

YMCA 175

Oral Histories and Stories

Story teller Mario Gabor

Subject Personal Reflection

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Interview with Mario Gabor, YMCA Rotherham, Apprentice Youth Worker and former service user.

Int: Continuing the interview now with Mario. So Mario, could you explain to us why you initially started coming to the centre as a young person?

M: So, obviously when I moved here 13 years ago I didn't know anybody, I had a few friends, but them friends that I had used to come here from my place, so I've heard its quite good place, with a pool table, everything's for free. It's like right good - so I started coming, and obviously first session I really enjoyed it and the youth workers are really nice, kind, enthusiastic, so I regularly came and I really enjoyed it. And I started doing, when I was 16, so when I started until I was 16 I used to come here every day and started volunteering because I really enjoyed it and obviously, some youth workers like Nick and Levi were like my inspiration to be a youth worker, also Tom Haywood was really enthusiastic, which I was quite arty as well so I was into art, so they all made me think I could be a youth worker, so then obviously this course came up which was Youth Work, Introduction to Youth Work course level one and level two so I started doing that, and got a level two Introduction to Youth Work, then there's a - then I waited for an apprenticeship which was quite a long time, because I needed to do volunteering for quite a few months, placement then it finally came then I applied for it, and I got it - the apprenticeship - and till now it's right got. I'm learning new things, learning how to be a youth worker, skills that I never knew also, I'm just learning a lot of things, that I never knew I could learn in the YMCA.

Int: Fantastic, so, while being part of the YMCA, what changes have you seen, and have you contributed to them at all?

M: So first when I came here there weren't a lot of young people obviously, and because it think it just started, but from there to now, there lot of young people who come here really enjoy coming here, and there's a reason why they obviously come here because the youth workers are really kind, nice, they do activities, things like that, so I think it's a really big change and also the young people that started to now still come because they know that the youth workers are going to provide the same things that they provided last time. But now the young people are 16 or 17 which, we do a group, which every week discos, trips, which is really good also, so I think overall YMCA has changed here in Rotherham like right changed, because it used to be little now it's a big thing, because a lot of young people come. Youth workers are right good, everything changed.

Int: Do you feel like we give you responsibility as well, and give you control over how you run your own centre? So we give you opportunities to suggest ideas and, you know, create your own activities?

M: So, yeah, obviously I plan activities for the young people especially juniors so it takes me quite a few weeks to plan so I think it's a big responsibility for me, because I've never done it, so overall yeah. Also, I do activities, so I plan it quite long, it's not just a little thing, and yeah!

Int: So, as regards to YMCA and working here, or not even working so attending the centre, what's one of your earlier memories? Would you say the Treebo Gobo event? Or...

M: So, when I started coming I was like - in two years now - Treebo Gobo came up, that was quite memorable because that was the first time I acted in-front of an audience so

that was quite memorable. Also like the trips that we went on, like Scarborough, that was quite memorable as well. There's a lot of things that I remember that were really good, so I can't just choose one, they are all good.

Int: What do you think it is to be a part of the YMCA? As regards the overarching theme of the YMCA is to provide and support people, irrespective of their background, do you think the centre provides that and do you think as someone who, as you say you came to this country 13 years ago, do you think it's helped you integrate, feel comfortable and do you think its provided any, kind of, if the centre wasn't here, do you think it would have been more difficult for you? Or easier for you, or...

M: So, when I started obviously coming here I was a bit like - I'm lonely because I didn't know how to speak English, I had no much friends, didn't go outside, always home, so I'd come in here and met a lot of friends so from that I've built up my confidence because of the youth workers and I feel like the youth workers provide the things that they should, so like me when I started coming I was a bit down, but now it's like all the way because of them. So I've got a lot of friends, know everybody, go and play football, come here, chat with them, play music, it's a big thing now for me, so I think overall for me this building provides - so like - confidence in young people, aspirations, inspirations, skills, help, just normal daily help - so like we have daily drop-ins which people come here to do CVs things like that which make helped do my CV through college work, school work, homework, when I used to come in here to do homework for drop-ins, which used to help me. So I think the centre provides the things they should.

Int: Oh brilliant!

M: And they're quite good at it as well.

Int: What do you believe, as regards, not only your future with the YMCA and what you hoped to accomplish in the future and where you hope to develop, but also the YMCA as a whole? Do you think it's a growing business, do you think its evolving and changing, it's shaping lives in different ways these days? And what do you hope to kind of do...

M: I think YMCA is a growing thing, it's quite big of a think now YMCA, and I think it will be a lot bigger for young people especially, so I think it's going to get quite big hopefully, and obviously it changes a lot of lives, young people's mental health, people used to come here with mental health and youth workers help them, loneliness, no friends, youth workers are helping with a lot. So I think if it grows, which I think it will in my opinion, it will help a massive a lot of people, which is a good thing. So I think it will potentially grow more than this.

Int: What do you think as regards the specific communities as well that have utilised this centre in-particular, MyPlace centre, in St-Annes. Do you think that's evolving as well, it's changing its shaping, because originally as you say it was primarily the local community but we've got young people coming now from further-a-field, do you think that's a good thing as regards to integration and getting people who may not have instinctively interacted, to form friendships and work together, and learn things?

M: So we had a lot of young people just recently move-in that are Muslims, from Africa, Chinese, and obviously British, let's say three years ago it were just the local young people, so Roma people, a few English, white British, which they didn't last that much, but now I think the young people got right together so we had a lot of young people coming from different areas, now they interact and I think that right big thing for

us, from other local communities they are coming in, see what we do, see what we do for the local areas, so it's not always about the local young people, it's about all the young people. So I think it's a big thing for us that they interact, they are confident to interact with other communities, come together. So recently I did a little-pick and I got young people locally from here and other communities and they interacted together and I showed them that it's not always about throwing litter on the floor, and just leaving it there, you have to clean after your community and after yourself, and they are - I think that they've got it - also the people from the other communities they were like 'oh I'll come here now, because I've cleaned this place' so they feel confident coming here because it's not dangerous, so I think it's a big thing, and the people interact with other people.

Int: Outside of the centre, and in the community, and also young people who have, you know, they are still part of the community but they are adults now, and they've got their own lives and they've left and they've moved and they live elsewhere and have families. Do you think that the work that we've done over the years here has influenced that, do you think its shaped and changed interactions outside of the centre? Do you feel like the communities, are a bit more confident, and less secular, less fearful reprisal and stuff and do you feel like the communities have a place to voice their concerns and they can obviously, especially the young people, they can obviously attend the centre, and should any issues arise outside and within the rest of Rotherham, school and the likes, voice their concerns and hopefully get them dealt with?

M: Yeah, I feel like when, well when I used to come here first, if I was having concerns in my family or school, or just outside with my friends, I just come here and say it, because I felt confidently in the youth workers that they could help me. And obviously they helped me through a lot, so I went to Clifftown, and I had some trouble there, and I told the youth workers and they helped me through it, told me how to deal with it, so I dealt with it and I got my GCSEs, so I think that was a big thing for me. And also I think the young people here are quite confident to just say something to the youth workers, issues, especially with schools now, it's quite a big thing. I think, anybody, any young person feel confident, saying, even me and you as a youth worker, Leah, Nick, Levi, Vick, Suz, I think they're alright me saying I feel comfortable talking to us.

Int: As regards with interaction with other services that are in Rotherham, how do you think the YMCA interacts and has interacted over the years? So obviously we've worked with the RnB scene, and we've worked with schools to varying degrees and the likes, do you think there's still more opportunities in the future to do this sort of work? And do you think, do you have any ideas as regards to this sort of work?

M: Well, I think there is a lot of opportunities to interact with organisations... yeah, so I think in the future it will still be a good thing if we interact with other organisations because then we get more young people in, we work with them in a community also, as young people if they are coming here from other local areas, we can explain to them 'oh you can come here' this and that, this and that, which means we get, explain to their friends, 'oh, this is a great place, and we get a lot of young people, and then lets say - donating, that's a quite big thing, so like we get quite a lot of homeless people here asking for clothes, things like that so, other organisations come here to donate, and food we donate a lot to other organisations... and yeah, it's a big thing if we interact with other organisations.

Int: So actually, on the topic of organisations, seeing as it seems to be quite an interesting buzzword with ya, would you say, obviously English isn't your first language, is it?

M: Yeah.

Int: So would you say, interacting with people here has also shaped your ability to speak the language, and local dialect as well, which obviously you've shown interest in over the years? You know, 'tin tin' and the likes? And a lot of Yorkshire vocabulary... do you feel more confident in your speaking, so would you feel more confident now speaking English to a member of public for example, say you were going into a shop and buying something.

M: Yeah, obviously, yeah, I feel more confident speaking English now. Throughout the years, youth workers here have helped me speak English, they learn, they have taught me how to speak Yorkshire ways, that's helpful I know how to speak it now, and obviously if I went in public - in a shop - or just speaking to a public member - I would feel confident, yeah. It's a normal thing for me now.

Int: Could you tell us a bit about some of the, well you ran a language lesson at one point for ht workers here, how do you feel that went?

M: Well that, I planned it a lot. It was quite a big thing for me as well, because that's the first thing that I, that's the first time I did it, like presented other languages to youth workers, so that was quite really good - it was funny - because a lot of youth workers all white British, so I think it were quite funny, because when I said a work in Slovakian, or Czech, they said it back and it was quite funny. So, yeah I think it went really well, because for me, I planned it a lot, it went really well, youth workers learnt a lot of Slovakian words, Czech words, so they could use it their work area so I think it went really well - yeah!

Int: Fantastic, is there anything else you would like to add to the interview before we finish? You can take your time... no? Okay, well thank you very much for your time, it's been a wonderful interview, it's been fascinating, hearing your insights, I'll round up the interview now then!

M: Thank you.

Int: so this is the 16th of the 11th 2019, MyPlace YMCA, Rotherham, interview with Mario Gabor, finishing.