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Hands-on: How we got to grips with better health and community spirit

The efforts of NHS staff and members of the community to improve care in Derby have been recognised at the fifth annual Celebrating Success ceremony, run by the city's health trust. Six awards were handed out for achievements ranging from helping vulnerable teenage girls to preventing falls among the elderly. **Kate Liptrot** meets some of the winners.

WHEN millionaire Kavita Oberoi lent her support to a community project for young girls on national television, she inspired a team of health and social care staff in Derby.

As part of her role in the show *The Secret Millionaire*, Derby businesswoman Kavita volunteered her time and money to a project called *Sisters with Voices*.

It originally aimed to boost the self-esteem of teenage girls in Birmingham but captured the imagination of health workers in Derby and has now been rolled out here.

Senior nursery nurse Kelly Potts, of the Osleston and Allenton SureStart Children's Centre, watched the show and decided it would benefit local youngsters.

She and a team of healthcare staff met

with Kavita and put plans into place to launch the scheme for 10 girls aged 13 to 17 in Derby.

Their efforts have now been rewarded at NHS Derby City's annual Celebrating Success ceremony.

They received the Partnership Award for their teamwork on Derby's *Sisters With Voices* project.

Among them was Lindsay Difusco, of the children's centre, who said the scheme was aimed at girls who were experiencing issues such as skipping

school, having difficulty making friends, or were thought to be at risk of falling pregnant.

She said: "The girls really enjoyed having the support of the group and learning from each other."

They were put forward for the eight-week course after coming into contact with social services, health workers or staff at the centre.

Bethany Lamb was one of the girls in the project's first group, funded by SureStart, and said it boosted her confidence.

The 16-year-old, of Derby, said: "I learned things and got to know people that I wouldn't have thought I'd get along with."

"It was mind-blowing. It touched me. I was really nervous at first but after about three weeks I was really into it."

She was given the chance to take part in dance classes and has continued taking lessons.

She hopes to volunteer when a second group of girls take part in the project later this year.

One particularly successful part of the course was a weekend during which the girls took home lifelike baby dolls, to educate them on the realities of being a teenage mum.

Bethany said: "It was scary at first but once you got into it, it was all right."

"I did what I'd normally do at the weekend but I took it with me and a few people were looking at me. It cried a lot, which was a bit stressful."



The "babies" had a computer chip in them which monitored whether they had been properly "fed" and looked after.

Lindsay said: "The girls all found it very hard and stressful but they all did really well."

She said that although there had not been any formal follow-up work to assess the impact of the course on the girls, it had clearly made a difference.

"One of the girls is back in full-time education," she said.

I can't believe the impact it's had on those girls - it's just brilliant

KAVITA OBEROI

"Some have said they would like to volunteer during the next course, which is really positive."

Kavita, who lives in Hazelwood and owns IT firm Oberoi Consulting, in Pride Park, said she was delighted the project had won an award.

She said: "I can't believe the impact it's had on those girls - it's brilliant."

There are plans to run another course later this year.



INSPIRED: Kavita Oberoi sparked ideas.

