

Healing The Cracks

[Hina Rana](#) explores the initiatives that aim to get young people out of gangs and into enterprise

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Image: Pexels

Warnings about gang culture and violence were especially prevalent during secondary school. I remember sitting through workshops about knife crime and peer pressure, listening to ex-gang member Paul Hannaford discuss drug awareness and the drastic impact it can have on young, impressionable lives. According to the Home Office, gang members carry out half of all shootings in the capital and 22 per cent of all serious violence. With this being an extremely high figure, companies, charities and schools across the country have been attempting to pinpoint the way gang culture has an effect on both the young people in them, and those likely to join them.

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New social enterprise *Cracked It* does exactly this, attempting to help make a difference in the lives of young people aged 16 to 24 who may be at risk of joining a gang, by training them to fix smartphone screens. Based in Central London, *Cracked It* run clinics and enterprise programmes where young at-risk people learn to repair three iPhone models and how to market their talents in an intensive five days of training. On an average day in the company, their technicians claim to conduct screen repairs in under 60 minutes, even running regular pop up clinics at workplaces in the local area. All that is required is to fill in

details about the cracked phone screen on a form on their website and an estimate will be received within 24 hours of posting the form. The aim behind *Cracked It* is shown as a means “to illuminate enterprise as a credible alternative to gang life”. They have tried to achieve this by giving young people access to the alluring elements that may have given them an incentive to turn to gangs. These include self-worth, a sense of belonging, and gaining a source of income, all of which are harnessed into the company’s curriculum in a positive manner.



Image: Pixabay

CEO and founder of the company, Josh Babarinde, has a large background in politics where, prior to making *Cracked It*, he campaigned and rallied for issues that he wanted to see a change in. Studying Politics at university, Babarinde found the course too ‘theoretical’ for his liking and wanted to focus on aspects that would make a difference in and around the community. These have involved a number of projects from parliamentary work, including lobbying the Home Secretary to clarify and review visa regulations for foreign students studying English in the UK, to shadowing his parliamentary mentor, the Rt. Hon. Norman Lamb MP, and speaking about the importance of diversity in public life. Babarinde then came up with the concept behind *Cracked It* after working in a placement with young at-risk people who didn’t feel like they were valued, or wanted to earn a wage that they were happy with.

Cracked It have received a large number of positive reviews from members of the public who have asked for their services following a damaged iPhone screen. Ellen Goodman on Twitter praised the company, saying that it has “amazing service & great value - would recommend to anyone who is as clumsy as me”. Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, also congratulated the company on its achievements after visiting and being taught how to repair an iPhone 6 by one of the trainees. He said that he “thought it was very impressive. These are young people who have come together in a positive way in a positive atmosphere. It is much better than being ignored and ending up with negative ideas and negative attitudes. Well done *Cracked It*.”



Image: Flickr - Paul Townsend

All in all, while gang culture and gang violence are not as prominent an issue in York compared to London and other large cities, similar programmes to enable young people to get into education, employment and away from crime should be made. Following the murder of seven-year old girl Katie Rough and the arrest

of a 15-year old after her death in the Woodthorpe area of the city on 9 January, it seems as if much more should be done to keep young people safe and more aware of alternative options which can keep them occupied. Here's to hoping new companies such as *Cracked It* can expand across the nation. In the meantime, the University of York host higher education events through the Student Ambassador scheme in which secondary school students receive workshops and apprenticeships. As well as this, companies such as *2020 Dreams* offer valuable educational programs to youngsters on a range of matters including gang, gun and knife crime, drugs and alcohol workshops across the United Kingdom. **M**

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