The Restoration Panel

Underdog Crew Studios – Team Experience and Professional Credentials

At **The Underdog Crew CIC**, our strength lies in the people behind the work. We are a diverse, multicultural, and multi-faith team united by shared purpose, lived experience, and a trauma-informed approach to youth empowerment and neurodiversity support. Every member of our core team brings both professional expertise and personal understanding of additional needs, mental health, and adversity. Our lived experience allows us to meet each young person with empathy that cannot be taught — understanding born from experience, not theory.

Core Team

Our day-to-day operations are delivered by trained youth practitioners and mentors who undergo regular safeguarding, neurodiversity, and trauma-awareness training.
All staff hold enhanced DBS clearance and adhere to our in-house Code of Conduct, aligned with the latest **Youth Work National Occupational Standards** and **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)** guidance. Our approach is rooted in emotional literacy, co-regulation, and restorative practice — ensuring every young person is seen, heard, and supported.

External Critical-Intervention Team

At the heart of our safeguarding framework sits a network of experienced specialists — our *critical-intervention layer* — providing professional oversight and direct clinical guidance whenever required.

Natalie Barker-Heard – Youth Counsellor specialising in rape, trauma, and recovery.
Amanda Hitchin – (*Colchester Children's Counselling*) qualified child and adolescent therapist.
Dr Mark Wheeler (iCARP.org.uk) – Clinical trauma and PTSD specialist, advisor on complex-needs case management.

Their combined expertise ensures that every young person accessing Underdog Crew support benefits from evidence-based, trauma-informed strategies, delivered within a safe and consistent framework by a team of experts in their chosen fields.

Allied Partnerships.

We are proud to collaborate with regional and national partners including **Essex Youth Service**, **Lads Need Dads CIC**, **Action for Family Carers**, **Boys and Men CIC**, and **Inclusion Ventures**. These partnerships extend our reach, strengthen safeguarding networks, and ensure that every young person receives coordinated, wrap-around support from trusted professionals.

Our Practice

Our Code of Conduct reflects current youth-welfare legislation and best practice, embedding equality, transparency, and accountability in all that we do. Together, our team represents over 100 years of combined experience in youth work, creative education, mental-health support, and safeguarding. We are leading the way in neurodiverse youth engagement and empowerment - not through policy statements, but through lived compassion, cultural inclusion, and measurable impact on young lives.