

## **The Street Weapon's Commission**

**Jim Rushe**

**Fay Selvan**

Hello, Jim Rushe from Right On Track. Jim, would you like to tell us a bit about what Right on Track does?

**Jim Rushe**

Right on Track's a project, a multi vehicle project based in East Manchester. Been in operation since 1999 as a karting circuit and been involved in education since 2003, running a project that's for young people at risk of offending or having offended or not attending school, introducing them back into education through the use of the go-karts and go-kart maintenance.

Basically I think you could say we use the karts as a carrot and we sneak up on them with the education.

**Fay Selvan**

So why are you doing that? You're a successful business man, why have you turned your hand to this?

**Jim Rushe**

I was, I'm from that area, I'm originally from Gorton in Manchester, wanted to put something back. We had a day time provision that was virtually unused because people with the money to go and use it, a karting circuit, you have to have a disposable income to do that. They'd have to be working. So your karting track like a lot of other businesses that could do the same, are virtually unused during the day time. So we used it to occupy the premises and to generate an income, but also to put something back into the community for the young people.

**Fay Selvan**

And have you made a difference?

**Jim Rushe**

I like to think so. We've got, we're now a recognised PRU with a pupil referral unit with 15 students on one full time course and 30 other students on part time courses throughout the day, each day. We get a great rating in the GCSE.

**Fay Selvan**

So students who come to you are excluded from school are they? And you put them through their GCSEs?

**Jim Rushe**

Yeah. They have to attend five days a week. They get one day's karting during that five. They get one karting session and that's behavioural improvement based meaning that they have to attend all week first of all. And they also have to achieve something and the karting's the bonus for achieving.

**Fay Selvan**

So why do you succeed when maybe the schools haven't?

**Jim Rushe**

It's a different environment –

INTERRUPTION DUE TO SIREN IN BACKGROUND

**Fay Selvan**

So why do you succeed when maybe the schools haven't?

**Jim Rushe**

It's a different environment entirely to a school environment. It's probably a more relaxed, more concentrated environment, able to deal with smaller groups of young people. And also mainstream school probably isn't for everybody any more, just like in a lot of other walks of life, people don't want the same thing that they used to want. So mainstream school has virtually stayed the same for a large number of years but young people have changed. So they don't want to go to mainstream school and we offer something alternative.

**Fay Selvan**

Are your young people difficult?

**Jim Rushe**

Yeah, because they've been excluded from school, so we would be dealing with the hardest to reach young people. We don't get young people – ours is not on offer to every young person unfortunately, I wish there was places for everybody but there's not. So we're dealing with the people once they've been excluded from two or three schools already. So, yeah, they are hard to reach but they are reachable with the right work.

**Fay Selvan**

Who would like to ask a question? Gus?

**Gus**

Do you only deal with excluded students or do you deal with truants as well?

**Jim Rushe**

We deal with truants, people who are, they come on the part time courses. They still stay attached to their particular school that they're on roll with and they come to us for enrichment and they come to us as part educational. Our

vocational courses take care of young people that are more practical than academic.

**Gus**

And how many of the excluded students do you reintegrate into their schools? Or is that not the objective?

**Jim Rushe**

No, that's the objective. We work closely with the schools and they might do three days with us and two days at the school, or they might do four days with the school and only one day with us, depending on the young person and that young person's needs and what the school in particular advises for that young person. But it's all about the individual and working with them and seeing what their needs are, and we increase or decrease it. If somebody's coming to us for four days and then they can gradually get back into mainstream school, we can reduce that down to three or two or so on and so forth, or they don't come to us at all for a while and go back into mainstream education.

**Gus**

And how would what you do now be affected by the Government's new diploma?

**Jim Rushe**

I'm not sure about that. I'm not qualified to answer that really. I don't know how it's gonna affect us. We've been doing what we've been doing successfully since 2003. How we'll fit in with the Government's new diploma plans and everything I'm not quite sure yet. We need to have a look at that and just see how that goes.

**Mark**

Can you just give us like a sort of typical view and backgrounds of like the people you work with and how they get into trouble?

**Jim Rushe**

Lots of different ways really. As I say they're already, they're usually having had some experience with the justice system or with the police by the time they come to our project. 90% of them will have been in some sort of minor criminal or even more serious -

**Mark**

Sorry, are they referred to you?

**Jim Rushe**

Yeah, they're referred to us by schools. We've worked with the ISSP in Trafford quite closely. We've worked -

**Fay Selvan**

What's ISSP?

**Jim Rushe**

Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme, Sue Walker at Trafford Borough, we work with them quite closely and they have a provision to provide 25 hours of education a week which we deliver for them on their behalf. We also work very closely with MAGS, Manchester Against Guns, and Mr Hurley and his organisation and bringing young people in that have been referred, or siblings of gang members to come to us to try and prevent them from going down that slippery slope.

**Mark**

So do you provide, so you've got the teachers delivering the sort of academic

curriculum and then in the afternoon it'll be sort of mechanics or people who work with go-karts. Are there any other provision there to work more intensely with young people?

**Jim Rushe**

In terms of sign posting them to other -

**Mark**

Yeah, more of emotional development sort of work.

**Jim Rushe**

Yeah, we have all PHSE, we have personal development, we have all sorts of people coming in and doing different types of courses and delivering different course to the young people all the time. It's all about keeping it fresh and keeping it interesting for those young people, because they fell out with mainstream school because probably a lot of them get bored with it or don't agree with it. So we try and keep it as fresh as we can possibly keep it, but keep a consistency there all the time and keep the same barriers and boundaries there for the young people to work within.

**Gus**

And what's the ethnic break down of the people you work with?

**Jim Rushe**

It's, there isn't one. We work totally across the board. The whole project started just after the riots in Oldham and we work specifically with Asian young people and with white males and females to reintegrate them, to get them to work together in Oldham. That was the first course we did. It was with those people. So it's – our most famous young person recently, our infamous young person, it is unfortunate, was young Lewis Braithwaite who

got shot in Manchester recently, and we was trying very hard. Our difficulty is it's when they come to 16 and they come off the end of our conveyor belt. We don't have a system for getting those young people into full time employment. We're trying very hard at the moment in terms of offering companies free karting sessions for their employees in return for giving young people a chance of work. We're prepared to give them free time for their staff on our kart track if they're prepared to take young people and give them a chance, without the formal interview. I'm not asking for special circumstances for them but in another sense they are a little bit special circumstances cos some of them have been out of the school environment for two or three years, you know. And they come back -

**Fay Selvan**

So what worked for Lewis and what failed him?

**Jim Rushe**

What worked for Lewis was he attended and he had a 97% attendance rate at our project when he hadn't attended school at all over a two year period, year 10 and 11. We gave him part time work but as I explained before our work for young people is in the evenings. We can give them work marshalling on the track but that's the only work we have for them and then we try and find them employment in local garages or any business really that will take them, retail, anywhere. And we work very hard with them. We hadn't had a great deal of success in locating Lewis some work but we were still trying and he was still a visitor to the project even though he'd finished on the course. And unfortunately Lewis was in a bookie's shop in Manchester and was shot in what's believed to be a gang related crime.

**Ian**

Hi Jim. Just a few questions here. The teachers that teach on the project,

the GCSE part of it, are they the same teachers from the schools?

**Jim Rushe**

No, they're different teachers. We don't, we second them from Manchester Education Committee or from agencies that have teachers on their books. We don't use the school teachers that they're connected with all the time.

**Ian**

Because young people for whatever reason, if the teacher before the class is not the sort of person that is going to motivate and inspire them then we could have a repetition of that. But aren't you in fear that your project might be so successful that when you try to reintegrate them into schools they come back to you again?

**Jim Rushe**

Treats for naught boys you mean? Well we've been accused of that in the past. You know, we've had headlines in the paper for treats. We never believe in that. It doesn't happen like that with the young people because part of the learning process is to learn them and to reintegrate them into the schools because we're telling them that although the teacher, you know, with a bigger class size doesn't have the time to spend on them. There is no, the teacher doesn't have an agenda to pick them out or single them out. It's just the system that doesn't work in that way. And when we send them back into schools we tend to find that they've got a little bit more respect for the teacher and for what the teacher's trying to do.

**Ian**

There is just one thing about you, their progression to an NVQ2, I'm just curious as to how that works.

**Jim Rushe**

In terms of their vocational side?

**Ian**

Yes, because I know a lot of the assessment has to be done in the work place and you say you've got problems allocating them into work.

**Jim Rushe**

We have a garage of our own that we send the young people to and they're assessed there working. They progress right through from a small go-kart right up to an ambulance or a bus. We've done, we've sent ambulances to third world countries that the young people have worked on. We sent 30 people to Cuba to follow one of those ambulances and buses in 2004 on a ten day trip, and that's when we got the headlines of treats for naughty kids. So no matter how hard you work at it and what you manage to achieve, we had to, you know, to fight tooth and nail to get any funding for that and raised most of it ourselves, along with some organisations in Oldham. We work very hard to get that and sometimes it just gets thrown back at you anyway cos that's what you're accused of. You're accused of treats for naughty kids where what alternative is there then? If there isn't people like us going to do that they're just going to sit at home, so they don't deserve to be just sat at home and given up on. You need to try something with them in my opinion.

**Ian**

So you've got a go-kart business but also you've got a garage as well.

**Jim Rushe**

A working garage workshop. They do academic studies in the morning and vocational studies in the afternoon, and we developed a course that's recognised by the OCN which is the Open College Network, or in our case the

GMOCN, the Greater Manchester Open College Network. It's nationally recognised as equivalent to an NVQ2.

**Ian**

So the NVQ that they do, which awarding body is it through? Because some of these -

**Jim Rushe**

The GMOCN.

**Ian**

Some of them are not recognised in the trade and that's the unfortunate thing.

**Jim Rushe**

This is recognised in the trade. It's nationally recognised as a motor vehicle qualification.

**Mark**

I think that education is the problem, you know, but it's what kind of education, how relevant do you think academic qualifications are with this group of people, when you're saying that at the end of your course they're not getting jobs or going into employment.

**Jim Rushe**

Well they are getting jobs but not enough of them. We don't have enough links and it's the age old thing about funding, isn't it? I think if we had enough money we could cure anyway. But you could with a lot of things. It's all about funding and the funding gets moved around and you tend to spend more time and energy applying to the different organisations that's got the funding this year, cos this year one organisation will have it and next year it's taken off

them and given to somebody else and you start the application process all over again. And therefore you spend two thirds of the year applying for it and by the time you get it they've not got it any more, it's moved.

**Mark**

How relevant do you think academic qualifications are to this group?

**Jim Rushe**

They're very relevant because they may not decided, they may have a change of heart and not decide to work in the field that we specialise in which is the motor vehicle industry. They may go on to retail. We've got lots of young people that have gone and joined the armed forces. In my office back at work I have a list of letters from Iraq where young people that have been on our courses are now serving as soldiers in Iraq. And you know letters from young girls that have told us what child they've just given birth to and what they've named them and how we really did them some good. So all of that for us is reward enough really.

**Gus**

I want to return to the question of funding for a minute.

**Jim Rushe**

Thank you.

**Gus**

Those young people who come to you, excluded or truanting would be on the books of some school somewhere.

**Jim Rushe**

Yeah.

**Gus**

The money for them remains with the school or does it get transferred to you?

**Jim Rushe**

In some cases it remains with the school, in some cases it's transferred to us depending on whether they come to us full time. Over the last 18 months the schools have been a lot more helpful in terms of, I think the Government have done a little bit in terms of letting them know that the funding has to travel with the young person. So they're a bit more amicable now as to what they do with that funding, and we do plug into it. But it's core funding, it's development funding to go on and develop the other things that you could actually do with the young people and where you could sign post them and take them. We have several projects that have just fallen by the wayside because there is no core funding to start them up. We have a vehicle that's a sound studio, that's a mobile sound studio, and lots of young people are prepared to work with it but we can't get the funding to take it out. Although we've bought it out of our own money we can't staff it and we can't run it. We also have one that does hairdressing. It's a fully built hairdressing shop in the back of a mobile vehicle that could travel from youth centre to youth centre and do that work. But we can't fund the staffing of it and we're always looking for funding and applying.

**Gus**

So does the Learning Skills Council see you as an accredited provider?

**Jim Rushe**

Not at this moment in time. We've applied to the Learning and Skills Council in our own right but because since 2004 we've been a delivery vehicle for everybody else we've never actually applied to be on the panel. And it's

getting that far, it's getting that far down the road that, you know, we've always wanted to but again who do you – has anybody ever looked at the application forms to get on that panel? I need to pay a member of staff for 12 months just to fill them in.

**Fay Selvan**

Okay, thank you. That's been really fascinating and thank you for your evidence. Could you just tell us before you leave, one last question, apart from the funding, cos I have looked at those LSE forms, what would be the one thing that you would want to see happen that would help reduce gun and knife crime?

**Jim Rushe**

The link between education to employment. More emphasis placed on the link that the young person knows when they come into the course like in year 10, that there is evidence of young people getting jobs, hope for them basically. Give them some sort of hope because there isn't any for them right now and that's why they turn to crime. And that's why, you know, they arm themselves because they're turning to a crime of maybe selling drugs, and to sell drugs you need to be armed and that's why they're armed. And then the territory comes in and all the weapons come into it. It's all linked. It's all linked. If you give them some sort of hope from year 9 or 10 that there is the possibility of future employment even though they fell off the conveyor belt or fell out with education in some way, there is still hope for those young people to get back on and go down a decent path without having to get involved in crime. But there's no jobs for them at the end of it and they need to know that there is, there is some work. The Government should put some sort of pressure on companies to take young people. I don't know how they would do it right now. Or some incentive, doesn't have to be pressure. Give companies an incentive, give motor vehicle companies or hairdressing shops

or whatever it is where the young people could get employment. Retail, give them some sort of incentive for taking these young people and it would alter the statistics drastically.

**Fay Selvan**

Thank you very much.

**Jim Rushe**

Thank you very much.

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