



LANAI COLLIS-PHILLIPS

AGE: 18 years old FROM: England - East of England

“Why wouldn’t you want to use your voice for change? You’d be surprised how much speaking out can do.”

For the last three years, I’ve been volunteering for a unique and special project: Women Against Sexual Exploitation and Violence Speak UP (WASSUP).

WASSUP was set up by four women with English as a second language who were passionate about raising awareness and creating safe pathways out of abuse and exploitation. It’s now grown into a team of 35 young women who volunteer a total of 170 hours each month to raise awareness of domestic abuse, child abuse and sexual violence.

I’m one of a core group of 14 young women who meet every week to plan events and campaigns, and work on our interactive toolkit for schools that signposts young people to safety.

So far, we’ve delivered our workshops to 1,500 children in primary schools and 700 young people in senior schools across Suffolk.

Volunteering with WASSUP has given me the confidence

to speak up and take the lead, which in turn has opened up new opportunities. I’ve given speeches to community groups and the Mayor of Ipswich to promote WASSUP’s work, and am now the first young person in Suffolk to become a representative on our local safeguarding board.

Volunteering has helped me have my say, but the widespread lack of youth voice in our society concerns me greatly. There’s so much moral panic and negativity towards young people, with the media and older generations holding stereotyped views of us and expecting us to fail.

But it’s not about ‘getting down’ on our level, it’s about keeping up with our harsh reality and educating us to protect ourselves. Even having a safe place to vent is empowering for us.

My plans now are to take a year out of education so I can volunteer full-time with WASSUP. I’m going to keep speaking out, supporting others, and working to deliver hope, positivity and change.

ORGANISATIONS I’VE WORKED WITH

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS (WASSUP)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

LEADERSHIP, RESILIENCE, PERSEVERANCE AND DETERMINATION, EMPATHY, COMMUNITY AWARENESS, HUMILITY OR MODESTY

