



Raid the doom and gloom since the tragic event of 7/7 in London. Awaaz exclusively focuses on one excellent youth project in Kirklees which is channelling its energy in positive directions.

The Pakistani Youth Forum based in Crosland Moor, Huddersfield works with young people between the ages of 13-19. Since the 7/7 events in London the Forum has been trying to challenge the impact the disaster has had on Pakistani young people living in this country. The project is managed by the Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance through a service level agreement with KMC's Young People's Service. The Youth Forum aims to give young people access to recreational sports as well as encouraging their social and educational development. Project co-ordinator Sofia Buncy told Awaaz: "Youth Forums play an important

role in allowing young people to have a voice to discuss issues and concerns relating to them and their area."

Since the 7/7 atrocities there has been a particular concern around how young people, especially Pakistani young people, would be affected by the tragedy. According to Sofia, since the event her members have had many open debates, where they have identified what happened and recognised its psychological, social and political implications.

Sofia explained how some young people found it easy to express their thoughts about the events while equally others were not so vocally inclined or able. For them the Forum took the opportunity to carry out some partnership work with the Arts based organisation 'Creative Keys'. Young people came up with the idea of carrying

out a graffiti project affecting young Pakistani people. Graffiti artists Daniel Boyes and Matt Hards helped young people to look back in retrospect at the 7/7 events as well as at the initial 9/11 events to piece together a political picture of related causes.

Other young people decided to concentrate on stereotypes of British Pakistanis, taking a step back and putting themselves in the shoes of others to put together an artistic collage. Sofia explained: "The graffiti project was an engaging activity for young people to express issues and concerns. These may otherwise have been pent up and released in a negative way. The project also gave young people the rare opportunity to creatively involve and realise the importance and impact of politics, an arena that most young people dislodge themselves from."

Changing attitudes towards Asian girls



Young girls from the Pakistani Youth Forum have just returned from their annual residential to the Lake District. The 'girls only' group has been running every Wednesday since September 2003 and is based in Crosland Moor, Huddersfield.

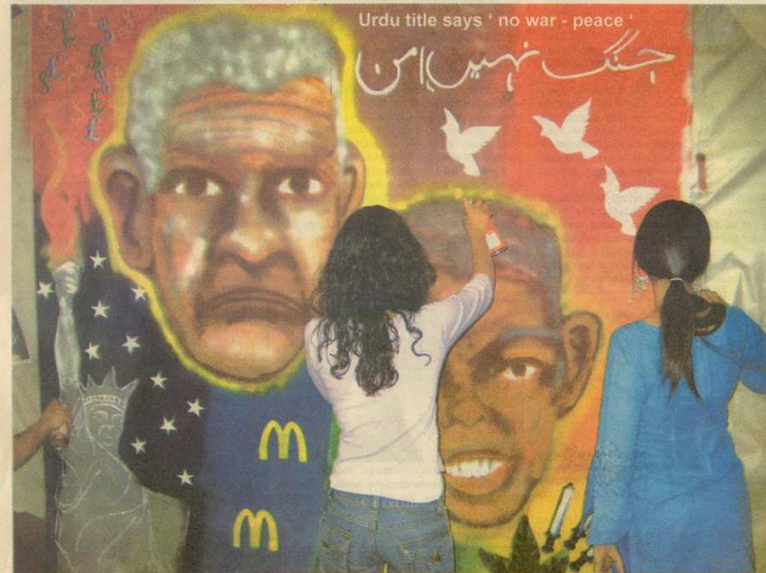
The aim of the group is to help young women between the ages of 13-19 in all aspects of their life including recreational and social activities as well as education and employment. Project co-ordinator Sofia Buncy told Awaaz: "The group has been a great success in the community and has helped to change attitudes towards young Pakistani women accessing youth provision."

Sofia said the reason for this is because of the cultural and religiously sensitive nature of the group as it is a 'girls only' environment. This allows both the young women and their parents to feel comfortable and safe about the provision.

Summer is the busiest time of year for the Youth Forum and this year has been no exception. The group has been involved in numerous projects such as a graffiti art project, which focussed on politics and stereotypes, an allotment project, which emphasised healthy living and numerous day trips. Among these activities the girls group successfully managed to plan for their summer residential to the Lake District. The residential funded by Voluntary Action Kirklees' community chest initiative.

However Sofia recalls that carrying out a 'female only' residential has not always been easy. "This was our first attempt at carrying out a girls' only residential, a concept which is unheard of in the Pakistani community. It was regarded as a taboo area and in all honesty it was a difficult task breaking down barriers and persuading parents to allow their daughters on the residential," she explained.

After having satisfied the parents' queries and concerns from last year's trip, Sofia found herself oversubscribed for this year's residential. She commented that it was satisfying to see a positive change had taken place in the community. "This just shows that the Pakistani community is happily willing to work alongside mainstream youth provision as long as they feel the provision caters for their cultural and religious needs," she said.



Have your say

Bradford Council has recently launched a website highlighting the work of its Young People's Scrutiny Commission, a forum made up of young people and local councillors. Young people in Bradford have been involved in improving services across the district.

Young commissioners analyse ways of improving services for young people and will soon be examining transport as an issue. They can make their suggestions and raise concerns via the message boards at www.youthunite.com. The site also features a help and advice zone, information about what is going on in the district and details of a study into bullying in the city's schools.

Councillor Andrew Thornton, commission chairman, said: "The content and style of the site has been directed by the young people on the commission and they have done a fantastic job."

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