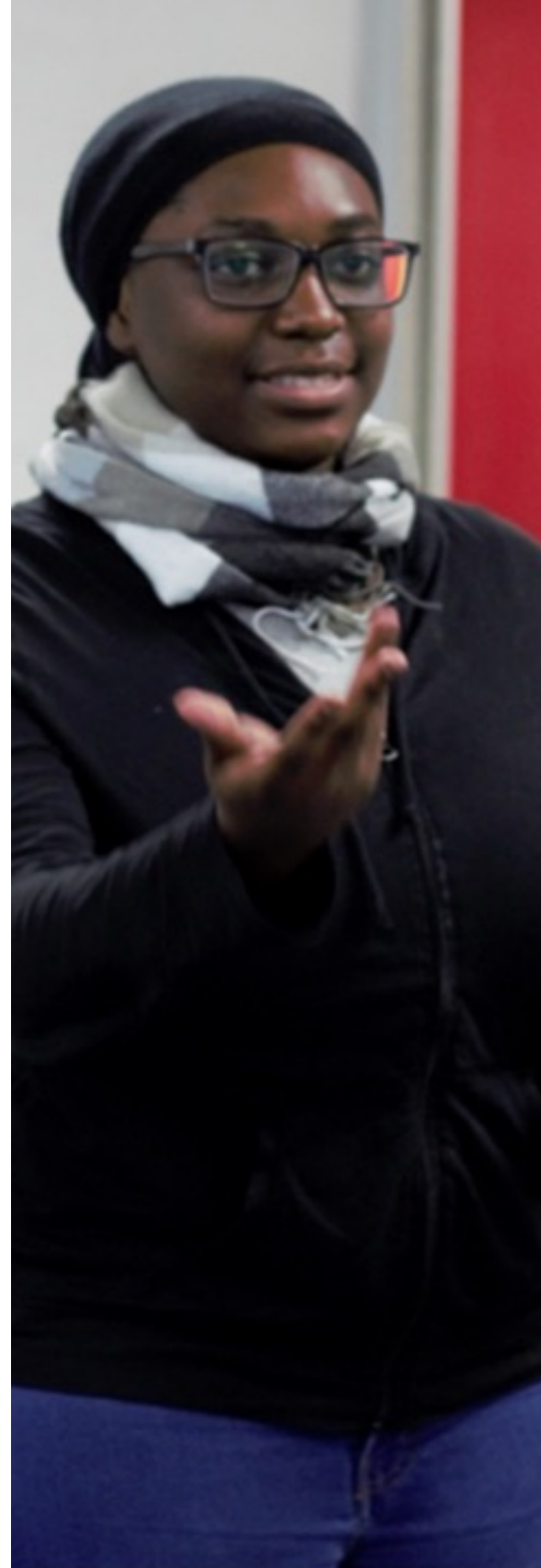
A practitioner strengthening youthcentred practice

Michelle is a youth worker and safeguarding lead with over 20 years of experience. For her, the programme provided something often missing in frontline work: protected space to pause, reflect and rethink longheld habits.

Through exercises focused on listening, pacing, and emotional awareness, she found herself shifting from "getting through tasks" to being more responsive to what young people needed in the moment. The experiential style of the training helped her notice her own patterns, experiment with alternatives, and see immediate changes in her practice.

She became more intentional in how she communicated — using clearer language, slowing down, adapting activities for neurodiverse young people, and checking in more regularly to make sure everyone felt safe and included. The programme also strengthened her boundaries and her confidence when working with parents, professionals and young people.

For Michelle, it wasn't just the content but the way it was delivered: collaboratively, reflectively and with real-time practice, that enabled these shifts.



Shared learning: conflict as a tool for growth

Both Clara and Michelle described a shift in how they understand conflict. Rather than viewing it as something to avoid, they began to see it as a normal and often useful part of life.

Group activities, reflective dialogue and opportunities to practise the tools helped them recognise that when handled safely and with curiosity, conflict can:

- deepen selfawareness
- build empathy
- strengthen relationships
- support clearer communication
- create more equitable group dynamics

Their stories show that when young people and adults learn these skills side by side:

- young people grow in confidence and agency
- adults become more adaptable and reflective
- communication becomes more honest and grounded
- boundaries become clearer and healthier
- participation becomes more genuine and rooted in real relationships

What this means for those working with young people

These journeys highlight the impact of combining practical tools, reflective practice and opportunities for realworld application. When youth workers and young people learn together in this way, they develop shared language, stronger relationships and greater capacity to navigate challenging moments.

Embedding these approaches into everyday youth work, education and community practice can create environments where young people feel heard, supported and better able to handle conflict, and where adults feel more confident, intentional and responsive.