



Active Successful Engagement (ASÉ) CIC: Transforming Lives Through the Power of Lived Experience

An extended feature based on an original interview and article by Kate Duggan for Hammersmith United Charities, adapted and expanded by Pauline Zepherin, Active Successful Engagement (ASÉ) CIC.

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Active Successful Engagement (ASÉ)

ASÉ is about recognising, respecting and valuing each person's unique journey. We understand the importance of lived experience and the profound impact that trauma, disadvantage and inequality can have on an individual, their family and their community.

Our work is rooted in **inclusivity, equity and diversity**. We believe that every person should have the opportunity to be heard, valued and supported, regardless of their background, identity, circumstances or life experiences. We recognise that people do not all start from the same place, and therefore meaningful support must be responsive to individual needs, removing barriers and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.

We work with people as individuals, listening to their stories without judgement and recognising the strengths, knowledge, experiences and resilience they already possess. We understand that lived experience is not a deficit; it is a source of knowledge, insight and strength. We walk alongside each person, offering guidance, encouragement and support as they build on their strengths, identify areas for growth and develop the confidence to shape their own future.

We also recognise the importance of **community**. Positive change does not happen in isolation. When individuals feel connected, valued and empowered, they are better able to contribute to their families, relationships and wider communities. By creating spaces where people can learn from one another, share experiences and celebrate difference, we help to strengthen communities and create a sense of belonging.

At ASÉ, we believe in **planting seeds for change**. Sometimes change begins with a conversation, a moment of being heard, a new perspective or someone believing in you when you may not yet believe in yourself. Our role is to nurture those seeds, creating the conditions for confidence, resilience, aspiration and positive change to grow.

At the heart of our approach is a simple but powerful message:

You are amazing. Your lived experience is one of the most valuable qualifications you have. You are the expert in your own life.

Our role is not to lead your journey, but to **travel alongside you** – helping you recognise, develop and use the tools, knowledge and skills you already have, while supporting you to discover new ones.

We believe that when people are empowered to recognise their own worth, understand their experiences and see their possibilities, they can become catalysts for change - not only in their own lives, but within their families and communities.

We walk alongside. We nurture potential. We plant seeds for change.

Pauline Zepherin is Director of Business Development and Communications at **Active Successful Engagement (ASÉ) CIC**. ASÉ is a team of **Holistic Transformation & Resilience Mentors** who use holistic mentoring to help people heal, build resilience and transform their lives.

The organisation delivers a wide range of services in Hammersmith & Fulham, including:

i-MATTER: Connections

Pauline explains:

“We deliver mentoring to young people aged 11-18 years old, and up to 25 for those with SEND, who may be experiencing mental health challenges or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), are not engaging with education, or are at risk of exclusion or exploitation.

“Many of our young people have gone through personal trauma. It could be domestic violence at home or bereavement. They may be at risk of, or experiencing, grooming or sexual exploitation, or be at risk of becoming involved in youth crime. Some of our mentees have also been care leavers.

“Many of the young people we support present as disengaged. They may feel that they’re not being heard within their family, friendship group or at school. By building trust, we can help them get back onto a stronger pathway, re-engage with their education, see a positive future and decide that today they want to be here. It’s about empowering them to have hope so they can move forward confidently and positively transform their lives.”

As one pupil shares:

“I used to feel really alone, but now I have a mentor who listens to me and helps me with my problems.”

ASÉ also engages with parents and carers, including those who are working with Children’s Services.

Pauline shares:

“We have delivered many programmes designed to support those who may have experienced substance/alcohol misuse or domestic violence. Some parents and carers may have mental health challenges, a long-term illness or disabilities, they could be facing challenges because of their own trauma and childhood experiences.”

“We recognise that, often, if people didn’t receive the appropriate early intervention needed in their childhood, their trauma and life challenges can continue to impact them into adulthood.”

“We recognise people may not engage with statutory services because of previous negative experiences. In our experience, they’ve lost trust, they may fear their children will be taken away, or they’re simply too frightened and don’t have the capacity. However, we’re deeply rooted within the community, and we continue to build trust and empower families by providing advocacy, guidance, advice and signposting.”

i-MATTER: Voices of Strength

This powerful and important programme helps participants better understand the different forms of domestic abuse.

Pauline says:

“It’s about reflection and learning, recognising coercive behaviour and really understanding the journey that one has been through with domestic violence, why it happened, and how to come out of that process stronger.”

Support is delivered through a free 13-week **Freedom Programme**. As a rolling programme, women have the opportunity to join at different stages.

Pauline explains:

“This creates a group, a sisterhood, where individuals who have gone through the programme and their own healing journey can embrace new members who are just starting their journey of empowerment and strength.

“It also creates a ripple effect. Group members talk about the programme and share what they’ve learned about recognising a dominator and coercive behaviours within their community.

“We’ve had individuals who suddenly realise, ‘My daughter, my friend or brother is experiencing coercive behaviour. My loved one is in a coercive relationship. They need this information.’”

ASÉ also has plans to expand **i-MATTER: Voices of Strength** into secondary schools, helping young people understand what a healthy relationship looks like and how to recognise coercive and controlling behaviour.

i-MATTER: Health & Wellbeing & Tackling Inequalities

ASÉ works with families who face cultural, social and systemic barriers to healthcare and wellbeing.

ASÉ supported the recent **H&F Active Wellbeing Festival**, which was attended by in excess of 550 people. As well as promoting the **Advocates for Change** programme, ASÉ organised with NHS and Imperial College partners to attend and conduct health screenings for attendees, including BMI, blood glucose, hepatitis B and C testing, and liver health checks.

Pauline says:

“The focus is on building trust and tackling inequalities, improving health and strengthening the community by helping people engage with the services that are available.” In 2025 ASÉ lead on the H&F Building Trust Initiative in identifying key health priorities for the black community in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Recognising that transport can be a barrier to participation for many people, free coach transport was provided for **69 people travelling from White City and Old Oak**. Free food was also organised for people

attending the event, helping to remove another potential barrier to participation and enabling residents to enjoy the day together.

Parent & Carer Champions Network (PCCN)

ASÉ developed the H&F PCCN model and trains volunteer **Parent & Carer Champions** to provide peer-to-peer support within the community.

Funded by MOPAC between 2020 and 2025 this programme was cited as Best Practice by MOPAC and is featured in the end of programme evaluation report.

As an early intervention and prevention programme, PCCN also raises awareness about risks such as County Lines, youth crime and exploitation. In addition, guidance around school exclusion and education, while helping parents and carers build the knowledge, skills and confidence to support their children. The programme also empowers families to seek and connect with specialist services available within the borough. ASÉ worked closely with the **Youth Engagement Team (Metropolitan Police)** to create programmes for both children, young people and Parents/ Carers.

The PCCN programme is currently funded by Public Health in Hammersmith and Fulham. This funding comes to an end in March 2027.

Pauline says:

“We’re going to build on the success of our original PCCN model. We have developed the **i-MATTER: Advocates for Change programme**, which is part-funded by **Hammersmith United Charities**. ASÉ is one of its Flexible Three-Year Grant holders, receiving £15,000 a year for three years.

Pauline says of the grant:

“The level of flexibility with the funding is brilliant. The three-year period really does help - it gives us a sense of security and enables us to plan. In addition, we’re so fortunate to be working with such knowledgeable, experienced and innovative Funders who overstand the vision”. Our Advocates are not just going to be parents and carers. They’re going to be uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, neighbours, professionals - anyone who wants to join us and make a difference in the community. The sky’s the limit!”

The programme is about building on people's existing strengths, lived experience and supporting their personal development and empowering them to pursue their passion for making a difference.

Pauline explains:

"We'll teach an introduction to holistic mentoring skills, including effective communication and active listening, understanding body language and building trust. In addition, Safeguarding practices and procedures. We want to empower Advocates to confidently go out into the community and effect real change.

"It's about showing people, 'You're amazing. You're valued and respected. Your lived experience is priceless. You're the expert. ASÉ is merely helping you to sharpen your tools."

i-MATTER: Advocates for Change

Get involved

If you're interested in becoming an **Advocate for Change** in your community, contact ASÉ on **020 3143 0209** or info@asecic.org.uk, or visit **ASÉ's website** for more information.

Social media

Advocates for Change

"It's about showing people, 'You're amazing. You've got lived experience. You're the expert. We're just giving you the tools so you can use those skills."

Head to our website to find out how ASÉ is training **Advocates for Change** in Hammersmith & Fulham.

i-MATTER: Voices of Strength

ASÉ's free 13-week **Freedom Programme** helps people better understand domestic abuse, including coercive control, the effect DA can have on children and supports them to move forward with their lives.

You can read a case study about the ASÉ on our website.

i-MATTER: Connections

ASÉ works with children and young people who may not be engaging with education and who are at risk of exclusion or exploitation. The programme focusses on personal development and empowers the young person to develop healthy relationships and to achieve their full potential.

Pauline Zepherin shares:

“It’s about building trust and getting our mentees back onto a stronger pathway, to re-engage with their education, have hope about their future prospects and transform their lives.”

You can find out more about ASÉ’s work on our website:

<https://www.asecic.org.uk/>