EVALUATION REPORT

The Neighbourhood Fund

Implementation and Process Evaluation Annual Report – Year 2 Delivery Phase (2024–2025)

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Nottingham Trent University

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

About the Youth Endowment Fund

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people from becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

Children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence deserve services that give them the best chance of a positive future. To make sure that happens, we'll fund promising projects and then use the very best evaluation to find out what works. Just as we benefit from robust trials in medicine, young people deserve support grounded in evidence. We'll build that knowledge through our various grant rounds and funding activities.

And just as important is understanding children and young people's lives. Through our Youth Advisory Board and national network of peer researchers, we'll ensure that children and young people influence our work and that we understand and are addressing their needs. But none of this will make a difference if all we do is produce reports that stay on a shelf.

Together, we need to look at the evidence and agree on what works, then build a movement to make sure that young people get the very best support possible. Our strategy sets out how we'll do it. At its heart, it says that we will fund good work, find what works and work for change. You can read it here.

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About the evaluator

The Neighbourhood Fund (NF) is being evaluated by a consortium that includes evaluators from Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The NF programme involves a complex, multi-phased delivery across five sites, and the evaluation team is implementing a complementary two-strand evaluation to 1) provide ongoing feedback on programme implementation (i.e. formative and process evaluation) and 2) understand programme impact (i.e. summative/impact evaluation). This report is one of a suite of reports that will be produced during the evaluation period, and focuses on Year 2 of the NF action plan delivery phase (2024–2025).

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We are grateful to the Youth Endowment Fund and to partners across the NF sites for supporting the evaluation implementation and to the learning partners (Renaisi and Dartington Service Design Lab) and LJMU staff for supporting the report finalisation.

List of abbreviations

CRCP	Community research and co-design partner
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NF	Neighbourhood Fund
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
TOC	Theory of change
VRUs	Violence Reduction Units
YEF	Youth Endowment Fund

Glossary of terms

Community research and co-design partner (CRCP): CRCPs led the discovery, feasibility and co-design phases of the Neighbourhood Fund by engaging deeply with local communities to understand their needs, challenges and resources. The CRCPs involved local community members in the research process and collaborated with them to develop tailored solutions, resulting in a community-informed local action plan.

Delivery partner: A delivery partner is an organisation that has received funding to run an intervention/activity relating to a specific strand of an action plan.

Formative evaluation: A formative evaluation provides ongoing feedback to improve a programme or project during its development.

Hyper-local/small-scale area: A very specific, narrowly defined geographic region, such as a neighbourhood or small community.

Lead coordinators: Organisations commissioned in each Neighbourhood Fund area responsible for guiding a community-led initiative by coordinating planning, partnerships and engagement efforts; managing resources; and acting as a liaison between funders, local organisations and residents to ensure the project aligns with community needs and goals.

Learning partners: The role of the learning partners, Renaisi and Dartington Service Design Lab, is to continuously help the Youth Endowment Fund learn from the investment and share fundamental learning between the selected areas and more broadly. For example, the learning partner supported sites in producing their theories of change (TOCs) through the delivery of workshops on TOC production and subsequent reviews of drafts of site-level TOCs.

Neighbourhood Fund: The Neighbourhood Fund aims to understand if and how empowering people to make decisions about their local neighbourhoods can prevent children from becoming involved in violence.

Problem-solving approach: An approach that systematically addresses and resolves issues.

Steering group member: A steering group member is someone from a local organisation or statutory agency who collaborates with other members to make decisions, support funding interventions and ensure the action plan aligns with community needs and interests.

Summative evaluation: A summative evaluation assesses the outcomes of a programme or project at its conclusion.

Terms of reference: A code of conduct for steering group members to follow.

Executive Summary

The project

The Neighbourhood Fund (NF) aims to establish if and how empowering people to make decisions about their local neighbourhoods can prevent children and young people (CYPs) from becoming involved in violence. The NF seeks to establish locally driven partnerships in specific areas with high levels of violence among CYPs and to provide funding for these partnerships' plans. This report describes the second year of delivery in five sites across England and Wales (Birmingham, Bradford, Cardiff, Manchester and Norfolk). Each site has completed three preparatory phases (2021–2023) before starting to deliver action plans in 2023. In the first phase, the feasibility phase, local statutory partners, the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and a community research and co-design partner (CRCP) worked together to identify small areas experiencing high levels of violence. In the second phase, the discovery phase, the CRCP engaged with the local community to identify the causes of the violence. In the third phase, the co-design phase, the CRCP established a steering group of local organisations, community leaders and, in some sites, statutory partners that worked together to develop an action plan and appointed one organisation (often the CRCP) as the lead coordinator for delivery. In the final phase, action plan delivery (which is ongoing), the lead coordinator and steering group will work together for up to five years to implement the action plan.

This is the second report in an ongoing evaluation. The Year 1 evaluation examined the transition from the three preparatory phases to the first year of action plan delivery and considered the various approaches that sites took to deliver their plans. The evaluation found that building trust with community groups and developing an understanding of local issues laid the groundwork for effective delivery and that the lead coordinator role facilitated collaboration among steering group members. Challenges included delays in recruiting staff and delivery partners.

This report describes an implementation and process evaluation of Year 2 of the action plan delivery (2024–2025) that synthesises the findings from across all five sites. The evaluation aimed to explore what approaches delivery partners have been taking to deliver action plans, how well action plans are being delivered and stakeholders' and CYPs' perceptions of the programme. It also aimed to offer insights into the effectiveness of local partnerships and early signs of outcomes. Data were collected through an online survey of 39 partners; 27 interviews with lead coordinators, delivery partners and steering group members; and focus groups of 46 CYPs that explored their experiences of the programme and suggestions for improvement. Monitoring data and a document review were also used. Since delivery began, over 6,700 CYPs (mostly aged 10–18) have been recruited into activities across the five sites. The second phase of the evaluation started in November 2024 and concluded in May 2025.

Key conclusions
Delivery partners employed a wide range of approaches, including mentoring, sports and arts activities, and mental health support. In several sites, delivery partners reported that adapting activities to the cultural needs of children and young people helped increase participation and retention.
CYPs and stakeholders were broadly supportive of the programme. CYPs valued supportive one-to-one relationships and safe spaces and described the programme as providing positive alternatives to unsafe environments. Stakeholders valued its inclusivity in engaging diverse groups and perceived that the embedding of youth leadership and voices made activities more relevant, better attended and more empowering.
Partnerships across statutory services, grassroots organisations, schools and steering groups were perceived to provide strong foundations for community-based delivery. In Year 2, many steering groups expanded their membership to include schools, local organisations and trusted community figures, which was perceived as strengthening reach and resources.
Lead coordinators played a central role in how sites worked together to deliver their action plans. The coordinators ran meetings, solved problems, supported data collection and monitoring and helped recruit new organisations

into the programme. Many sites have depended heavily on their coordinator, raising concerns about the sustainability of delivery when the role ends.
Barriers have continued to affect delivery. Funding constraints have reduced the ability to meet demand and expand interventions. Workforce pressures, including staff turnover and burnout, have affected delivery consistency. Inconsistent data collection, limited monitoring capacity among smaller partners and confusion around evaluation terminology have made it harder to track progress and demonstrate impact.

Interpretation

Across the sites, delivery partners, steering groups and lead coordinators developed more targeted and responsive approaches in Year 2. Delivery partners placed more emphasis on the adaptability of the programme, responding and adapting to feedback from the CYPs. Sites used focus groups, advisory panels and co-design sessions with CYP to ensure that delivery reflected young people's priorities. This led to the introduction of mentoring and one-to-one support and the creation of culturally relevant and gender-specific activities. For example, some sites offered sessions for Muslim girls, scheduled activities around Ramadan, provided language support for newly arrived families and worked with trusted organisations such as mosques and churches. These adaptations were reported to increase engagement and retention, particularly among groups who often face barriers to accessing services.

Focus groups with CYPs highlighted that they valued supportive one-to-one relationships and safe spaces where they could build their confidence. Stakeholders noted that these elements were particularly important for the CYPs who had only limited access to other positive opportunities. Both steering group members and delivery partners emphasised that embedding youth voice through advisory panels, co-designed sessions and youth leadership roles made activities more relevant, better attended and more empowering while also helping the young people develop their skills and confidence.

Steering groups played a key role in coordinating delivery and ensuring that activities reflected local needs. Many expanded their membership in Year 2, bringing in schools, local organisations and trusted community figures to widen their reach and resource base. Several sites showed progress in partnership working, with stronger joint planning, decision-making and sharing of resources. However, some sites reported challenges when balancing competing priorities and ensuring that all voices, particularly those from smaller organisations and newer partners, were equally included. Lead coordinators also remained central to delivery. They progressed action plans, facilitated meetings, solved delivery issues and supported capacity-building by helping partners improve their data collection and recruit new organisations. The coordinators' leadership was described as instrumental to the programme's progress. However, staffing and resource constraints limited what sites could deliver, with demand for interventions often outweighing capacity. Many coordinators went beyond their roles to sustain activity, raising concerns about the sustainability of delivery once these roles end.

Without additional funding, sites' ability to expand programmes or increase capacity remains a significant challenge. Workforce pressures, including staff turnover and burnout, disrupted consistency and placed heavy reliance on a small number of staff. Challenges with monitoring and data collection persisted. While some sites improved their systems, many smaller partners lacked the capacity to track participation and outcomes reliably, especially in regard to demographic data. These issues made it harder to evidence outcomes and risked undermining sustainability and future investment.

Although based only on a small number of interviews and focus groups, the CYP and delivery partners reported that the programme created safe and supportive environments, improved well-being and increased access to opportunities. Participants described experiencing greater confidence, reduced anxiety and stronger peer relationships. It remains too early to assess the programme's impact on violence. All five sites are continuing to progress with the delivery of their action plans.

The YEF will conduct further evaluations to learn from CYP's experiences and assess the impact of the NF on levels of violence.

1. Introduction

Funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), the Neighbourhood Fund (NF) is part of the YEF's broader strategy to address youth violence at a 'hyper-local' level. As a place-based funding programme, delivery is led by five lead coordinators and locally developed and led steering groups across five 'hyper-local' areas across the UK (Birmingham: *Lozells and Newtown*; Bradford: *Bowling and Barkerend*; Cardiff: *Butetown and Grangetown*; Norfolk: *Nelson Ward/central and Northgate Wards*; and Manchester: *Cheetham Hill*). The NF is based on the understanding that violence is concentrated in specific areas and that local knowledge, collaboration and investment are key to driving meaningful change. The programme empowers local partnerships to identify and implement tailored violence prevention strategies, providing both the funding and flexibility to ensure that interventions are shaped by community needs and insights. A key objective of the NF is to evaluate whether this approach effectively prevents children from becoming involved in violence. The YEF a priori theory of change (TOC) can be found in Appendix 1.

Neighbourhood Fund key questions

Through establishing the NF, the YEF aims to build evidence on the following (YEF, n.d.):

- Which community engagement and partnership approaches help to keep children safe from violence, and how do they work?
- How do different conditions and contexts affect change?
- Which hyper-local activities, interventions and approaches are most effective at preventing children and young people (CYPs) from becoming involved in violence?
- How do you measure changes in violence at a neighbourhood level?

Neighbourhood Fund areas, organisations and phases

The NF is split into four phases:

1. Feasibility (Year 1, ~1–6 months)
    - Identify areas with concentrated youth violence using data and community insights.
    - Select specific neighbourhoods for intervention.
2. Discovery (Year 1, ~6–12 months)
    - Engage with the community to understand the causes of violence and local priorities.
    - Form a steering group and alignment with local partners.
3. Co-design (Year 1–2, ~6–24 months)
    - Develop a community action plan informed by local insights and evidence-based strategies (Appendix 2).
    - Create a TOC and acquire approval for implementation.
4. Action plan delivery (up to five years from April 2023)
    - Implement the action plan with the flexibility to adapt to evolving community needs.
    - Ensure the ongoing delivery and monitoring of interventions.

A community research and co-design partner (CRCP) was commissioned at each of the five sites to conduct a range of activities in Phases 1–3. A lead partner was then identified by the local steering group to coordinate delivery (i.e. Table 1, Phase 4).

The role of the learning partners, Renaisi and Dartington Service Design Lab, is to continuously help the YEF learn from the investment and share fundamental learning between the selected areas and more broadly.

Table 1: NF sites: lead partners and YEF funding provision

Site	Phase 1–3 (feasibility, discovery and co-design)	Phase 4 (delivery)
Birmingham	Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (£146,601)	Aston Villa Foundation (£1,000,000)
Bradford	Born in Bradford (£139,995)	Born in Bradford (£1,000,000)
Cardiff	Citizens UK (£117,731)	Citizens UK (£1,000,000)
Manchester	Social Finance and Lennina Ofori (£155,276)	Young Manchester (£1,000,000)
Norfolk	Right to Succeed (£158,833)	Right to Succeed (£1,000,000)

This report builds on the findings of the Year 1 (2023–2024) implementation and process evaluation report (Quigg et al., 2024). The Year 1 report explored the transition from feasibility/discovery/co-design to delivery. Key findings from the Year 1 report are summarised below.

- **Collaboration and engagement:** Partnerships, particularly relationships built as a result of the individual site steering groups, enabled stakeholders to work together, find creative solutions and strengthen multi-agency collaboration. Many sites discussed how smaller charity organisations, or those that would usually work independently, successfully leveraged partnerships to collaborate in applying for joint funding. Doing so enabled them to deliver activities for a variety of action plan strands across sites and allowed them to better address service gaps.
- **Community involvement:** Youth and community voices played a significant role in shaping activities, with youth leaders appointed to steering groups and community meetings influencing programme direction.
- **Challenges in delivery:** All sites faced challenges in some capacity, including administrative delays, recruitment challenges and capacity issues within grassroots organisations; however, most successfully established the necessary infrastructure for programme delivery to commence in Year 1.
- **Leadership and governance:** Strong leadership was critical to guiding partnerships, ensuring a balance between facilitation and empowering members to make strategic decisions. Steering groups played a key role in maintaining legitimacy and trust.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Efforts were made to broaden participation by recruiting new organisations to the partnership and expanding funding access, fostering a more representative decision-making process.
- **Creativity and adaptability:** Some sites modified structured plans to allow for co-creation with communities, ensuring strategies remained relevant and responsive to local needs.

For further details on the NF's design, including its key phases, site action plans and overarching programme-level TOC, refer to the Year 1 annual report (Quigg et al., 2024).

This report focuses on the Year 2 (2024/25) implementation and process evaluation of the NF and aims to continue to address the key research aims, predominately focusing on the delivery phase of the programme. This report also encompasses the young people's voices to help understand how they feel about the activities and what changes they would like to see made to their local area.

2. Research questions

Formative evaluation is integrated throughout all stages of the NF evaluation, continuously informing programme implementation and shaping the development of the summative evaluation. Data collection involves a combination of monitoring data; an online survey with partners; and qualitative interviews with the steering group members, delivery partners, lead coordinators, wider stakeholders and young people. This combined approach helps to assess how closely the intervention aligns with its original plan while identifying any contextual differences across the five intervention sites.

The evaluation framework includes several key questions (outlined in Table 2). This year's report focuses on Questions 2–4, examining how delivery partners have operationalised their action plans in Year 2, the perceived effectiveness of different plan components and overall implementation success across the different sites. While other research questions will be explored in future evaluations, this report also provides early insights into Question 6.

Table 2: Formative evaluation questions[1]

1	How effective was the transition from feasibility/discovery/co-design to delivery? *(Year 1 report)*
2	What approaches are delivery partners taking to deliver the plans?
3	How well are the different components of the action plan being delivered?
4	What are the stakeholders' and children and young people's views on the programme?
5	To what extent are systems change outcomes being achieved and in what context: for whom/where, how and why?
6	What evidence is there of impacts on intended outcomes, and what are the mechanisms of these?

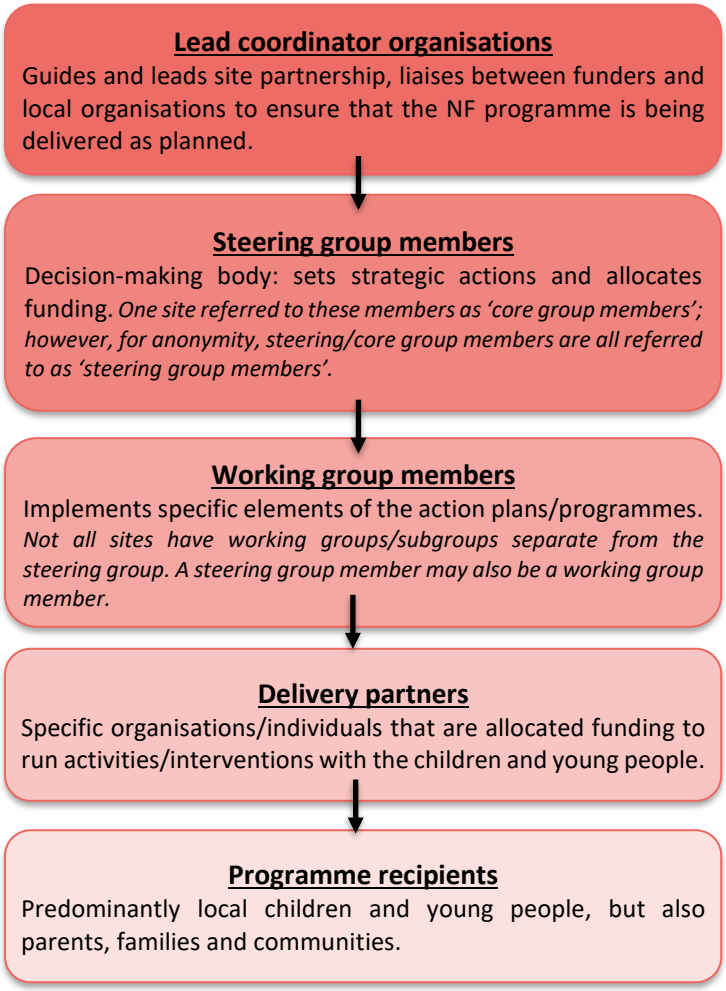
[1] Two of the formative evaluation questions (Questions 2 and 4) were revised for the Year 2 report to better align with a feasibility study approach. The updated questions place greater emphasis on capturing the views of stakeholders and programme recipients rather than on drawing conclusions about effectiveness. The original Year 1 formative evaluation questions are available in the Year 1 report (Quigg et al., 2024).

3. Methods

Methodological overview

Figure 1 represents the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the NF at a site level, from the lead coordinator role to the programme recipients. Further information on these roles can be found in the glossary of terms at the beginning of the report (pg. v), and a more comprehensive description of each can be found in the Year 1 report (Quigg et al., 2024).

Figure 1: Site-level roles, responsibilities and interactions within the Neighbourhood Fund



The evaluation draws on a combination of data collection methods, as follows.

Online survey (n = 39): Conducted among steering/working group members and delivery partners to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of local partnerships and the potential outcomes of interventions to date. The survey included questions for all or for specific types of partners:

- **Steering group members (n = 33)**: The questions explored experiences related to how well partnerships are working together, collaborating and making decisions.
- **Delivery partners (n = 17)**: The questions explored the types of interventions delivered and demographics of the young people served, perceived outcomes, support received from the steering group and challenges encountered.

- **Questions for both groups (n = 39)**: The questions explored the observed potential outcomes on the CYPs and the local community and considered areas for development.

Interviews (n = 27)[2]: Conducted across the five sites to explore in-depth views and experiences. Participants included:

- **The five sites' lead coordinator organisations (n = 7)**
- **Steering group members (n = 11)**
- **Delivery partners (n = 18).**[2]

Focus groups with the CYPs (n = 46): To explore the CYPs' experiences of participating in the programme/the interventions.

Monitoring data: To track the activities, participation and progress against objectives.

Learning partner reports: To cross-check the findings from the process evaluations with the learning partner reports to ensure that all learning has been accurately captured.

3.1 Participant selection

At each of the five sites, steering/working group members and the intervention delivery partners were identified (through the lead coordinators) to participate in an interview and/or the online survey. After contacting the delivery partners, the evaluation team asked the partners to connect the researchers with the CYPs accessing their NF programme–funded activities/interventions.

Lead coordinators were asked to distribute a link to the online survey (via email) to the steering group members and delivery partners. They also shared the contact details of the research team with individuals who preferred to participate only in an interview or who had questions about the evaluation. Informed consent was obtained in two ways: 1) from service managers acting as gatekeepers for intervention delivery partners; and 2) directly from all individuals who took part in the survey or interviews. The CYPs were recruited through delivery partners, who provided them and their parents or guardians with a participant information sheet and consent form. For those under 16 years old, both parental consent and the child's assent were required. Most CYPs were recruited at larger community events, where the researcher approached parents and CYPs to invite them to join a focus group. Each CYP who participated received a £10 voucher as a thank you for their time.

3.2 Data collection

Tables 2 and 3 outline the timeline and methods used to answer the research questions.

[2] Across some sites, steering group members were often also delivery partners.

Data collection instruments for qualitative interviews and focus groups (interview/focus group schedules, consent forms and information sheets for gatekeepers, local coordinators, steering group members, delivery partners and programme recipients [i.e. CYPs]) were developed by the evaluation team. These were reviewed by the YEF and lead coordinators across the sites. Data collection was conducted by a team of trained researchers from Liverpool John Moores University and Nottingham Trent University, working with the evaluation leads. Data was collected both online (via Microsoft Teams) and, where possible, on site at services where activities were being delivered. In total, 73 people were interviewed (see Figure 2 and Table 4 for details).

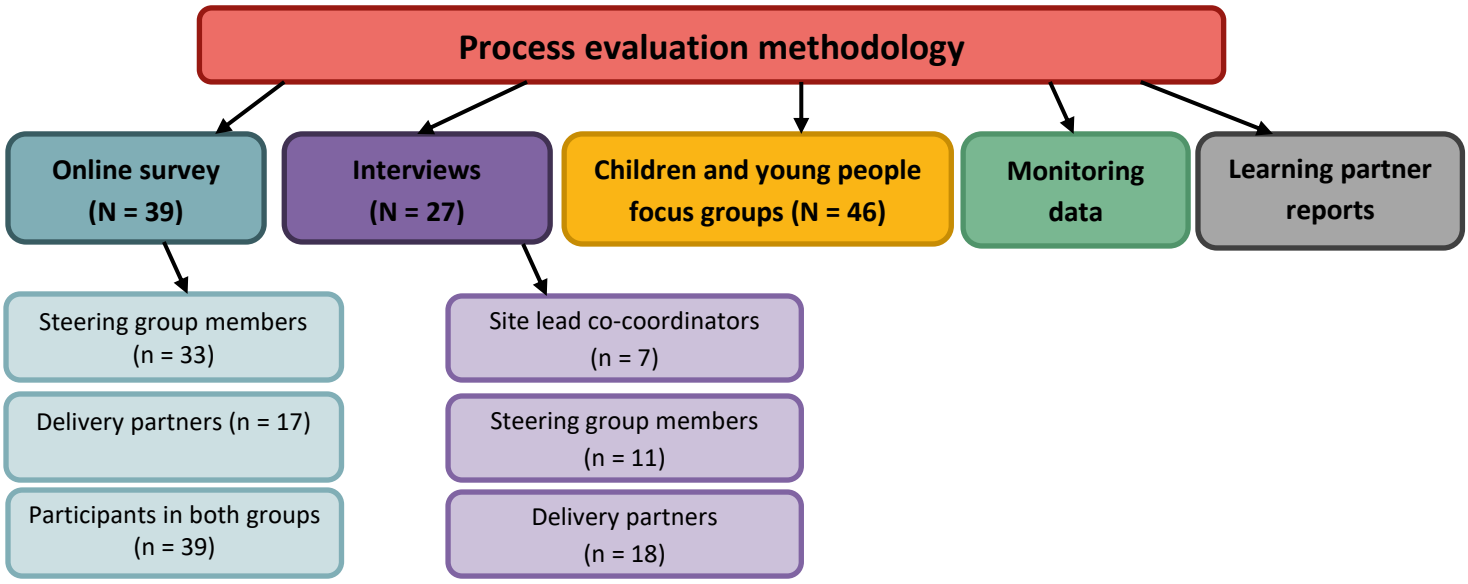
A structured survey was administered to steering group members and delivery partners to assess the functioning and perceived outcomes of local partnerships and the reach and perceived outcomes of the interventions. The survey was divided into three sections, with the first specifically targeting steering group members to evaluate their experiences of collaboration and decision-making within the partnership. The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool (PSAT) (Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health [CASH], 2002) was selected to measure key elements of partnership effectiveness. The tool consisted of 63 items that used a combination of Likert scales and yes/no response options and covered the topics of synergy, leadership, efficiency, administration and management, non-financial and financial resources, decision-making, the benefits and drawbacks of participation, and overall satisfaction. The PSAT is a publicly available tool that has been widely used to assess multi-stakeholder partnerships in areas such as public health (Loban et al., 2021). To ensure data reliability, partnerships were required to meet specific criteria: they had to have existed for at least six months, to have actively collaborated on shared goals and to involve at least five active partners. Because of low numbers of respondents from several sites (Table 5), totals were calculated for partnerships working across the programme rather than for individual sites. Therefore, these scores may not be completely representative of the views and experiences of every partnership. Once all of the means and frequencies had been calculated, each sub-heading of the survey (synergy, leadership, efficiency, etc.) was allocated a score. The second part of the survey was directed at delivery partners and included tailored questions developed by the evaluation team. These questions focused on the types of interventions or activities being delivered, the demographics of the participating young people, the perceptions of effectiveness and the support provided by local project leaders. They also considered how well the various elements of the interventions were being implemented, including key successes and challenges. The third section was intended for both steering group members and delivery partners. It explored observed or potential outcomes for CYPs, the wider local community and collaborative working within partnerships. The survey also served as a recruitment tool for interviews and focus groups. It included a section where participants could voluntarily provide their email address if they were interested in taking part in an interview or supporting the facilitation of a focus group with CYPs. A member of the research team then followed up to arrange the next steps. In total, 39 steering group members/delivery partners participated in the survey (see Tables 3 and 5 for a further breakdown).

For the documentary analysis, quarterly reports on programme implementation were compiled by site leads using YEF monitoring and supplementary evaluation forms. These reports were collected and reviewed for insights relevant to the evaluation research questions. The YEF quarterly monitoring report provides a high-level overview of each site's progress, including the number of CYPs and practitioners engaged in activities,

key achievements, risks and upcoming plans. The supplementary evaluation form offers a more detailed view of programme delivery, incorporating project Gantt charts, a risk register, key learnings from each quarter and specifics on implemented activities, including participation numbers. Following each report submission, site leads, YEF representatives, learning partners and the evaluation team held review meetings to assess progress and discuss the report content. These discussions helped contextualise the reports, clarify the data and address any gaps. Where needed, the YEF and the evaluation team provided feedback to enhance future reporting – for example, by encouraging more detailed descriptions of activities to improve understanding of site-level implementation across sites (while still allowing flexibility in reporting to accommodate variations in local delivery plans). To further inform evaluation, we also reviewed key programme materials, including action plans and partner reports for both individual sites and the programme overall. These reports provided an overview of project progress, successes, challenges and key learnings.

Additionally, programme documentation, learning partner reports [3] and observations of programme implementation meetings were also produced and integrated throughout the qualitative data collection process to ensure a comprehensive understanding of site-level progress.

Figure 2: Summary of evaluation methods and participant groups



3.3 Analysis

Qualitative data analysis of interviews with stakeholders (e.g. lead coordinators, steering group members, delivery partners) were subjected to framework analysis. This is a deductive approach, and

[3] Learning partner reports were for each site and the programme as a whole, providing an overview of the programme/site-level project; perceptions of progress, successes and challenges; and key learnings. They also discussed the use of the TOC by sites to deliver action plans, any evidence of outputs/activities they had observed that supported mechanisms of change and where amendments to the TOC might need to be explored in the future.

analysis is structured around pre-specified themes so that the findings have relevance to applied research questions (at this stage of evaluation, focusing on the delivery of action plans) (Gale et al., 2013). Data was coded under a list of a priori themes relevant to the research questions.[4] The CYP focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis by means of an inductive approach to supplement the research questions and key themes. Quantitative analyses were undertaken in SPSS (vers. 28), and qualitative quotes were extracted from free-text questions and included alongside interview quotes. To assess partnership working, PSAT means and percentages[5] were used to categorise the progress of the partnerships (CASH, 2002). PSAT category scores are derived by calculating the mean score for each section of the tool, based on participants' responses. These mean scores are then categorised into one of four zones that reflect the partnership's performance in each area:

- **1.0–2.9 Danger Zone: This area needs a lot of improvement.**
- **3.0–3.9 Work Zone: More effort is needed in this area to maximise partnership's collaborative potential.**
- **4.0–4.5 Headway Zone: The partnerships are doing pretty well in this area but has potential to progress even further.**
- **4.5–5.0 Target Zone: The partnerships are currently excels in this area and needs to focus attention on maintaining a high score.**

3.4 Ethical review

An ethical review was undertaken and approved by the Nottingham Trent University Research Ethics Committee.[6] Appendix 4 provides the participant information sheets and interview schedules used in this phase of the evaluation.

Table 3: Timeline

Date	Activity
Nov 2024– Feb 2025	Recruitment and data collection • Online (Microsoft Teams) interviews • Survey live Dec 2024–Feb 2025 • Site visits in four locations (completed Oct 2024–Feb 2025) to support recruitment for and the implementation of interviews/focus groups
Jan–Mar 2025	Data analysis
Apr 2025	Annual report submission to the Youth Endowment Fund

[4] The framework analysis model will be refined and updated at key review points as the evaluation progresses.

[5] To ensure data reliability, partnerships were required to meet specific criteria: they had to have existed for at least six months, to have actively collaborated on shared goals and to involve at least five active partners.

[6] Project ID 1544809.

Table 4: Methods overview

Research questions addressed	Data collection methods	Participants/data sources	Data analysis methods	Implementation/logic model relevance
2. What approaches are delivery partners taking to deliver the plans, and are these approaches effective? 3. How well are the different components of the action plan(s) being delivered? 4. What are the stakeholders' and children and young people's views on the programme?	Interviews/children and young people (CYPs) focus groups Survey Review of programme documentation and Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and learning partner reports	73 interviews/CYP focus groups Stakeholder interviews (n = 27) and CYP focus groups (n = 11; consisting of 46 individual CYPs and ranging from two to six CYPs per focus group) • Manchester: lead coordinators (n = 2); steering group/delivery partners (n = 6) ; CYPs (14) • Bradford: lead coordinators (n = 2); steering group/delivery partners (n = 2) ; CYPs (13) • Great Yarmouth: lead coordinators (n = 1); steering group/delivery partners (n = 8); CYPs (n = 6) • Cardiff: lead coordinators (n = 1); steering group/delivery partners (n = 1); CYPs (n = 5) • Birmingham: lead coordinators (n = 1); steering group/delivery partners (n = 3); CYPs (n = 4) Online survey (N = 39 across the five sites): Birmingham (n = 9); Bradford (n = 4); Great Yarmouth (n = 16); Cardiff (n = 7); Manchester (n = 3) Quarterly monitoring documents, learning partner report and supplementary documents from each site	Qualitative: coding of transcripts using framework and thematic analysis Quantitative: means and percentages used to categorise the progress of the partnerships using the Partnership Self-Assessment Tool	Assess dimensions of implementation, alignment with programme logic model/action plan and areas for refinement Assess the factors impacting implementation Assess outputs and explore perceived outcomes for the neighbourhood/CYPs

4. Findings

To protect the anonymity of participants and ensure confidentiality, sites have been randomly assigned codes (i.e. Sites 1–5). This approach helps to mitigate potential conflicts and encourages the steering group members, delivery partners and CYPs to engage in the evaluation process honestly and openly, both now and in future evaluations.

4.1 What approaches are delivery partners taking to deliver the plans?

This section discusses the theme and sub-themes (Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of theme and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
Activity and intervention delivery	Programme reach and retention Activity types Examples of activity/interventions across sites

4.1.1 Programme reach and retention

YEF quarterly monitoring forms show that since the commencement of delivery (April 2023) to the end of March 2025, 6,733 CYPs had been recruited into activities across the five sites, with a retention rate of 80.4% (n = 5,455), far exceeding the recruitment predictions the sites had anticipated. In addition, 15 community members (e.g. parents) and 64 practitioners were recruited to different activities (Table 6).

"We have 621 regular young people a week that attend the project" —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Table 6: Estimated[7] programme reach by site and target group total since project commencement

Site	Target group	Estimate numbers	Number recruited	Number withdrawn[8]	Total	Retention rate
Birmingham	Children and young people (CYPs)	320	474	0	474	100%
	Community members	–	15	0	15	100%
	Practitioners	–	0	0	0	NA

[7] Data collection issues across sites resulted in some discrepancies.

[8] Sites recorded withdrawal numbers differently; therefore, this is a cautious estimate (e.g. some activities were one-off events or a short intervention, and once finished, some sites recorded those CYPs as having withdrawn).

Site	Target group	Estimate numbers	Number recruited	Number withdrawn[8]	Total	Retention rate
Bradford	CYPs	240	1,817	10	1,856	99.5%
	Community members	–	0	0	0	NA
	Practitioners	–	8	0	8	100%
Cardiff	CYPs	316	1,286	429	857	66.6%
	Community members	–	0	0	0	NA
	Practitioners	–	0	0	0	NA
Great Yarmouth	CYPs	552	1,610	699	911	56.6%
	Community members	–	0	0	0	0
	Practitioners	–	18	0	18	100%
Manchester	CYPs	1260	1,546	189	1,357	87.8%
	Community members	–	0	0	0	NA
	Practitioners	–	37	0	37	100%
Programme total	CYPs	2,688	6,733	1,327	5,455	81.0%
	Community members	–	15	0	15	100%
	Practitioners	–	63	0	63	100%

4.1.2 Demographics of the children and young people

Interviews with delivery partners highlighted some examples of how some interventions were specifically targeted towards distinct demographic groups based on age, gender, ethnicity and vulnerability.

Age groups: Delivery partners described tailoring activities by age. Younger children (7–10) were included at two sites (Site 4 and Site 5), but this group was less of a focus overall. The core age group across sites was 11–16, especially in Sites 2, 4 and 5, which were seen as the most at risk. Some programmes extended to young adults (17–25), particularly in Sites 2, 3 and 5, targeting those facing unemployment or involvement in crime or those with special educational needs and disabilities.

> *"We work with all sorts of boys and girls of that age range – 10 to 16 years of age. But to be fair, we do work with sort of younger children as well, starting from the age of seven to ... I'd say, about 18 years."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

Gender: Most activities were mixed gender, although boys tended to have a higher representation. Sites 2 and 5 offered male-focused provision, often in mosque-based or crime prevention settings. Sites 1, 2, 4 and 5 ran sessions for girls, particularly Muslim girls and those in care. One site noted that less than 5% of their provision reached girls, a gap they aimed to address.

> *"We do mentoring with all the youth clubs at the centre. It was open to anyone; if parents wanted to send their children for mentoring, they could come in. Initially, it was just one session, but now we've got four sessions running: one for girls, one for young boys, one for older boys and one for teenagers."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

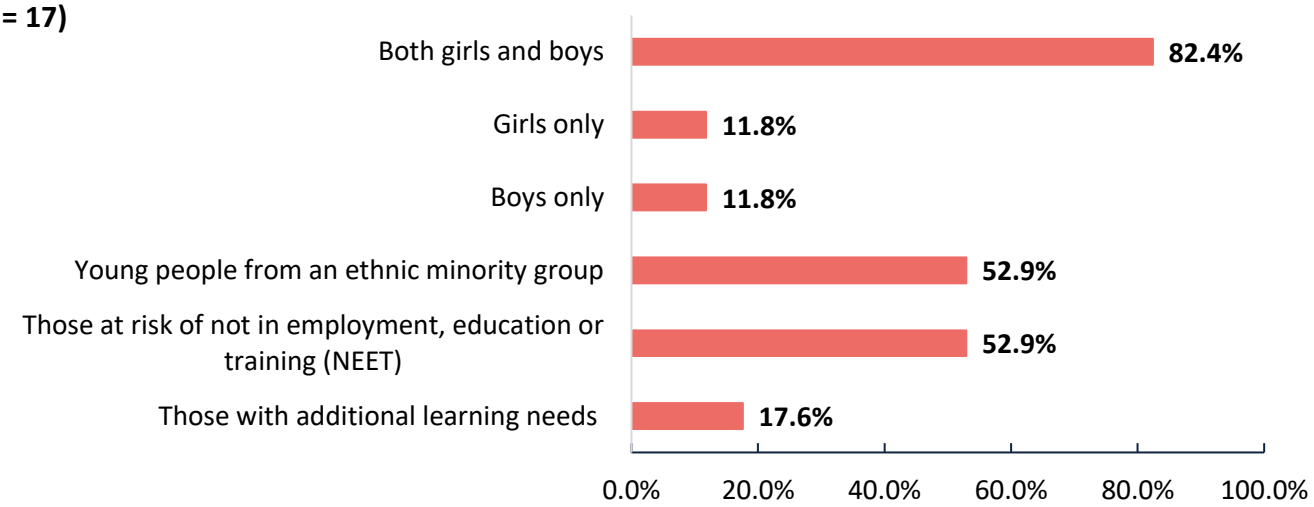
Ethnicity and cultural backgrounds: All sites engaged ethnically diverse groups. Sites 2 and 5 tailored some interventions to Muslim youths, including gender-separated activities. Sites 1, 4 and 5 worked with Black and South Asian communities, often through churches and mosques. Programmes also addressed language barriers and supported integration.

> *"There's a larger community here that doesn't speak English at all. We need to focus on them, making sure children and parents are equipped for the next generation. At the end of the day, we don't want them stuck in low-paying, dead-end jobs, with no opportunities to move forward. We want them to speak English and support themselves."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Vulnerable young people: Sites 3 and 4 created inclusive spaces for neurodivergent youth, including those with autism and ADHD. Sites 2 and 3 focused on those at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET), offering practical support and training and pathways into employment. Activities such as cookery courses helped some secure jobs.

Delivery partners who participated in the survey (n = 18) also shared their views on who their interventions were targeted towards (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Delivery partners' Neighbourhood Fund target groups for activities/interventions, survey data (n = 17)



4.1.3 Activity/intervention types

Delivery partners and the CYPs interviewed shared examples of the activities currently being offered. A diverse range of programmes have been delivered across the five sites, with an emphasis on education, sports, creative arts, mentorship and community initiatives to engage and support CYPs. These programmes focus on skill development, personal growth and social inclusion, providing safe spaces and structured interventions to support CYPs. Common activities include educational workshops, tutoring, sports-based mentorship, arts and creative programmes, outreach work and community-led events. Many sites also incorporate career support, environmental projects and trips to broaden CYPs' experiences. This summary categorises the key activity types delivered across the sites, highlighting shared themes.

1. Educational and skills-based activities

- **Workshops and awareness sessions**: e.g. internet safety, gang association, vaping, mental health, financial literacy
- **Tutoring and homework support**: e.g. in maths, English and science; literacy interventions
- **Employment and career support**: e.g. CV writing, job placement programmes, work experience initiatives
- **Skill development**: e.g. leadership training, digital skills, drone flying, photography, videography
- **Literacy and reading interventions**: e.g. school-based reading schemes, community-led storytelling.

2. Sports and physical activities

- **Traditional sports**: e.g. football, boxing, basketball, cricket, swimming
- **Recreational activities**: e.g. gym access, hiking, climbing, multi-sports sessions
- **Sports-based mentorship**: e.g. Using football and boxing as structured engagement tools; having older young people act as a 'big brother' or 'big sister' to younger members.

3. Arts and creative activities

- **Drama and performing arts**: e.g. theatre programmes at community hubs and places of worship
- **Music and creative arts**: e.g. music workshops, crafts and artist-led creative sessions.

4. Youth engagement and community-based support

- **Detached and outreach youth work**: e.g. engaging hard-to-reach youth in safe spaces
- **Mentorship and personal development**: e.g. networking events, female mentorship, mental health discussions and well-being workshops
- **Safe spaces and youth clubs**: e.g. youth pavilions, community centres and gaming hubs.

5. Community and social events

- **Public events and festivals**: e.g. park parties, music and food gatherings
- **Community-led engagement**: e.g. youth-led planning of activities and youth leadership programmes
- **Environmental and social initiatives**: e.g. climate change projects and park improvement programmes.

6. Cultural, outdoor and community trips

- **Educational trips**: e.g. to museums; career-oriented site visits
- **Outdoor adventures**: e.g. farm visits and hiking excursions
- **Industry and career exposure**: e.g. workplace visits and mentorship programmes in professional settings.

Critically, across all sites, many approaches were implemented using multiple activities, providing a wider, complementary offer for the CYPs that was informed by their voices. For example, arts and cultural activities were used to educate the CYPs.

> *"Yeah, in Year 5 I started with some activities with my first project working towards reducing racism, called [intervention name]. Since then, I have made my own book, been involved with the self-defence classes and then sharing their experiences. I have done a range of activities."* —Site 4 CYP

"Just bring[ing] people in our area to come together and just enjoy ourselves and get off the bad lifestyle and stuff like that." —Site 1 CYP

Examples of activities included one delivery partner who discussed how they use drama and performance to educate young people in their area about serious subjects such as racism, discrimination and crime.

"What we try and do within the workshops is encourage young people to tackle themes as a sort of awareness-raising tool. For example, one of the groups at the moment, the Friday night group, they're working on a play about hate crime that they're going to be performing next February as part of Hate Crime Week, which deals with racism, homophobia, ageism, misogyny, stuff like that. So basically, on one hand, in a practical way, it's keeping them off the streets and giving them something positive to do. But on the other hand, it's about educating them on things and issues that might put them in danger and create danger for them." —Site 5 delivery partner

Several sites discussed the need for wrap-around support, and one organisation discussed how it provided education and career advice to help CYPs set goals and achieve them. However, the sites also noted the importance of keeping CYPs engaged outside of school, especially over the summer period, by signposting them to other interventions and activities running locally in the community, highlighting the need for a multi-agency approach, with one Site 2 lead coordinator stating, *"It takes a village to raise a child."*

"It's one-to-one coaching work. Setting up a plan, setting goals, helping them work towards those goals and sort of understanding the situation that they're in at the moment and where they would like to be or what's preventing them from being where they want to be … However, it's also positive activities in the holidays. We did a summer activity programme with them and [are] helping them engage with other activities in the community and other organisations that will support them."—Site 3 delivery partner

"[Organisation name] have incorporated an educational element and tutoring to their boxing. They noticed that a lot of boys, some young girls but mainly boys, were not doing very well in their English literacy and maths. So, they brought a maths and English teacher in and said to the lads, 'Look, you know, I'm going to still take you boxing. But you have to do a minimum of an hour of education first.'" —Site 2 lead coordinator

All sites offered support with mental health and well-being in varying capacities. One site discussed how they brought people with lived experience of mental health to speak with the CYPs. A CYP who is a mentor to younger children discussed how they help to support a girls-only mental well-being session. These types of sessions aim to teach young girls skills and improve their mental health and well-being while offering older girls the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

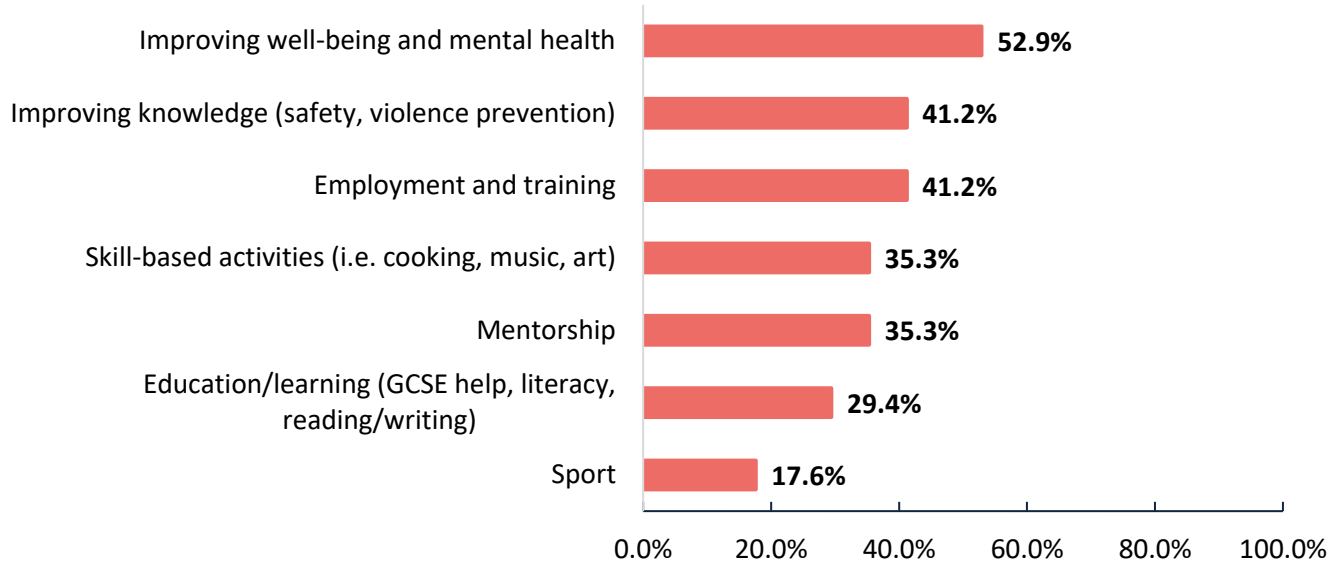
"Maybe like once a month, we'll do a girls' night session where we teach her, like, life lessons, and we play games. Like a cute little event each month for the girls to get to know each other and bring that community." —Site 1 CYP

Learning new skills and providing CYPs with new experiences were also seen as key priorities for all sites. This was accomplished in a variety of ways, with several examples including cookery, music, DJ-ing and drone sessions. Delivery partners also wanted the CYPs to experience life outside of their local areas by taking them on organised trips and educational outings.

> *"So, drones and photography, etc. So, it's about learning about photography, then we're taking them out in the field. So they'll go out, I don't know, [to] lots of different places to fly the drones themselves, but then they have to learn about the geography and topography of the area and also where they can and can't fly. So, there are lots of rules to that. About flying and then, alongside all of that, we'll link them into videography editing, so there are lots of different new skills they can learn."* —Site 5 delivery partner.

Delivery partners who participated in the survey (n = 18) selected activities that they were providing as part of the NF (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Delivery partners' Neighbourhood Fund activity types as provided to the children and young people, survey data (n = 17)



4.2 How well are the different components of the action plan being delivered?

This section discusses the following themes and sub-themes (Table 7).

Table 7: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
Overview of partnership working	The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool (PSAT) assesses partnership work across the five sites (completed by steering group members only; n = 33) PSAT assesses synergy, leadership, efficiency, administration and management, non-financial resources, financial resources, satisfaction with the partnership, and the decision-making process

Challenges in activity/intervention delivery and strategies to overcome them	Challenges related to intervention/activity delivery: • Data recording and impact measurement • Capacity and resource limitations • Lack of employment opportunities for young people • Engagement and participation issues • Building and maintaining relationships Strategies employed to overcome challenges: • Listening to young people's voices to improve retention and engagement • Building flexibility, adaptability and diversity into the approach • Establishing increased resources and capacity • Continuing to build strong relationships

Overview of partnership working

Partnerships across the five sites show strong collaboration, committed leadership and effective use of partners' skills. While strengths include shared problem-solving, inclusive decision-making and meaningful community involvement, some areas – particularly synergy, efficiency and access to financial resources – require further support to maximise how well partnerships across the five sites are working. Variations across sites reflect differing levels of statutory engagement, resource availability and grassroots capacity. Overall, the findings point to a partnership with strong foundations and the potential to evolve into more self-directed and sustainable groups if good practice and overarching lead coordinator support continues.

4.2.1 Synergy

The PSAT survey asked 11 questions relating to synergy (Figure 5). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of synergy across the NF programme (see the Methods chapter). Findings here showed:

- **Mean score = 3.92**
- **Work Zone: More effort is needed in this area to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential.**

Figure 5 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as performing "extremely well" or "very well" in the synergy statements.

Steering group members across three sites discussed how partners have collaborated to apply for grants and bids together, particularly for some of the larger funding grants available, to solve gaps in their provision and apply with the strongest application, covering multiple skills and activities. One site discussed how local delivery partners have reduced the need to compete against one another for funding.

"I'm not in competition with the people sat around the table. We're all here together. We can also start working together ourselves and try and look at extra work ... and sharing

skills amongst ourselves."
—Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

All sites reported involving the views of CYPs as well as those of individuals from the wider community. Methods through which such views were recorded included events/forums and included surveys with local CYPs and CYPs being involved in steering group meetings and panels to decide which organisations would be awarded grants.

"We also appoint youth leaders in the group as well. That can show more of a leadership role and make them be the guide between the young people." —Site 1 lead coordinator

Two sites discussed holding a meeting with parents in the local community after a tragic incident in their local areas. As a result of these meetings, interventions that aim to work with both families and CYPs directly affected by violence in their areas were commissioned.

"Some parents reached out to [local organisation]. This led to a group discussion where families asked, "How long will we keep watching this cycle continue?" They spoke about how their young men are either ending up in prison or being buried in the ground, and that it is not fair. During that conversation, some of the older men started crying, realising the direction their children were heading. That discussion led to real action: one of our small grant projects is now working to directly engage the young people from the affected families. This is a direct intervention in response to the violence, and the hope is that these efforts will continue to make a difference in the future." —Site 4 lead coordinator

One partner discussed the importance of having a multi-agency steering group which works towards improving the lives of young people. Most sites discussed successes in creating useful and meaningful partnerships with statutory organisations and local policymakers. Examples included forming partnerships with local authorities, local Violence Reduction Partnerships and the police and crime commissioner.

"I think the work with local authorities is going quite well: so we work closely with the [team name], and they have different offers that we try and utilise and make use of. So, for example, [local authorities] will link into different things that are going on in the area that we knew nothing about. So, we're linking into them in a big way and utilising their programmes to widen the sorts of projects that the young people are getting involved with." —Site 5 lead coordinator

However, a steering group member from one site discussed the need to have more statutory involvement in steering group meetings to fully access all opportunities.

"I would like to see the police, or whoever – I'd like to see certain people present at meetings because they need to be involved in the steering groups to see the work we're doing because that might lead to further opportunities for the [NF] – it might lead to further commissioning opportunities. They are stakeholders, at the end of the day." —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

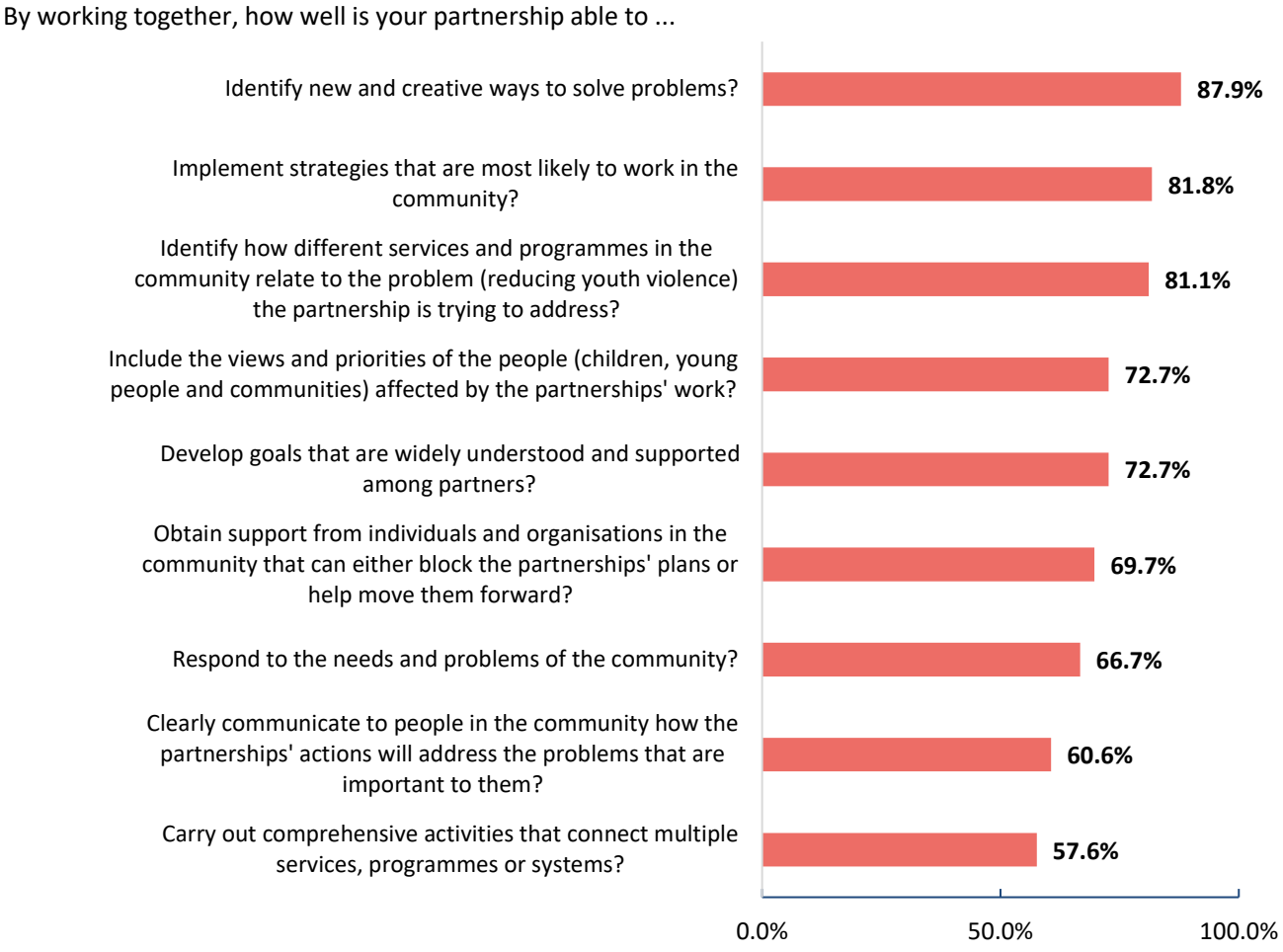
This reflects a growing culture of collaboration among steering group members, delivery partners and external organisations, with many working together to deliver joint programmes and/or sharing resources. That same site noted that there has been a noticeable shift from lead coordinator–facilitated collaboration to more organic partnerships, with organisations now independently identifying complementary activities and working together.

> *"This year, they are approaching others themselves … People are now thinking about which partners' activities complement their own, and they're focusing more on diversity in collaboration."* —Site 4 lead coordinator

Several sites developed methods to share information locally, including dedicated social media accounts and websites to centralise relevant details.

> *"I probably think about getting more buy in from different organisations and the community. Soft launch, but it's almost like saying this is about to happen, these organisations are involved and this is what they're doing. This is about how we're going to help in making this community better. That's what we're there for. But it's about getting that information out there earlier rather than later; it's almost like a campaign."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Figure 5: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnership as performing "extremely well" or "very well" across the synergy statements (n = 33)



4.2.2 Leadership

The PSAT survey asked 11 questions relating to leadership (Figure 6). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of good leadership across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 4.06**
- **Headway Zone: The partnerships are doing pretty well in this area but have potential to progress even further.**

Figure 6 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as performing "excellently" or "very good" in the leadership statements.

In their interviews, steering group members highlighted the importance of strong leadership in guiding the partnership and in balancing programme facilitation with empowering members to make decisions. One Site 5 lead coordinator explained, *"We facilitate the steering group to be decision-makers. We facilitate them to get to that point to make strategic decisions about funding, about their priorities."* Fostering trust

and inclusiveness was seen as both a challenge and a priority, particularly in communities affected by historical disadvantage.

> *"I don't want to call it a capacity drain, but often these folks are very distrustful and rightfully so because of the past traumas."* —Site 5 lead coordinator

Despite such challenges, the YEF was praised for delivering on its promises and enabling progress.

> *"The journey itself from three years ago. It's something we do in our own time, but the [NF] is something that's come, and they delivered what they promised, and we've gone from strength to strength."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

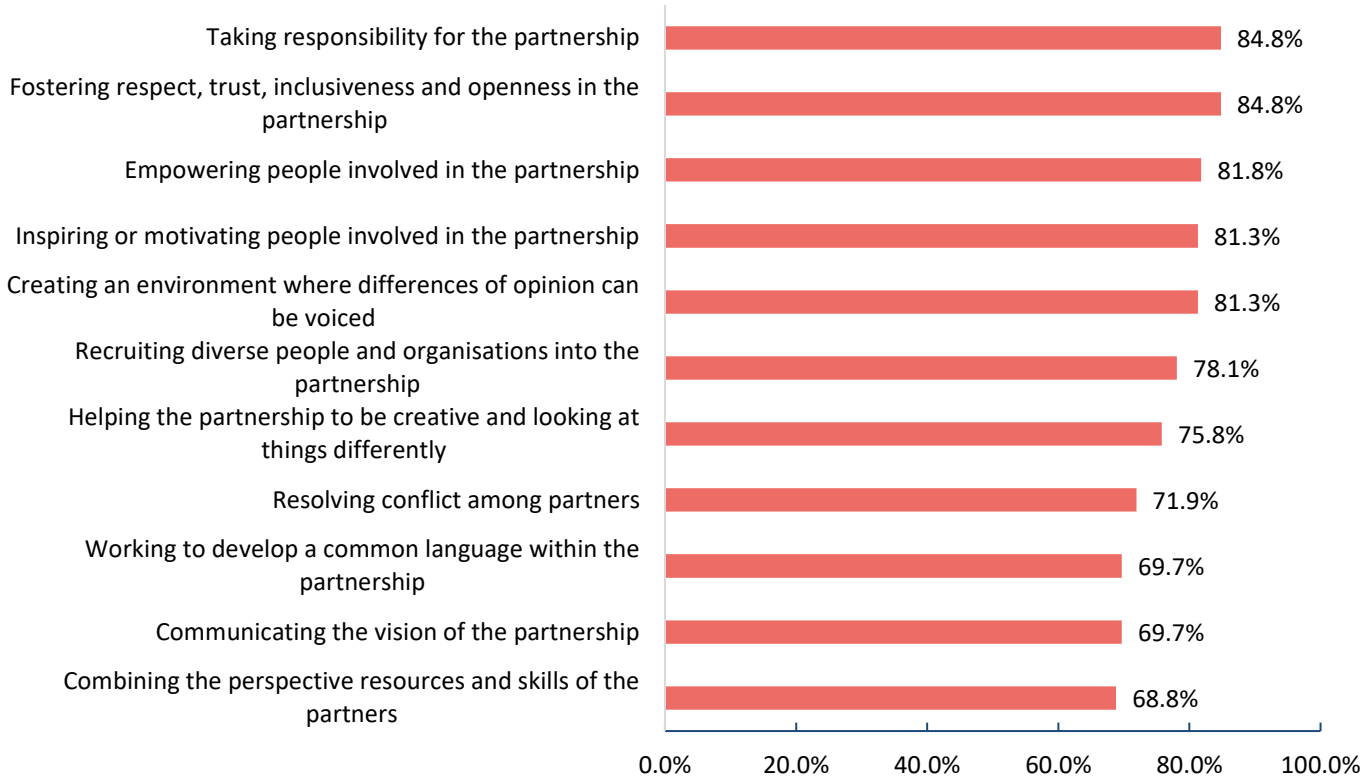
Empowerment was seen as central to the programme's success and keeping steering group members motivated and aligned with the programme's vision.

> *"It's about managing expectations and making sure everyone is motivated and on the same page ... Encouraging them to look beyond their own organisations, which they're actually being amazing at doing."* —Site 5 lead coordinator

However, there were concerns about sustainability and continued reliance on coordinators to resolve tensions within the group.

> *"One ongoing challenge, though, is that some people still expect us to do certain things for them or [to] have tough conversations when there's disagreements in their collaborations. For example, they might ask us to tell someone to do something, but we explain that that's not really our job. We're here to coordinate and support them in carrying out their own activities."* —Site 4 lead coordinator

Figure 6: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnerships' leadership (both formal and informal) as "excellent" or "very good" across the leadership statements (n = 33)



4.2.3 Efficiency

The PSAT survey asked three questions relating to efficiency (Figure 7). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of good efficiency across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 3.97**
- **Work Zone: More effort is needed in this area to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential.**

Figure 7 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as performing "excellently" or "very good" in the efficiency statements.

Partnerships demonstrated adaptability in managing financial resources, with some highlighting the flexibility needed to adjust budgets based on evolving programme demands. One site reflected on how adjusting funding allocations and utilising leftover funds from another work stream allowed them to provide extra days of intervention delivery, which was perceived to have supported wider youth engagement. Another described taking a strategic approach to ensure sustainability by pacing their spending, allowing continued service delivery beyond the initial funding period. However, delays in receiving funding created challenges in planning and implementation. Some sites highlighted that delivery partners had to wait for financial resources before executing programmes, impacting the project timeline.

"It took time for us to get the funding for several reasons. What I didn't want to do was just blow it all at once. What we said was, OK, right, because I'm interested in sustainable delivery, let's just go slow … Let's have a spin over and do it properly up until August because by that time, we get the next funding. So, we're getting a bit more funding, and now we can give the funding more in a structured way so that they can deliver as well." —Site 4 steering group member

One site emphasised the balance they sought between structured and flexible use of community spaces.

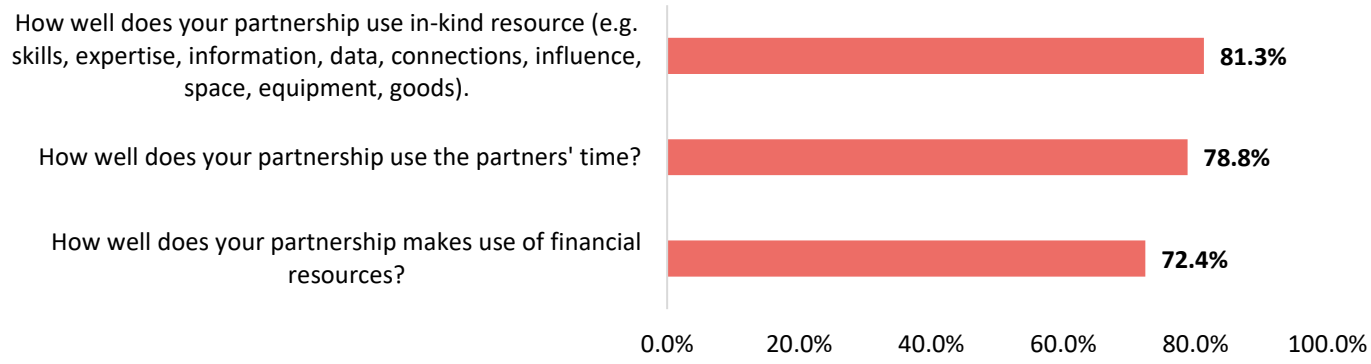
"It's that balance between schools, community centres, outdoor spaces, green spaces and parks. There are football sessions and more. One of the green spaces is even getting some redevelopment done. We're trying to create something for everyone. Not everyone's into sports, creativity, arts, or well-being activities like mindfulness or colouring sessions. So, we offer a wide range of activities to cater to different interests and make sure everyone has access to some kind of support." —Site 4 lead coordinator

While most partners felt their time was used effectively, reflections on capacity-building sessions highlighted both strengths and areas for improvement. The need for flexibility in project timelines was a recurring theme, with partners recognising that unexpected challenges often required adjustments.

"We've learned that you always have to add in that time for flexibility and for changes and unexpected things to happen." —Site 5 lead coordinator

External factors also influenced the efficient use of time, with one delivery partner survey respondent noting that *"unforeseen circumstances have sometimes hindered timelines"*.

Figure 7: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnership as "excellent" or "very good" across the efficiency statements (n = 33)



4.2.4 Administration and management

The PSAT survey asked nine questions relating to administration and management (Figure 8). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of good administration and management across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 4.0**
- **Headway Zone: The partnerships are doing pretty well in this area but have potential to progress even further.**

Figure 8 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as performing "excellently" or "very good" in the administration and management statements.

Two sites discussed how the lead coordinator played a significant role in providing administrative support, facilitating governance and maintaining strategic direction.

> *"We have [lead organisation], who are like our go-to people. They do all the handing out, the funding, the forms. Supporting and mentoring if we needed it, getting things done."*
> —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

However, engaging grassroots organisations required additional support, as many lacked the capacity to handle administrative and evaluation requirements. This created a tension between building long-term sustainability, the capacity building of those organisations and providing immediate support.

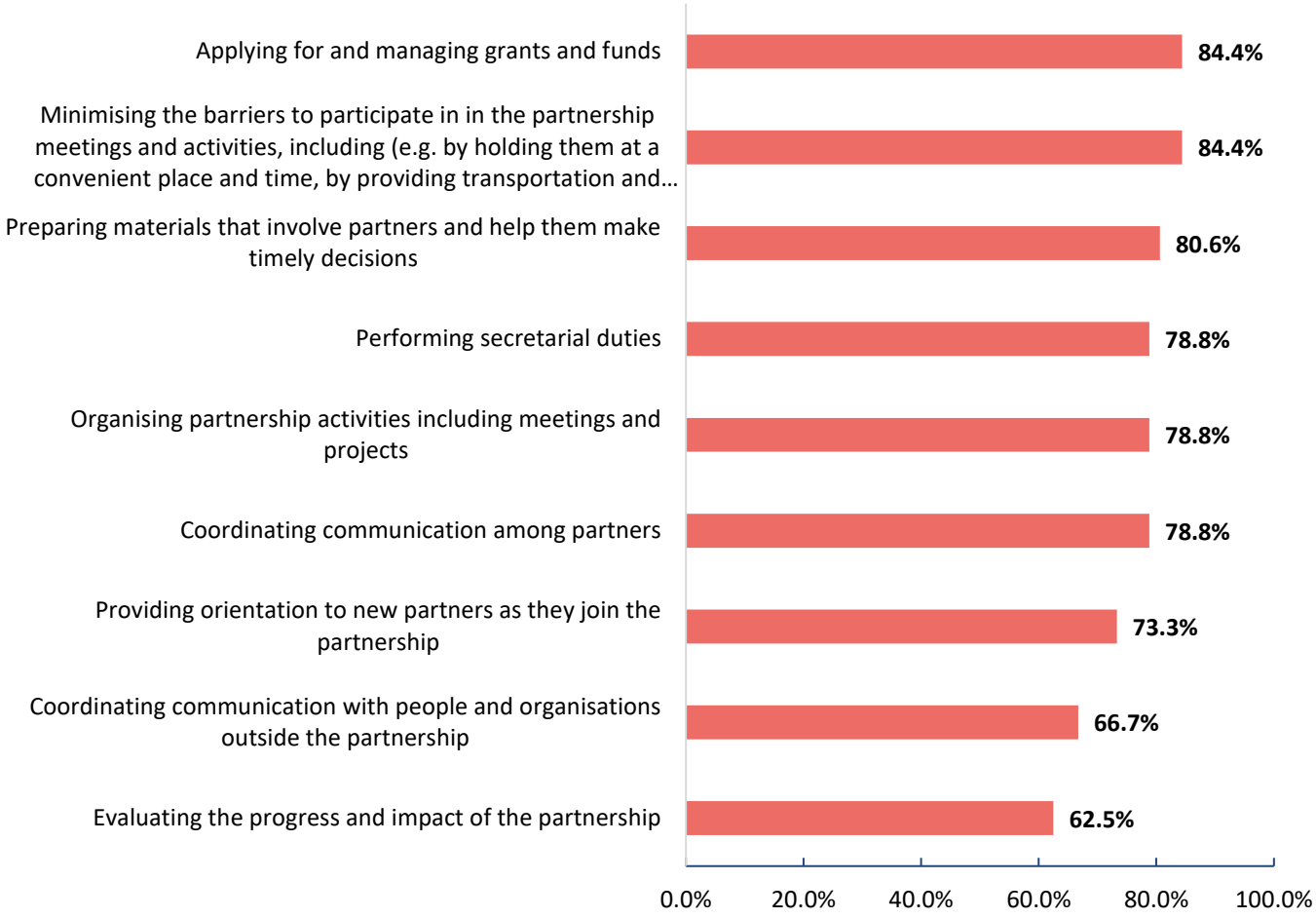
> *"The nature of the groups we're engaging with … they are volunteer-led; it requires a lot of capacity from us to make sure they're able to continue engaging with the project because they don't have any resources. They don't have the time to fill out the forms or do their monitoring evaluation without scaffolding from us and continuous support from us. Considering by the end of the project, the aim is that their capacity is built, that they are able to hold that amount of admin themselves … but also what's realistic to them right now, considering the resources they have?"* —Site 5 lead coordinator

Partners acknowledged the importance of monitoring and reporting processes to ensuring accountability. However, regular reporting required ongoing reminders and follow-ups by lead coordinators to ensure reports were completed on time.

> *"It's just constantly reminding, chasing, giving the heads up a few weeks beforehand … The reports aren't too onerous to do once you've done one."* —Site 4 steering group member

While reporting was necessary, partners highlighted the importance of balancing administrative requirements with the realities of delivery, particularly for grassroots organisations with limited capacity.

Figure 8: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnership as "excellent" or "very good" across the administration and management statements (n = 33)



4.2.5 Non-financial resources

The PSAT survey asked six questions relating to non-financial resources (Figure 9). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of good use of non-financial resources across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 4.06**
- **Headway Zone: The partnerships are doing pretty well in this area but have potential to progress even further.**

Figure 9 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as having "all" or "nearly all" of what they need in terms of non-financial resources statements.

The partnerships leveraged a range of non-financial resources to enhance their effectiveness, including statutory involvement, shared skills, community spaces, training opportunities and existing networks. Engagement with statutory agencies was seen as a valuable non-financial resource that strengthened the partnerships' reach and impact. Some steering group members highlighted the involvement of local authorities and police representatives in meetings. A key strength of the partnerships were their ability to facilitate knowledge exchange among partners, ensuring that a diverse range of expertise was accessible.

"I think it is working together as partners, sharing skills, because there are a lot of skills within the group, but we don't all have them." —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

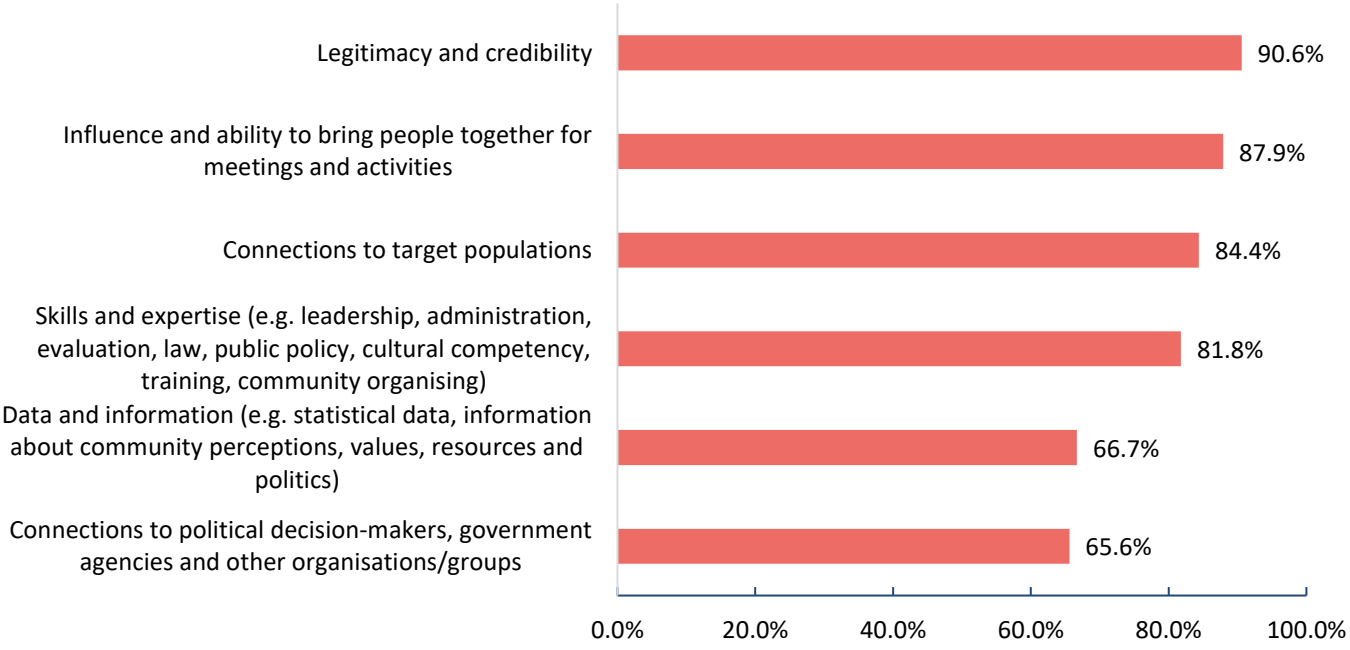
Maximising available community spaces was another way in which the partnership extended its reach. Faith-based institutions, community centres and outdoor areas were utilised to engage with more CYPs. Partners also placed a strong emphasis on upskilling and professional development, offering training to build capacity among delivery organisations. This was particularly evident in the provision of safeguarding and specialist training sessions, such as learning more about county lines and serious organised crime. These platforms allowed for information-sharing, event promotion and ongoing engagement with the wider community.

Another site interviewee discussed how they changed how tasks were delegated based on individual skills rather than seniority to ensure the best-suited person was completing particular tasks.

"People in community organisations have different skills, so even though the lead is usually responsible for the monitoring, in one of our collaborations, the lead ended up delegating it, and it still got done." —Site 4 lead coordinator

At one site, the programme positioned itself as a key reference point for community organisations in relation to best practice and community organising, with a Site 4 lead coordinator stating, *"They come to us as a reference point. If anything is to be done through community organisations, then we become the reference point, which I think we should definitely be."*

Figure 9: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnership as having "all" or "nearly all" its needs across the non-financial resources statements (n = 33)



4.2.6 Financial and other capital resources

The PSAT survey asked three questions relating to financial and other capital resources (Figure 10). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of good use of financial and other capital resources across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 3.89**
- **Work Zone: More effort is needed in this area to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential.**

Figure 10 shows the proportion of survey respondents who rated the partnership as having "all" or "nearly all" of what they need across the financial and other capital resources statements.

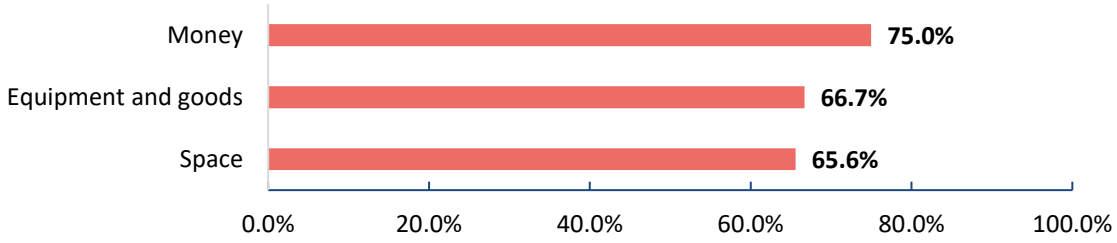
Access to financial resources remains a major challenge across many sites, limiting their ability to improve infrastructure and technology. At Site 5, delivery partners highlighted how inadequate facilities such as outdated kitchen spaces that restrict the range of activities they can offer, such as cooking and healthy eating sessions. Technology access is also a barrier, with unreliable internet and insufficient devices hindering efforts to support young people, particularly high schoolers. These limitations significantly impact the ability to deliver and expand programming effectively.

> *"The internet in the church is really hindering because when the high schoolers need to go on it ... we would like to move and have a technology station for them, but without [the] internet, we can't really have all that at the moment. And obviously, we don't have all the iPads that we need. We do get given laptops and stuff, but they're just so slow."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Two sites highlighted the importance that funding flexibility and sustainability plays in the long-term success of delivery organisations. One site criticised short-term funding, noting that it prevents meaningful, lasting change and disrupts both service delivery and participant outcomes. In contrast, another site found unexpected advantages in delayed funding, which allowed for a more sustainable pacing of programme delivery. Additionally, Site 4 steering group members praised funding that supports smaller, grassroots organisations, noting that this approach helps reach groups often overlooked by large funders and enables impactful work within communities that typically lack infrastructure or paid capacity.

> *"It's amazing because a lot of these organisations don't have that infrastructure in place or only have voluntary capacity. What's really good about this programme is that the money is being utilised and going to those who are often sort of missed out by bigger funders ... they do grassroots work and often go unnoticed. I think it's been amazing because their approach has been different, and I hope others will take a similar approach"* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

Figure 10: Proportion of survey respondents rating the partnership as having "all" or "nearly all" it needs across the financial and other capital resources statements (n = 33)



4.2.7 Satisfaction with participation

The PSAT survey asked five questions relating to partners' satisfaction with participation statements (see Figure 11). Responses from these questions (steering group members; n = 33) were summed to provide a mean score indicating the level of partnership satisfaction across the NF programme. Findings here show:

- **Mean score = 4.11**
- **Headway Zone: The partnerships are doing pretty well in this area but have potential to progress even further.**

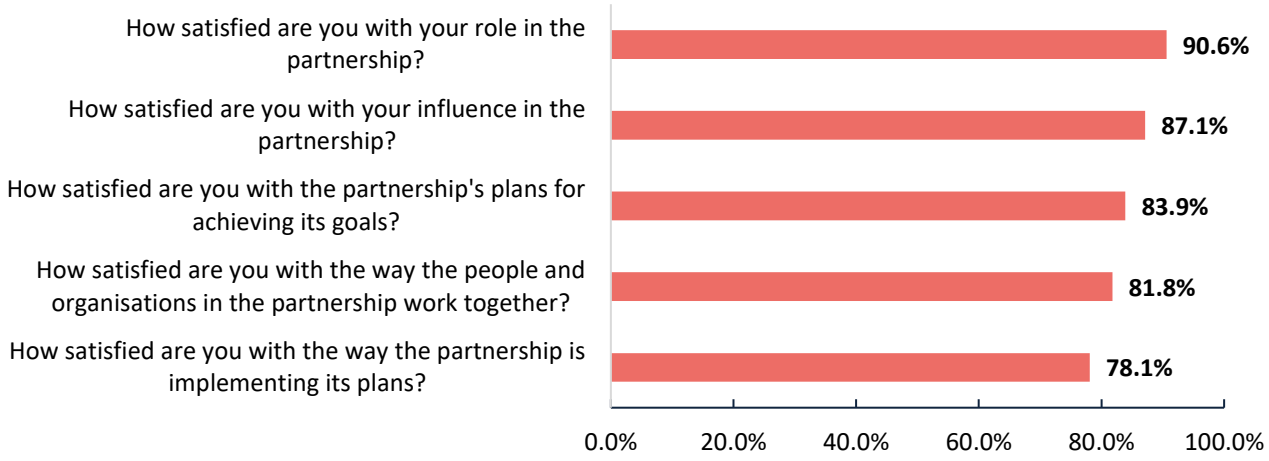
Figure 11 shows the proportion of survey respondents who reported being "completely satisfied" or "mostly satisfied" across the satisfaction with participation statements.

Steering group members across sites expressed strong satisfaction with their partnerships, highlighting high levels of engagement and commitment. One member noted that consistent attendance reflected the value participants place on the meetings. Members also emphasised the strength of the groups themselves, citing a shared understanding of impact, meaningful collaboration and the presence of the right stakeholders to drive positive community outcomes.

"I would say 80% of the members attend every month. The fact is that there is a good turnout, people are interested and they do want to do it, and they prioritise it as a meeting." —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

"The steering group seems really strong in terms of the right people that are there." —Site 3 steering group member/delivery partner

Figure 11: Proportion of survey respondents who reported being "completely" or "mostly" satisfied across the satisfaction with participation statements (n = 33)



4.2.8 Decision-making

Several sites highlighted the importance of impartiality in decision-making, particularly to avoid conflicts of interest. To ensure fairness, steering group members who were also delivery partners were excluded from funding panels, with decisions instead made by lead coordinators and elected community organisations. Some sites also introduced youth-led panels to review applications and recommend activities for funding.

> *"This year, I think it's just [lead coordinator and an elected community organisation] that makes the decision, and to be honest, I think that is a better process ... otherwise there's always going to be maybe a bit of conflict of interest."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

Figure 12 shows the proportion of survey respondents (steering group members; n = 33) who were extremely comfortable/very comfortable with the way their partnership makes decisions. Steering group members were also asked how often they felt they had been left out of the decision-making process (Figure 13).

Figure 12: How comfortable survey respondents' are with the way their partnership makes decisions (n = 33)

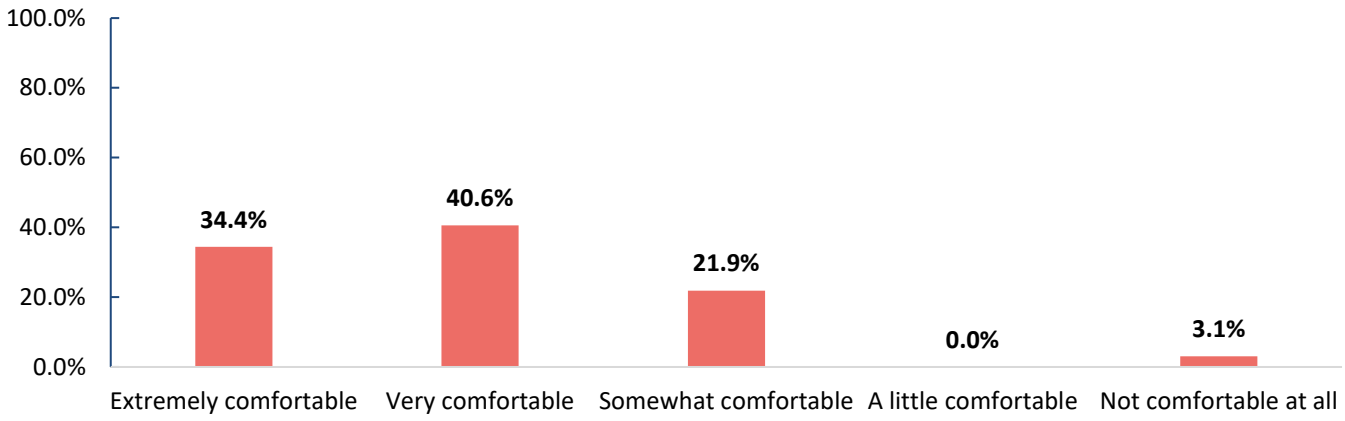
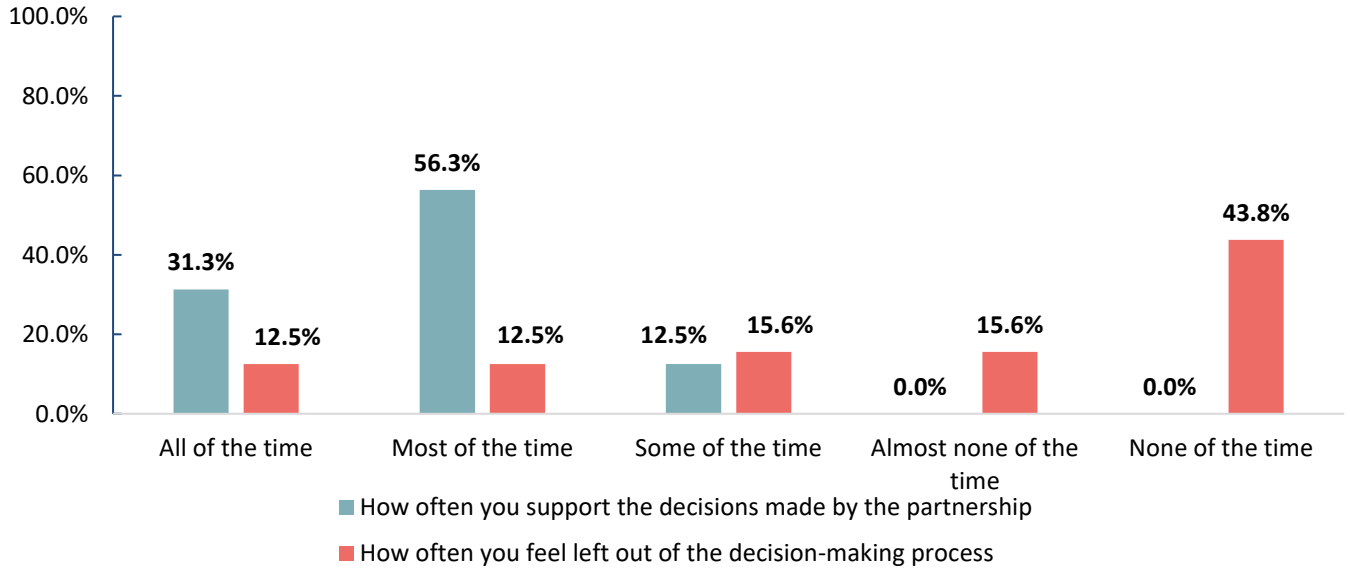


Figure 13: How often survey respondents felt they supported or were left out of the decision-making process in their partnership (n = 33)



4.2.9 Delivery partners' views on the delivery of their interventions/activities

Delivery partners who participated in the survey (n = 17) were asked how they felt about a number of statements; all (100%) felt they had been supported by the leaders/those funding them to undertake their activities very well/well. Delivery partners mentioned how lead coordinators/those funding their activities/interventions were excellent at communication and how monitoring and regular catch-ups to keep them accountable were also helpful in keeping partners consistently involved, with the leads there to assist with solutions to problems.

"The leads are on hand to discuss issues and will come out to us to work things through and take on concerns." —Delivery partner survey respondent

Over three-quarters (76.5%) reported that all elements of their activities/interventions were being delivered very well/well; one delivery partner reported that delivery had started to slow but had since progressed well. However, some delivery partners highlighted capacity as an issue, with one survey respondent stating that *"demand exceeds capacity currently"* and that capacity had affected the work carried out with other organisations that they had been working with.

"Some challenges include working with schools, change[s] in staff contracts, school priorities etc. This is a barrier, but we manage it well." —Delivery partner survey respondent

Similarly, most (76.5%) reported that the funding they had received covered all of the activities they had been commissioned to run very well/well. One delivery partner felt that the fund had helped them to continue to deliver their activities and build on existing activities/interventions; however, to make their activity/intervention sustainable in the long term, they would need to seek additional funding. This sentiment was reiterated by another delivery partner survey respondent, who noted that, *"While the funding is appreciated, the expectation is to do more with what is applied for. Oftentimes, match funding is needed to run a 12- or 15-month programme."*

Seven in ten (70.6%) felt they had very well/well accounted for additional costs in their application, such as staff time, facilities and bills. Delivery partners generally felt they had sufficiently accounted for additional costs and stated that factors such as having volunteers and setting out clear expectations helped to keep within budget.

"I think we set clear expectations and budgets to ensure this intervention can work." —Delivery partner survey respondent

Another delivery partner survey respondent stated, *"We have a deep breakdown of costs, plus we had a lot of volunteers, which helped lower the cost."* However, others reported that the funding provided did not always cover all of the costs or had resulted in tight budgets that just about covered costs

"In this instance, adequately is just about enough." —Delivery partner survey respondent

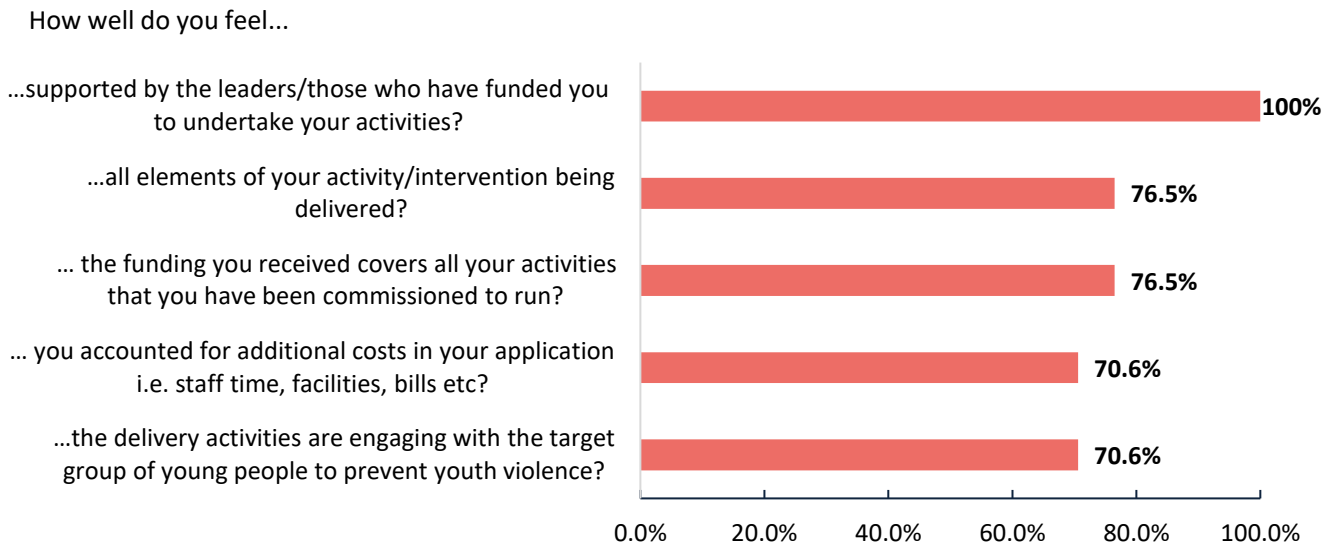
Similarly, (70.6%) of delivery partners felt their activities/interventions were engaging with the target group of CYPs to prevent youth violence. While this suggests that around 30% of partners did not believe the programme was directly targeting the intended group, it's important to note that this is a community-led initiative with a preventative, bottom-up approach. It recognises that CYPs living in areas affected by youth violence are inherently at risk. Although not all participants may be directly involved in youth violence, many activities offer early intervention and provide safe spaces for those who may be vulnerable. This broader reach aims to help build community resilience and reflects the programme's emphasis on addressing risk before it escalates.

Generally, delivery partners felt they did well in engaging with the CYPs most at risk of youth violence; others felt that additional help from the police could improve staff safety when approaching the most-at-risk CYPs.

"it's difficult to reach the youth at most risk of violence, but we are doing well with what we have. It would be good to get support from police to feel safe going to those kids where they [are], i.e. on the streets." —Delivery partner survey respondent

Other delivery partners stated that it was too early to tell or that it wasn't something they were currently measuring in their service (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Proportion of delivery partners who reported that they feel very good/good about statements relating to their activity/intervention delivery, survey data (n = 17)



4.3. Challenges in activity/intervention delivery

Through engagement with CYPs, delivery partners across the five sites identified several key challenges. While some are unique to specific locations, many reflect broader systemic issues that impact participation, engagement and programme delivery. These challenges cut across areas such as data collection, outcome/impact measurement, resource availability, employer engagement and building meaningful relationships with CYPs and partner organisations.

4.3.1 Data recording and impact measurement

Across all sites, capturing and measuring the outcomes and impact of activities and programmes remains a significant challenge. Although events and activities are often well received, tracking their long-term impact on the organisations and, more importantly, on the CYPs attending, remains difficult. A key issue is the lack of a unified data collection system across organisations, which leads to inconsistencies in tracking outcomes. Different organisations have their own internal processes for monitoring success, but these methods rarely align with the YEF's monitoring systems, leading to fragmented and incomplete data.

Sites highlighted that one of the main difficulties is understanding the long-term impact of programmes on the individuals involved. For example, one site noted that after an employment event, it was unclear whether the young people were able to secure employment or needed further support. This lack of follow-up makes it challenging to assess the true effectiveness of activities and to build on successes for future

improvements. In many cases, external organisations that are not part of the partnership do not report back on how individuals are supported after engaging with the programmes.

> *"We need to get much better at how we capture the impact, both from an employer side and an individual side. The hard thing with this is, like, we can do these events and support them, but it's really hard once people are in these places to know 100% how they got on or how they felt supported."* —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

Similarly, another site discussed how the focus on delivering programmes sometimes overshadowed the need for comprehensive data recording, making it difficult to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Another site expressed how data collection had been further complicated by staffing and resource constraints, which made it harder to maintain consistent data collection and follow up each quarter.

4.3.2 Capacity and resource limitations

> *"No space, too many young people and not enough staff."* —Delivery partner survey respondent

Across all five sites, the capacity constraints of delivery partner organisations were a key barrier to effective programme delivery. These challenges arose from limited staffing, tight budgets, oversubscribed programmes and the need to juggle multiple responsibilities, leading to an underestimation of the resources required to deliver programmes to the standard that delivery partners envision. Many organisations operate with minimal resources and rely heavily on volunteers, making it difficult to maintain consistent, high-quality services. Without additional funding, expanding programmes or increasing capacity remains a significant challenge. These concerns were also reiterated by the delivery partners who participated in the survey.

> *"I would say that because I'm not in this as a paid role, from our view, it is about capacity building, and I know that's come up a lot, but in order to do that, you've got to find the time to write up this and do that and to get it developed. So, for me, that has been the biggest hurdle."* —Site 5 delivery partner

> *"I work full-time; this is just community-based. I'm just helping the community and volunteering, and I don't get paid from it. So, it's just time, really; it's time-consuming."* —Site 1 delivery partner

Many delivery partners expressed the difficulty of managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously. Some sites reported staff burnout due to running several programmes at once. Organisations also under-estimated the time and resources needed to deliver multiple programmes.

> *"And then it's just trying to manage everything all at the same time because we've got other programmes going on as well, so it's managing everything all at the same time. So that's – it's a drag on people [staff]."* —Site 5 delivery partner

One of the most pressing issues was the overwhelming demand for activities compared to the available resources. Across sites, some delivery partners reported being consistently oversubscribed, forcing them to turn CYPs away due to capacity constraints.

"People don't tend to leave, but the problem is that if people don't leave, you don't have any spare places for new members to come in." —Site 5 delivery partner

Another site said that they had to adapt by splitting groups and adjusting workshop plans because of overcrowding, although they acknowledged that this allowed them to tailor the sessions to be more age-appropriate. However, even when activities are designed to be small and manageable, sites report that they often exceed intended participation numbers, which reduces the effectiveness of the sessions. This issue was highlighted by one site, who discussed how they had initially planned for smaller group sizes but ended up exceeding capacity.

Limited resources were a pervasive challenge across the five sites, affecting staffing levels, financial capacity and physical space. Staff shortages and relying on dedicated volunteer workers were noted as key issues in nearly all sites, with many programmes running with fewer personnel than needed to effectively deliver services. In one site, for example, financial constraints restricted the number of sessions that could be delivered. In another site, a lack of staffing and overcrowded sessions made it difficult to meet demand.

"We take up to 250 kids, and we still can be oversubscribed." —Site 5 steering group/delivery partner

Resource constraints also extended to physical spaces, with one site highlighting issues such as the loss of a building, which directly affected attendance and service delivery.

Geographical boundaries often limited access to services, as seen in two sites, where programmes could only serve certain geographical areas and postcodes. This led to discomfort in offering services to some CYPs while excluding others who lived just outside the designated catchment area. In some cases, the lack of adequate resources or physical space restricted the programme's ability to reach all those who needed support. Additionally, some sites noted that activities could not be delivered effectively in certain areas because of issues such as poor infrastructure and a lack of suitable venues.

4.3.3 Engagement and participation issues

While some activities/interventions had challenges with over-subscription and difficulties meeting demand, others had poor attendance, with stakeholders citing CYPs' lack of awareness and reluctance to engage. One site discussed how they had experienced issues with low attendance at activities, particularly among CYPs who struggled to mix outside of their pre-existing social groups. Others noted that it was specific activities CYPs didn't engage with. For example, one site struggled to fill music sessions, while another had difficulty engaging girls due to the organisation being a Christian faith–based charity. As a result, they made the decision not to fund those activities again.

"We did a music workshop last year which didn't get the numbers we expected or didn't get the engagement. Should I say, I think they might have got bored, or they just didn't like it." —Site 4 delivery partner

Two sites discussed how external factors, such as safety concerns when leaving an activity in the dark and family responsibilities (for example, looking after younger siblings), often contributed to low attendance.

"Because they're slightly older, they're having to look after their siblings and so can't come." —Site 5 delivery partner

Safety and well-being concerns emerged as major barriers to engagement in several sites. In two sites, for instance, CYPs' safety concerns were linked to ongoing violence in the area, making parents hesitant to allow their children to participate in activities. In addition, safety issues were also linked to environmental problems, such as poor street lighting, and concerns about safety in the local area led to reduced participation.

Beyond organisational relationships and collaboration, several sites reported ongoing challenges in building trust between CYPs and institutions such as the police. Negative perceptions and past experiences continued to shape engagement, often hindering effective collaboration. Strengthening these critical relationships was a shared priority across many sites, though for most, it remains a work in progress. Some sites expressed concern that new initiatives, such as Clear, Hold, Build, were having unintended negative effects – potentially undermining efforts to nurture these fragile connections. However, others observed signs of gradual improvement, with some of the historical mistrust beginning to ease and relationships slowly starting to rebuild.

"A lot of the young people don't have a very good relationship with police. So that was something that I was challenged with because, obviously, I'm there. I'm not ... I don't have ... I'm not clued up in terms of, other than obviously my personal experience of like, you know, they're here to help you. And also, there's someone doing a job, and their job is to protect you and make sure you feel safe. You know, how much pressure that must be on someone. Do you know what I mean?" —Site 3 delivery partner

4.3.4 Lack of employment opportunities for young people

A lack of job availability and of employers' willingness to engage with delivery partners' activities for the NF and to offer meaningful chances to young people were recurring themes. In one site, many employers wanted to engage with the young people but were not always able to offer immediate job openings, leading to frustration from delivery partners and disengaged young people.

"I think the biggest feedback we get is, sometimes we have employers, and they don't have any current jobs, but they still want to come and talk about it, and that's tricky because of that; like, they might be speaking to someone [CYP], and actually, they don't have any jobs, and I'm like, OK, why am I wasting my time talking to you?" —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

Traditional recruitment methods and previous experience expectations were seen as limiting opportunities for young people, with some employers reluctant to change long-established processes (for example, having a formal CV, previous employment references, qualifications or attendance at formal interviews). In many cases, these recruitment practices were not conducive to offering young people the kinds of opportunities they needed to enter the workforce, especially those who were at risk or facing barriers such as a lack of experience or qualifications.

> *"Trying to get employers to move away [from traditional employment practices and to] be flexible in how they recruit depending on the type of roles that they need."* —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

4.3.5 Building and maintaining relationships

Across all five sites, maintaining strong relationships with organisations, including employers, schools and statutory organisations, has been a recurring challenge. Staff changes, organisational shifts and initial hesitations from external groups have created barriers to sustaining meaningful partnerships. These challenges have impacted the effectiveness of engagement efforts, making long-term collaboration difficult to maintain and potentially affecting the legacy of the programme. Many sites reported difficulties in maintaining continuity when key contacts left their roles. This issue is particularly challenging when organisations rely on partnerships to deliver activities. The time and effort needed to rebuild these relationships can slow down progress. One site discussed how challenges arise when key figures in policing change roles, disrupting long-standing community connections.

> *"The officers spend so much time building relationships within the community, and then those connections can be disrupted when there's a change in leadership."* —Site 4 lead coordinator

Some sites, and one site in particular, noted that they have faced difficulties in establishing partnerships with schools. While some schools have been receptive, expanding to new schools in the area has been a challenge. These difficulties were attributed to a history of poor collaboration among local schools, frequent changes in leadership and competing priorities that have diverted focus from partnership efforts. This was reiterated by a delivery partner survey respondent who felt there needed to be a consensus and synergy across schools in order to get the best impact: *"[We need to ensure] that staff across school buy into the new way of delivering reading."*

Several sites discussed issues with working with certain organisations in the local areas; this was noted across a number of sites as a problem, particularly when working with statutory agencies such as local councils and politicians. One site said they had experienced hesitation from local groups when initiating the NF partnership; they noted that while, over time, relationships improved, initial resistance had made collaboration difficult.

> *"Initially, there was a bit of hesitation and resistance from certain groups, but over time, they've become more open and willing to engage."* —Site 5 delivery partner

4.4 Strategies to overcome challenges

Efforts to overcome challenges focus on improving CYPs' uptake and engagement, flexibility, resource allocation (particularly for programmes that are over-subscribed), collaboration and capacity building.

4.4.1 Listening to youth voices to improve retention and engagement

CYPs were able to share their views through a variety of different mechanisms, including advisory groups, large workshops, community events and site-led focus groups. Listening to CYPs and adapting sessions to their needs is believed to have increased participation and retention. CYPs suggested a plethora of activities they would like to see in their local area, including gymnastics, cooking, fashion design, badminton, football, debate clubs and self-defence classes.

> *"So, for me, I like badminton – there is always football on, but never another sport. I also agree with the suggestion of [a] debate club. I had a debate club in my school, and it was good; you learn speaking skills and how to research a topic. [It] would help with confidence in speaking in front of others also."* —Site 4 CYP

Three sites discussed wanting to take CYPs on trips, as *"many of these young people have never been outside their local area"* (Site 4 Delivery partner). When asked, a CYP from one site suggested going on more trips as something they would like to do. They discussed going on local or even international trips, to do fun activities such as go-karting and educational excursions.

> *"I reckon there should be more trips. Trip[s] outside of [site area]. Many kids haven't been outside of [local area]. Maybe even they can do like more trips for the youth; like, they should start doing go-karting trips. I think they should like start doing trips to New Zealand or something and educational trips."* —Site 2 CYP

One delivery partner survey respondent said that they were *"providing young people with an incentive. Making activities fun and engaging; co-production is key."* One site gave an example of how they changed from group sessions to offering more bespoke one-to-one support for mentoring and careers advice and tailoring their workshops based on topics CYPs wanted to know more about, such as CV and employment advice, internships, placements and interview advice.

> *"What happened was the feedback we got from all rounds – from the parents, from the youth, even from the mentees – they were happy ... And a lot of people requested more one-to-one [sessions]. Then, you know, maybe more tailored workshops, and so we are doing that now."* —Site 1 delivery partner

All sites discussed how providing incentives such as food and enjoyable activities has been an effective method of sustaining CYPs' participation.

> *"We work a lot with families and especially families in poverty that are in danger of getting heavily involved in debt and, yeah, not being able to eat and all that kind of stuff. We can give them somewhere safe to go."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

4.4.2 Flexibility, adaptability and diversity

Many organisations have shifted their approach based on what works best for the CYPs, such as overcoming barriers through flexibility in the location and timing of sessions, as well as considering factors such as building trusted relationships with parents and having bespoke sessions (e.g. girl-only sessions run by a female instructor). One challenge discussed by the sites was in relation to the safety of the CYPs attending the sessions. One site decided to adapt its session time to help reduce the risk of young people being out late in the evening and to help them get home safe.

> *"So, we obviously we have to reduce the time [to] earlier for safety reasons, just to make sure that we get home safely, and put in measures for everyone to get home safely as well. So, sometimes getting them taxis, if they have to be far, or drops home in the minibus or whatever it may be."* —Site 1 delivery partner

4.4.3 Increasing resources and capacity

"Getting more staff", "identifying more volunteers" and using existing resources more efficiently were key strategies highlighted by delivery partners to mitigate some of the challenges relating to capacity. Several sites discussed capacity and resource building as a key focus moving forwards. For example, one site discussed the desire to be able to check in with potential employers once a week, so as to maintain a strong relationship with local organisations who could be potential employers to young people; however, they felt that, presently, this was not realistic.

> *"I'd love to be able to do a drop-in for each employer every week, but we can't do that, and I think that that can be a challenge because there's no consistent presence."* —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

Another site spoke about how important it is to have the right staff who are experienced and qualified to work with vulnerable and at-risk CYPs.

> *"I'm going to blow our own trumpet; we've been doing this a long time, and we know what we're doing. We know the language that we need to use. We know how hard you can, like, push a young person and when you need to step back and let them have space."* —Site 3 delivery partner

4.4.4 Continuing to build strong relationships

Stronger partnerships and relationship building with other organisations have helped overcome engagement and capacity challenges. Many organisations focused on utilising staff expertise and existing partnerships to improve reach and impact. One delivery partner survey respondent discussed the importance of leveraging expertise for better delivery: *"Let different people lead in the different projects that understand that specific group."*

Information sharing across organisations was also highlighted as a way to get the most out of provision in the area: *"Using the network of partners, sharing each other's information"* (delivery partner survey respondent). A delivery partner from one site discussed utilising pre-existing networks, such as local groups

with large numbers, to share news about their programme, as well as more traditional methods such as posters.

> *"WhatsApp is a great tool ... we have lots of these groups with hundreds of people on it. But it's also going and giving out posters. I've gone round the local places where I know young people are – even, like, barbershops. You'd be surprised how many young people are in barbershops now."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

In addition, alongside traditional methods of recruitment such as word of mouth and posters in local areas, digital platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp and Snapchat have been key tools for reaching CYPs.

> *"We made a TikTok specifically for the youth. At least that way they can engage in our content, so when they hear something's coming, they're already trying to sign up before we've even released it."* —Site 1 delivery partner

4.5 What are stakeholders' and children and young people's views on the programme?

Although this is a process evaluation report, the evaluation has also started to explore the perceived outcomes of the programme for CYPs and partnerships. As part of this year's evaluation, it also explores CYPs' views in their local area, to inform future programme implementation. This section discusses the following themes and sub-themes (Table 8).

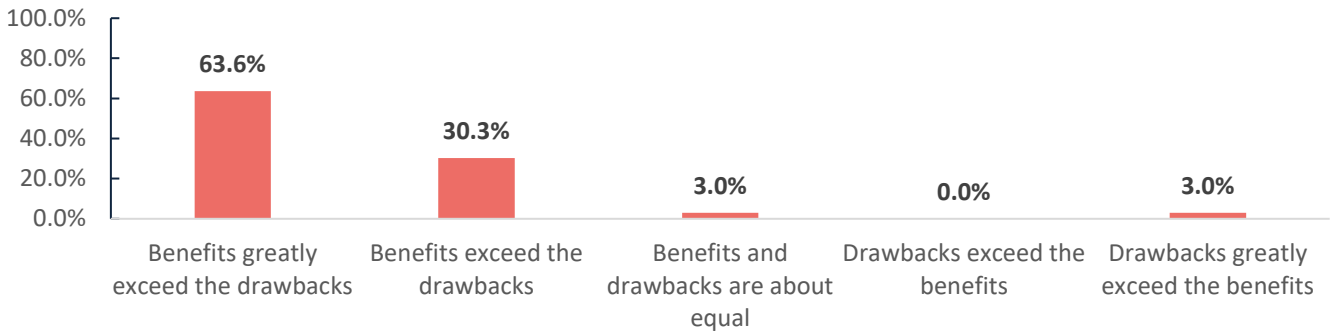
Table 8: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
Outcomes to date from intervention/activity delivery	• Benefits and drawbacks of participation in the partnerships • Perceived outcomes for children and young people, the community and the partnerships
Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Fund programme	• Securing additional funding • Collaboration, networking and relationships • The adaptability of action plans • Building capacity • Creating a legacy • Embedding youth voices throughout the programme
Young people's perceptions of their local area	• Lack of facilities and funding • Cleanliness and the environment • Multiculturalism and diversity

4.5.1 Benefits and drawbacks of participation in the partnerships

Nearly all (93.9%) steering group member survey respondents (n = 33) reported that the perceived benefits of participating in the partnership greatly exceeded/exceeded the drawbacks (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Survey respondents' opinions on the benefits versus the drawbacks of participating in the partnership (n = 33)



Benefits: Figure 16 illustrates the proportion of steering group survey respondents who reported specific benefits gained through their involvement in the partnership.

Participation in the partnerships was perceived to have brought a range of benefits, with improved relationships, collaboration and capacity building emerging as key themes. Organisations have gained valuable support through lead coordinators, who assist with *"behind the scenes"* work and help establish connections with new networks and organisations. The funding has strengthened communication among professionals and encouraged collaboration, with partners working together on bids and larger projects. These joint efforts have enhanced both organisational impact and youth engagement. Additionally, the partnerships have supported skill development, with members completing leadership programmes and gaining recognised qualifications. As a result, partnerships are now able to offer more diverse activities and engage more young people than ever before.

"The good thing about YEF and this funding, it's really brought the professionals together." —Site 3 steering group member

Drawbacks: Figure 17 illustrates the proportion of steering group survey respondents who reported specific drawbacks through their involvement in the partnership.

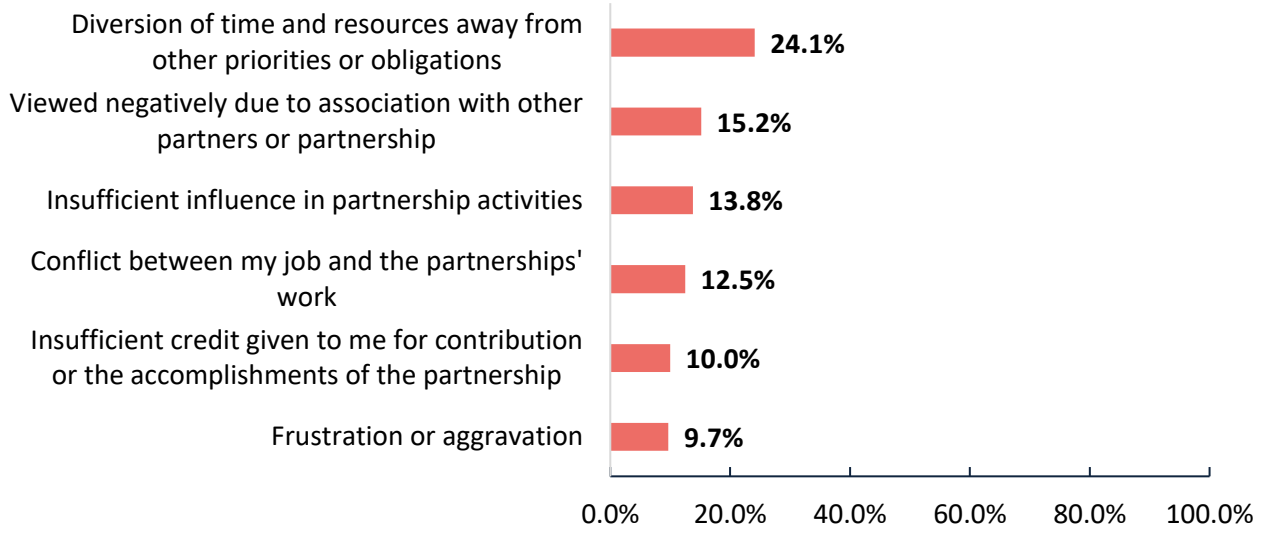
Despite the many benefits of participating in the partnerships, members have identified several challenges. Conflicts within steering groups have emerged as a significant issue, often stemming from differing priorities among members. In some cases, inconsistent attendance and low engagement have also hindered group effectiveness. A lack of meaningful consultation with statutory organisations has further contributed to the frustration, with some members feeling their voices are overlooked or undervalued. Additionally, balancing steering group responsibilities with other professional duties, particularly for those in teaching roles, has proven difficult and may impact sustained participation.

"Some of the barriers are like actually getting along and listening to each other." —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

"Some of the team will look a little disengaged, and for example, one of them hasn't been turning up to any meetings recently." —Site 1 lead coordinator

Figure 16: Proportion of survey respondents who reported "yes" or "no" to experiencing the following benefits because of their participation in their partnership (n = 33)

Figure 17: Proportion of survey respondents who reported "yes" or "no" to experiencing the following drawbacks because of their participation in their partnership (n = 33)



4.5.2 Emerging intervention/activity outcomes

This section presents early evidence that the programme is beginning to deliver meaningful outcomes for CYPs, communities and partner organisations across the five sites. While the full impact of long-term change will take time to measure and will be included in the summative evaluation, qualitative insights gathered from the five sites highlight several areas of progress towards the programme's intended goals.

Emerging outcomes for children and young people

Early intervention: Interviewees, focus group attendees and survey respondents across several sites discussed the importance of early intervention efforts in their local communities. By providing support to CYPs before issues escalate, they can help them to stay engaged in education and avoid negative influences. One site discussed the importance of reducing the risk associated with school exclusion. Anecdotal evidence from a specific case example was used to describe how a delivery partner intervened on a young person's behalf to keep them in education by collaborating with schools and parents and offering one-to-one mentoring. Another site discussed how their intervention provided a safe space for a young girl who might otherwise have ended up homeless or wandering the streets.

> *"I've heard stories about some of these young boys getting excluded from college or having a hard time in school. The diversion groups have intervened, [spoken] with the parents, [spoken] to schools directly and said, 'Look, I'm mentoring them, I'm supporting them. Could we work together instead of exiting them from the education system?'"* —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

> *"[There was a] girl who was going through some difficulties at home, and because she was able to attend our session, it became a safe space for her, and it kept her from living on the street."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

Increase in opportunities and training: Several sites discussed how they had supported skill development, job readiness and personal growth, helping CYPs make informed career choices or to find employment or training. A delivery partner from one site spoke about how they had helped young people gain employment, potentially diverting them away from less positive paths, such as criminal behaviours. A CYP from that same site reiterated this, stating that the delivery partners had helped them and other young people to get their first job by working one-on-one with them, which allowed those working at the sites to find out what the CYP was good at and what kind of job would best suit them.

> *"They did help me. I feel like our leaders help young people getting employed in their first jobs or [are] looking out for them, speaking to them one-to-one. So, I feel like they find out what the young people are good at and then find a job that suits them."* —Site 2 CYP

A CYP from another site felt that the skills they had learned while participating in NF-funded mentoring and training interventions helped them to prepare for when they were ready to get a job and to establish the communication skills they would need for a job interview.

> *"It can help with your vocabulary ... when you grow up, when you go into an interview for a job, if you use slang words, they won't really accept you."* —Site 3 CYP

Employment opportunities have been a key focus across most sites, *"empowering those from disadvantaged backgrounds"* (delivery partner survey respondent). One site discussed the increase in the number of young people they had supported to gain employment, helping to create professional career pathways and providing new opportunities for young people to thrive.

> *"Seventeen jobs provided in 2024, including roles for 15 young people aged 18–24 in the specific local area one site is set in. Skills development, such as Microsoft training, sports sponsorships, i.e. local boxers, and funding for SIA [Security Industry Authority] license courses."*—Delivery partner survey respondent

Improved confidence and mental well-being: All five sites have funded youth programmes aimed at improving CYPs' mental health and well-being. These initiatives aimed to reduce anxiety, encourage social connections and build self-esteem. Several CYPs from a number of sites expressed how the creative, performance-based and skills-based programmes had given them increased confidence and reduced their anxiety.

> *"Yes, it's definitely boosted confidence in some of us. A lot of confidence because normally I have anxiety, where I don't talk to people I don't know, but this has convinced me to speak to more people."*—Site 3 CYP

Relationship building: Many participants across all sites noted that the youth programmes were helping to foster meaningful relationships among peers, families and communities. Through shared experiences, it was suggested that CYPs strengthen their social skills and develop trust, understanding and friendships. One participant spoke about how attending programmes where they had access to positive role models was believed to have had a positive impact on some CYPs' relationships with their families.

> *"Some teenagers were not responsive, and you know they're talking back to their parents. Have more arguments, more fights maybe, and then seeing how someone's mood can change just through [the influence] of a role model or better role model that [is] outside [their family]. Sometimes people don't listen to their family, but someone else is external."* —Site 1 delivery partner

Learning new skills: The development of new skills through youth programmes was consistently identified as a potential outcome with the potential to support employability, education, creativity and personal growth. In one site, a young participant described gaining confidence in their reading, while another site reported integrating GCSE preparation with sports activities to boost educational attainment. Creative programmes were also highlighted as a space where CYPs could enhance their artistic skills and build positive peer relationships. In the same area, participants also reported gaining valuable knowledge on online safety, exploitation and drug awareness through interactive, resource-rich sessions. Elsewhere, delivery partners observed that older youth were developing key employability skills such as teamwork, self-discipline and responsibility. One site shared an example of a former participant who had progressed to become a mentor, demonstrating how skills gained through the programme were being reinvested into the community.

"We've helped [CYP] through school, and [CYP] now works with us; they are one of our volunteers. We have a lot of peer mentors that come and volunteer with us. So, the younger people that come in, if they don't want to speak to us, they've got someone on their level or maybe just a few years old[er] that understand them." —Site 1 delivery partner

Building young people's power: Across the five sites, CYPs have been given opportunities to lead, make decisions and influence their communities. By embedding youth-led and peer-supported approaches, these initiatives have helped strengthen CYPs' voices and foster a sense of agency. Delivery partners observed that involving CYPs in hands-on activities supported their well-being and personal development as emerging community leaders. CYPs have played active roles in decision-making processes, including serving on funding panels and developing leadership skills through these responsibilities. At one site, a group of young participants who regularly attended sessions went on to volunteer at community events over the summer, demonstrating a sense of ownership and commitment. In another site, youth leaders were appointed to act as intermediaries between CYPs and adults, ensuring that youth perspectives shaped local initiatives.

"We were speaking earlier about the applications – some of them didn't quite meet the requirements, then we'd give feedback. And it was very interesting to see how upon, kind of, receiving the feedback, you could definitely see in, like, the second round, and afterwards, there would be changes to the way that they did things, and you could tell they took the feedback on board." —Site 5 CYP

Reducing the risks of exposure to crime and youth violence: The lead coordinators, steering group members and delivery partners interviewed felt that the programmes have the potential to reduce local youth involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour in the future if they continue to engage with CYPs in their local areas. Delivery partners felt that providing CYPs with positive role models, alternative paths to success, emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills, and a sense of belonging would reduce the time the young people spent hanging around the streets, where they would be at great risk of being exploited and becoming involved in criminal behaviours. This was supported by CYPs, who reported that having a safe space and fun activities kept them off the street. Others perceived that CYPs' behaviour was improving and that the CYPs also felt safer as a result of the programme.

"There was a young person who, nearly every other week, he'd be banned because of his aggressive behaviour, getting other young people in headlocks and not engaging well. In just over a year, he doesn't get into trouble anymore. He's actually started to join the youth panel to speak to the police and help other young people." —Site 3 CYP

"When I was younger, I used to hear scary stories about the [local leisure centre], but now, since more people have started going, it feels calmer and more fun. It's like people who might've turned to crime don't feel the need to anymore." —Site 5 CYP

Community outcomes

Across the five sites, qualitative feedback suggests that the programme has played a crucial role in strengthening communities by fostering engagement, increasing awareness and creating opportunities for

CYPs and their families. At one site, there has been an increase in parental involvement in activities, and the local community has become more aware of violence prevention and CYPs' safety.

> *"There's been an increased awareness about preventing violence in families and the community. So, parents are more mindful about sending their kids to certain activities. They are starting to realise that young people need these kinds of opportunities to grow confidently. It gives them alternatives, a way to remove themselves from situations that aren't friendly. So, I think the word's getting out there, and one success we had was when we did the youth forum, more parents got involved."* —Site 4 steering group member/delivery partner

In one site, CYPs have embraced volunteering as a way to give back to their community, recognising that not all youth have the same opportunities. This sense of responsibility goes beyond financial rewards, with volunteers viewing their roles as vital to the health and well-being of local families. Similar community engagement has been seen at another site, where young people have actively involved their families in activities. The programme has also helped organisations build a strong sense of identity and belonging, with one creating a *"brand and a family in the community"* (Site 1 delivery partner). Survey respondents highlighted the broader impact, including increased resources and the provision of seed funding that enabled some organisations to secure further support. These efforts have fostered a sense of purpose and inclusion among CYPs while strengthening local networks to maintain resilient, supportive communities.

> *"This isn't just about attending sessions; it's about inspiring them to take social action. For instance, they've participated in initiatives like feeding the homeless, organising food drives and creating care packages for the less fortunate. These activities give them a sense of purpose and show them how they can make a real difference. It's been incredible to witness how they've stepped up and taken part in these efforts. They're not just learning; they're applying what they've learned to positively impact their communities."* —Site 5 delivery partner

Partnership outcomes

The delivery of interventions has fostered stronger partnerships between organisations, leading to greater collaboration, resource sharing and knowledge exchange. Collaboration has been essential, with a Site 1 delivery partner emphasising the value of teamwork by saying, *"I think we always go by 'it takes a village'."* Strong communication has been a key theme across the sites, ensuring that CYPs are signposted to the right support. As one delivery partner survey respondent noted, they had seen a *"partnership of local institutions signposting and working closely with each other"*. Schools have also played a role in strengthening these collaborations, with a delivery partner survey respondent explaining, *"Meeting with our local schools has been beneficial, and [we have been] discussing similar issues. I think this type of collaboration should be replicated more often."* Through these strengthened partnerships, interventions are more effectively delivered, ensuring that CYPs receive the right support while also enhancing collaboration across sectors.

Support between sites has also been highlighted as a positive outcome of the programme. One site shared its small-grant templates with another, helping to streamline the funding application process. This kind of

knowledge-sharing has improved how sites recruit organisations and strengthened best practices across the programme.

4.5.2 Sustainability

Across all five sites, sustainability has been a key concern in ensuring that the impact of the NF programme continues beyond its funding period.

Securing additional funding: A recurring concern across all sites was how to secure funding beyond the YEF programme period. At one site, participants emphasised the need to explore matched funding, alternative funding avenues and future financial planning to ensure continuity once the programme ended. Another site highlighted the difficulty of pursuing sustainability while managing existing workloads, noting that much of the work relies on the goodwill and voluntary commitment of individuals already stretched in their roles. This raised concerns about the sustainability of the current model in the long term. Similarly, another site expressed anxiety about the future of staff recruited specifically for intervention delivery, noting that without continued funding, those roles, and the activities they support, are at risk of being lost.

> *"Obviously, we've only got a couple of years left of this funding, and we have to make sure it lasts. It's great at the moment that we're all expanding and doing things, but then what happens in two years' time when the money runs out? And now you know, we're going to pay sessional staff to do those sessions, which is great, but now they are getting paid. What will then happen in two years' time?"* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Another site delivery partner discussed how they had managed to secure funding through matched funding, enabling them to expand their intervention and reach and support more CYPs from their area who would otherwise have nowhere to go.

> *"It's not a chargeable service, so even down to when we went over capacity, we match funded it to make sure that all the youth could come, rather than they don't have nowhere to go."* —Site 1 delivery partner

Another site discussed how steering group members/delivery partners had already begun to source other avenues for funding to keep the programme sustainable.

> *"People are also looking for other grants, small grants and funding opportunities outside of the [programme]. This has been a major success."* —Site 4 lead coordinator

Collaboration, networking and relationships: Collaboration and relationships have been central to sustaining the programme. One site described how joint funding bids with other organisations had strengthened partnerships and increased access to resources by bringing together a wider range of knowledge and experience. However, it was discussed that maintaining long-term relationships with CYPs remained difficult, particularly when interventions were short term or time-limited. Sites also explored alternative strategies for sustainability beyond funding. These included strengthening connections with schools, other charities and local neighbourhood policing teams to build on existing progress. One site

emphasised that maintaining regular meetings between schools helped to preserve relationships and momentum, noting that even simple, low-cost networking events could carry forwards the legacy of the programme.

> *"Now that we're working with different organisations, we might put in joint bids for things, so we have that kind of, just more knowledge and more experience from different organisations to offer a lot more."* —Site 3 steering group member/delivery partner

Adaptability of action plans: Adaptability was a common theme across multiple sites, with four organisations discussing how flexibility in programming ensures sustainability in the face of changing needs or funding circumstances. Sites noted the importance of updating action plans to address emerging needs, ensuring the programme evolves alongside changes in the community.

> *"We'll need to adjust the action plan ... the needs likely will change as times go on."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Building capacity: Three sites focused on the need to continue to build capacity to ensure long-term sustainability, emphasising the importance of developing infrastructure and partnerships that can independently sustain programmes beyond YEF funding. One site noted that grassroots organisations should work together on funding applications, allowing them to move away from relying on lead organisations.

> *"I think the angle is, ultimately, to support them to become standalone charities and to not need almost a hand-holding that we offer and that support that we offer."* —Site 5 lead coordinator

Three sites emphasised the importance of measuring impact through attendance and engagement, which helps to make decisions about future funding. They also prioritise organisations that show potential for building sustainable partnerships within the community. One site discussed how they had difficulty deciding between two funding applications; they ended up landing on the intervention that was most likely to be sustainable long term: *"It came down to which one of these was more likely to help build sustainability within the neighbourhood"* (Site 4 steering group member).

Whole-system approaches to create sustainable changes: Across all sites, there was a shared recognition that interventions must leave a lasting impact after YEF funding ends. This involves creating self-sustaining structures and ensuring that community members and organisations continue the work. Creating a lasting legacy beyond the funding period was a key theme across sites. One site emphasised the importance of ensuring the NF remains run by a community steering group once the programme finishes, avoiding potential takeover by statutory organisations that could overshadow the work of the current steering group.

> *"So, even beyond the YEF now after two years, we're looking to legacy and sustainability. This should just stand on its own because otherwise the council will take over and just want to train up, like, 10 people and everything we've built would, not be for nothing, but yeah."* —Site 2 steering group member/delivery partner

Similarly, at another site, there was a focus on ensuring that their efforts take root in the community. One partner from that site talked about the importance of expanding participation, and this was something that

they viewed as a key part of their long-term legacy plan, with a focus on involving more CYPs and creating lasting change through increased engagement.

> *"Next year, we hope to expand to like 60 people instead of 28 this year ... Sustainability is what I'm looking at."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

Embedding youth voices throughout the programme: All five sites stressed the importance of youth voice in shaping the intervention and ensuring that it remained relevant to the target audience. Engaging CYPs early in the process is vital to creating programmes that resonate and can be sustained over time. Several sites specifically pointed out that youth voice was not strongly embedded in the first year of their projects but is now a central part of the intervention; this was predominately achieved by inviting CYPs to attend steering group meetings, sit on funding decision panels and organise events etc. This inclusion of CYPs aims to ensure the interventions align with the young people's needs and aspirations.

> *"Not being scared to bring in youth voice earlier. Even if you feel that [the local programme] is not ready. Two years of project, unfortunately, have gone by, and in those two years that youth voice wasn't very strongly there. It's only now in the second year really that we're starting to have that youth voice embedded in it."* —Site 5 steering group member/delivery partner

4.5.3 Children and young people's perceptions of their local area

Understanding how CYPs perceive their local area is vital to shaping interventions that are responsive to their lived experiences. This section explores how CYPs across the five sites (n = 46) describe their communities, highlighting the importance of local context in shaping experiences.

Lack of facilities and funding: CYPs across several sites expressed concern about the lack of facilities and investment in their local areas, which they felt negatively affected their communities. Poorly maintained parks and recreational spaces were commonly mentioned, with limited funding leading to substandard amenities that discouraged use. This lack of accessible and appealing spaces was seen to contribute to boredom and, in some cases, to increased vulnerability to negative influences such as gangs and crime. CYPs also voiced frustration about the limited number of community events and activities, particularly during weekends and school holidays, which made it harder for them to stay engaged, active and connected.

> *"Yeah, there's not much going on, especially on weekends or during the school holidays – it's like everything stops."* —Site 5 CYP

Cleanliness and the local environment: CYPs across two sites perceived the environment and cleanliness of their local area as needing improvement. They expressed concerns about litter and a general lack of upkeep, which affected the overall appearance and atmosphere of the community. Some felt that better maintenance and investment in cleanliness would make the area more pleasant and inviting. The condition of the local environment was noted as affecting how CYPs use public spaces, with some avoiding certain areas due to their poor upkeep. This creates barriers to participation, particularly in activities held late at night or in local parks, where safety is a key concern.

"Well, as you come through, where the church [is,] there's a spot where it's really dark. When we walk through there at night, we have to go all the way around because it's so dark. The trees and leaves make it harder to see. There's not enough light." —Site 5 CYP

Multiculturism and diversity: CYPs from three sites emphasised how much they value the multiculturalism and diversity of their communities, describing these aspects as sources of strength, connection and belonging. They spoke about how diversity enables them to form friendships, learn from different cultures and feel part of an inclusive environment. Despite facing challenges such as crime and drug-related issues, many still viewed their neighbourhoods as tightly connected and supportive. Some reflected on the way communities unite around shared causes, noting how familiar faces come together for local events or to address common concerns. Others expressed frustration at the negative stereotypes often associated with their areas, believing that these do not reflect the lived reality of safety and cohesion they experience. At one site, CYPs highlighted their area's long-standing cultural richness and history, pointing to the unique blend of traditions and backgrounds as a defining feature.

"[Local area] in general, it has a lot of history … this community in particular is very diverse when it comes to the culture, compared to other parts of the city." —Site 2 CYP

5. Key learning and conclusions

5.1 Key learning for this project (Year 2)

This year has revealed significant insights into overcoming challenges and enhancing the delivery of youth-focused interventions. Steering groups and delivery partners across the five sites have developed and embedded a range of strategies to address persistent issues, including resource constraints and the low engagement and retention of CYPs in interventions. These strategies include actively listening to CYPs through focus groups, advisory panels and workshops and adapting interventions based on their feedback, such as by introducing more relevant activities, offering one-to-one mentoring and tailoring sessions to CYPs' interests and needs. Programmes have also provided incentives to boost participation, such as food and enriching experiences, including local trips and activity days. Flexibility in delivery was achieved by adjusting session times for safety and offering girls-only spaces, and using digital tools such as TikTok and WhatsApp has helped to engage more CYPs. Efforts to build capacity through increased staffing, volunteer recruitment and the more efficient use of resources have supported sustainability. Furthermore, delivery partners have strengthened partnerships by co-developing funding bids, expanding steering groups and improving information sharing across networks. While these approaches have led to improved engagement, outcomes and community involvement, further work is required to ensure that all partners feel included in decision-making, that collaboration is equitable and that funding is directed towards the programmes that target the CYPs most at risk of youth violence.

Key learnings for delivery of the programme

- ***Engagement and flexibility:*** Adapting sessions based on CYPs' preferences has led to increased attendance and retention. Offering trips, tailored workshops, flexible timings and gender-specific sessions helped to maintain engagement while addressing local needs. Listening to CYPs and incorporating their feedback has made the programme more relevant and appealing. Programmes focused on mental health and providing safe spaces have contributed to perceived increases in confidence, reduced anxiety and improved emotional well-being. Offering tailored support such as one-to-one mentoring has also been effective at maintaining young people's engagement.

- ***Building partnerships and addressing resource gaps:*** Strengthening partnerships with potential employers, schools and local organisations has improved engagement and resource sharing. Regular check-ins with other organisations, expanding the number of staff to meet new demand and recruiting volunteers were key strategies for overcoming resource limitations. Additionally, utilising trusted community networks for recruitment ensured a broader reach and effectiveness.

- ***Youth leadership and empowerment:*** Giving CYPs opportunities to lead, make decisions and influence local initiatives has enhanced their confidence and ownership. Youth-led panels and decision-making have been particularly impactful in terms of fostering accountability and strengthening community connections.

- ***Early intervention and skill development:*** Early interventions were perceived to be linked to a reduction (or to have the ability, in the future, to reduce) school exclusion and criminal involvement, while skill development programmes have empowered CYPs to make informed decisions about their futures. By providing access to job readiness training, career advice and personal growth opportunities, these programmes, partners say, are helping young people to build their stable futures.

- ***Sustainability and legacy:*** Sustainability planning has been a priority, with efforts focused on securing funding beyond the programme's duration and developing self-sustaining community structures. Embedding youth voices in programme design ensures lasting relevance, while fostering partnerships helps to build a network of support that can carry the programme forward.

- ***Data collection and impact measurement:*** Consistent data collection is essential to measuring the reach, dose and long-term outcomes/impact of the programme. Strengthening systems, improving the capacity of partners from grassroot organisations to accurately record CYPs' attendance and establishing a system for tracking outcomes will address the challenges related to assessing outcomes and ensure the programme's success beyond its initial phase.

These key learnings highlight the importance of adaptability, community collaboration and youth empowerment in ensuring the success and sustainability of intervention programmes.

5.2 Early recommendations for future Neighbourhood Fund programmes

The YEF NF involves investment across five neighbourhoods, as detailed in this report. To guide potential future placed-based approaches, both the learning partners and the evaluation partner play a crucial role in identifying insights for upcoming implementation. Based on the findings from the Year 2 evaluation, we present initial recommendations for similar place-based programmes below (further recommendations are also available in the Year 1 evaluation report [Quigg et al., 2024]).

- ***Make funding decisions in regard to delivery partners impartially****:* To ensure impartiality in funding decisions, it is crucial that steering group members (particularly when they are also delivery partners) are not directly involved in allocating funds. Instead, an independent external organisation or one chosen by the steering group should be tasked with reviewing applications to minimise bias and conflict of interest. As youth-led approaches continue to gain traction across the programme, a key consideration is how to balance CYPs' voices with evidence about which activities most effectively contribute to improved outcomes. While empowering CYPs to shape decisions fosters ownership and engagement, it is equally important to ensure that the initiatives selected are grounded in evidence on what works. One way to support this balance is by involving an independent youth panel that can provide informed input on what is relevant and appealing to them and their peers when presented with a range of evidence-informed options to choose from. These approaches help to ensure that funding decisions not only reflect CYPs' interests but also align with interventions that are known to have a positive impact. In doing so, the process becomes more transparent and responsive, building trust and credibility among young participants and delivery partners alike.

- ***Foster diversity and innovation through evolving partnerships:*** It is beneficial to continue seeking new organisations to join the steering group and apply for funding, thus ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and fresh ideas. By maintaining strong relationships with existing partners while also being open to new ones, programmes can benefit from innovative interventions and approaches. This flexibility helps prevent stagnation, encourages creativity and ensures that funding is distributed based on current needs and the evolving priorities of the community.
- ***Acknowledge the importance of early youth involvement in programme development:*** Including youth voice early in the process is crucial to creating programmes that are relevant and effective. Early involvement fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, encouraging greater engagement and participation throughout the programme. It also helps identify potential challenges and opportunities from the youth perspective, which can lead to more innovative and successful solutions. Ultimately, embedding youth voice from the outset strengthens the programme's impact and builds trust and accountability between CYPs and community steering groups and delivery partners.
- ***Engage families and local communities in the programme's progress:*** Involve families and local community members through information sessions, family-inclusive events or regular updates about new activities and interventions. Strengthen ties with local communities, schools and employers to provide a broader support system for CYPs and enhance programme sustainability.
- ***Prepare for scaling and sustainability****:* Building strong, sustainable partnerships and securing funding beyond the initial programme phase is key to long-term success. Collaboration with local organisations, statutory services and schools, along with the creation of self-sustaining community group structures, will help ensure the programme continues to thrive. Engaging CYPs in decision-making and leadership roles will also build a legacy and ensure the programme remains relevant to their needs.
- ***Ensure continued evaluation, monitoring and best practice*****:** Continued evaluation is essential to ensuring the ongoing effectiveness and relevance of the programme. By regularly assessing outcomes, collecting feedback and measuring progress, sites can adapt to emerging needs, refine their strategies and make data-driven decisions. This process helps identify both successes and areas for improvement, allowing for more targeted interventions where young people need them most. Good practice has emerged across several sites, including the decision to stop activities with persistently low attendance or that CYPs report as being unengaging, thus ensuring that resources are directed more efficiently. Many sites have prioritised interventions that demonstrate the strongest and most positive outcomes, particularly those related to education, employment and training, based on feedback and early impact data. Proportionate and responsive approaches, such as adjusting session content and delivery methods or targeting specific groups based on emerging insights, have enabled sites to stay relevant and youth-focused. This ongoing cycle of learning and adaptation ensures that the programme remains impactful and aligned with what matters most to CYPs.

5.3 Limitations of the evaluation

Several limitations have affected the evaluation process, particularly relating to data quality and consistency. Smaller organisations, in particular, often lack the capacity to reliably complete mandatory monitoring requirements. Many do not routinely collect key types of data, such as records of attendance, dropouts and demographic information, leading to gaps in reporting. Quarterly data submissions frequently contain errors and inconsistencies, with confusion around key terms such as “referred”, “recruited”, “retained” and “withdrew”, which were interpreted differently across delivery sites. As such, the reach figures presented in this report should be considered best estimates based on the available monitoring data.

Variability in site engagement also presented challenges. Some sites participated more actively in certain components of the evaluation than others, leading to uneven data collection. Small sample sizes at several sites limited the ability to report PSAT question findings at the individual site level. As a result, partnership working outcomes were calculated across the programme as a whole, rather than by site, meaning the findings might not fully represent the views and experiences of every local partnership. Similarly, some sites were better represented in the young people’s focus groups than others, potentially skewing the findings and missing valuable insights from underrepresented areas.

There are also limitations inherent in the framework analysis approach used. Employing a largely deductive method, the analysis organises data around pre-determined themes, which helps ensure alignment with applied research questions, such as assessing the delivery of action plans. However, this structure may restrict the ability to capture unanticipated insights or emergent themes. Coding guided by a priori categories, while efficient, can limit analytical flexibility and may overlook subtle but important nuances within the data (Gale et al., 2013).

5.4 Conclusion

The YEF NF has made strong progress over the past year, with delivery remaining a central focus of discussions. This year’s evaluation saw high levels of engagement from partners, who offered a wide range of perspectives and experiences, including valuable insights from the CYPs who participated in the programme. The Year 2 formative evaluation focused on examining three research questions:

- What approaches are delivery partners taking to deliver the plans?
- How well are the different components of the action plan being delivered?
- What are stakeholders’ and CYPs’ views on the programme?

Year 2 of the NF has shown strong progress in engaging over 6,733 CYPs across five sites, many of whom are among the most at risk or hardest to reach and are living in neighbourhoods where there is a strong likelihood of involvement in or exposure to youth violence. These CYPs were engaged through inclusive, locally tailored interventions aimed at preventing youth violence. Delivery partners used a diverse mix of approaches, including education, mentoring, arts, sports and mental health support, while placing youth voice at the heart of programme design and delivery. These efforts have empowered CYPs, improved well-being and helped address inequalities in access linked to gender, culture and neurodiversity.

Strong partnership working has been a key strength of the NF; it has helped to sustain delivery and contributed to emerging outcomes. Joint funding bids have brought in more resources and deepened collaboration, while a culture of constructive discussions has improved communication and programme quality.

Despite these successes, significant challenges remain. Capacity constraints, oversubscription and limited funding have stretched organisations, threatening delivery quality and sustainability. Inconsistent data collection from the quarterly monitoring data has further hampered efforts to assess the programme's overall reach and dose, hindering sites' ability to secure future support. While partnerships have been a key asset, some sites have faced difficulties maintaining relationships due to staff turnover and institutional disengagement.

Looking ahead, sustainability will depend on improved evaluation, greater collaboration and increased investment in staff and infrastructure. With stronger systems in place, the programme is well-positioned to build on early successes and to continue delivering meaningful outcomes for young people in the years to come.

Table 9: Summary of the Year 2 study findings

Research question	Finding
What approaches are delivery partners taking to deliver the plans?	The delivery partners have employed a wide range of inclusive, targeted and creative approaches to engage children and young people (CYPs) to prevent youth violence. Their strategies include structured educational programmes, sports- and arts-based mentorship, mental health support and community-led initiatives, all delivered through a multi-agency model. It is felt that, for the most part, these interventions are reaching and resonating with the intended audiences; since January 2023, over 6,733 CYPs have participated across the five Neighbourhood Fund sites.
How well are the different components of the action plan being delivered?	Delivery partners have been responsive to local needs and youth voices, co-producing tailored activities that reflect CYPs' interests and concerns. Furthermore, provision has been intentionally inclusive, addressing barriers related to gender, culture and neurodiversity. Survey and interview data suggest these approaches are largely working well, with delivery partners feeling well supported by funders, achieving positive engagement with target groups and maintaining their adaptability in the face of capacity and funding challenges. The range, reach and responsiveness of these interventions suggest that strong progress has been made in delivering on the aims of youth engagement and violence prevention.

	The Partnership Self-Assessment Tool found that the majority of categories fall within the "Headway Zone", indicating that partnerships are performing well but have room for improvement. Notably, areas such as leadership and administration are functioning effectively, with lead coordinators taking responsibility and fostering respect, trust, inclusiveness and openness within the partnership. However, several categories require future consideration. The "Work Zone" highlights areas needing more effort to maximise the partnership's collaborative potential. For instance, efficiency could be improved by better utilising financial resources, and synergy could be enhanced by improving communication among partners. Overall, while the partnerships are working well, continuous monitoring and targeted improvements in these areas will help move all categories towards the "Target Zone", ensuring better partnership working in the future.
What are the stakeholders' and children and young people's views on the programme?	Stakeholders across the five areas had mixed views on this year's programme delivery. While most considered it very successful, several noted ongoing challenges. The programmes demonstrated promising outcomes through youth engagement, skill-building and community collaboration, but implementation was often hindered by inconsistent data collection, limited resources and capacity constraints. Sites struggled to measure long-term impact due to a lack of partner capacity and inconsistent monitoring systems. CYPs' engagement was also affected by safety concerns and geographical limitations. In addition, maintaining partnerships outside the programme (for example, with partners who were not steering group members or delivery partners) proved difficult amid staff turnover and competing priorities. Despite these barriers, many sites adapted by incorporating youth voice, increasing delivery flexibility and building on strong local partnerships, thereby enhancing participation and inclusivity. Qualitative findings suggest positive outcomes for CYPs, including improved mental well-being, increased access to training and employment, skill development and a perceived reduction in youth violence. Mechanisms such as mentoring, safe spaces and youth-led decision-making helped CYPs stay engaged, build their confidence, develop new skills and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, these programmes strengthened relationships among organisations, families and communities, supporting stronger cross-sector collaboration to better meet CYPs' needs. However, ensuring long-term sustainability and fair resource distribution remains critical to strengthening delivery across all areas.

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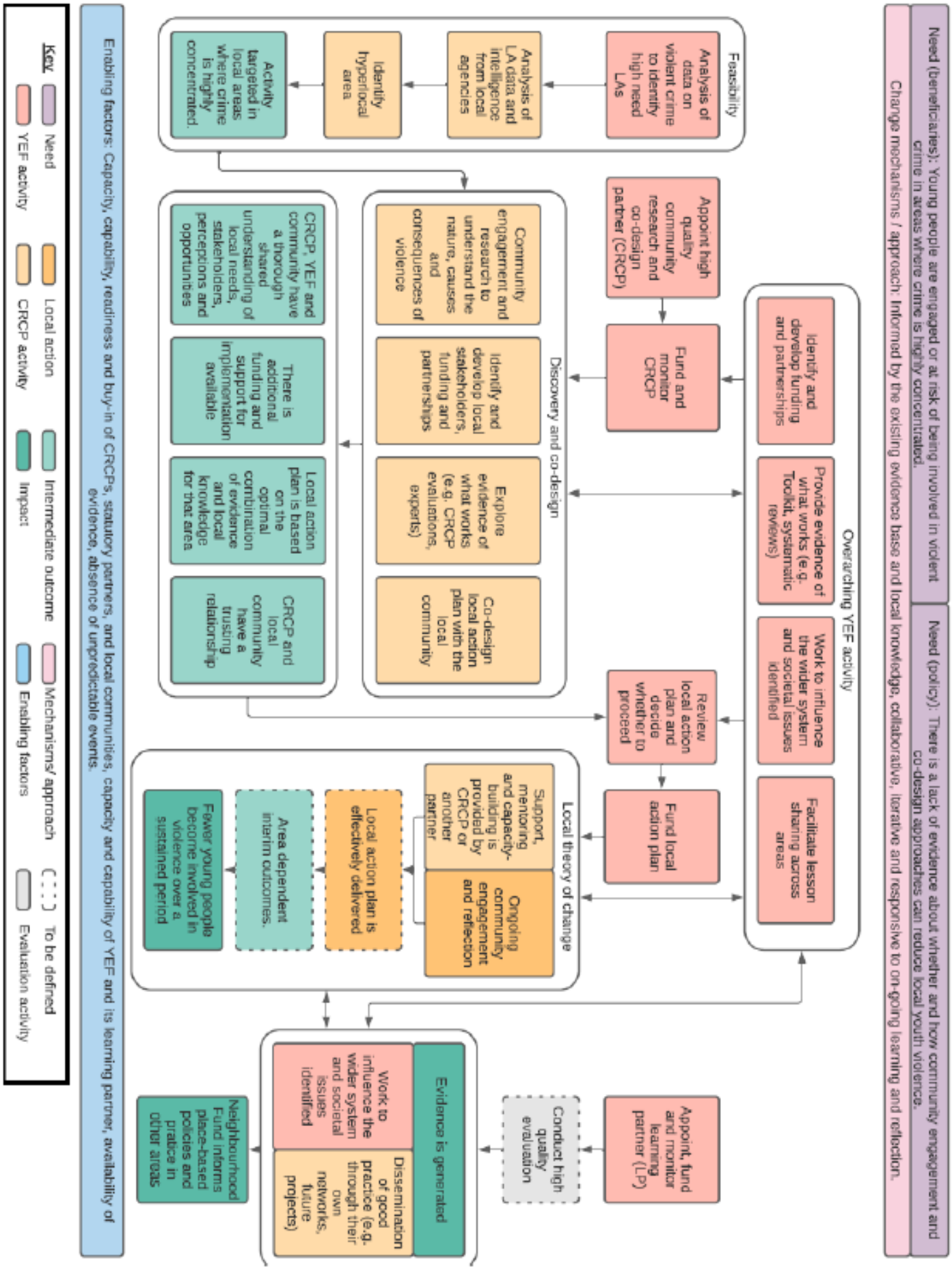
7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: YEF a priori theory of change



7.2 Appendix 2: Site-level action plan themes and activities

Site (delivery period)	Action plan themes/activities
Aston Villa Foundation, YEF NF project, Newton and Lozells, Birmingham (3 years)	**Support a collaborative and responsive system:** develop a system-wide strategic pledge, work towards establishing Lozells and Newtown as a Restorative Neighbourhood, and co-design and pilot approaches to family advocacy. **Promote a safe, welcoming, and prospering neighbourhood**: distribute small grants to support environmental improvement, distribute a Community Chest and Flexible Response Fund to support grassroots organisations delivering youth activity and community responses to incidents of serious youth violence, fund the creation of a Neighbourhood Development Forum, and enhance links between businesses and the community.
The Youth Resilience Programme, Barkerend, Bradford (5 years)	**Build capacity through partnerships, collaboration, training, and small grant facilitation**: build capacity, implement training, set up a young people's forum, and facilitate small grants. **Engage vulnerable young people for better mental health**: provide youth worker support, build awareness and education on vulnerabilities, and connect young people with mental health support. **Role modelling, mentoring, and supporting career pathways**: promotion of positive role models, mentorship, and career pathways support.
Citizens UK, YEF NF project, Butetown and Grangetown, Cardiff (5 years)	**Microgrant and capacity building:** create a microgrant and capacity building scheme for grassroots organisations. **Establish a youth action zone**: local organisations collaborate to establish a youth leadership programme and work with the police to build relationships. **Emotional well-being navigator in the community**: link the community and well-being services, provide support such as translation and service access guidance, advise on services, identify gaps, and campaign for improvements. **Community organiser to develop the power of local people and lead local campaigns**: review school admissions and exclusions policies, develop a plan for the Butetown hub, raise awareness and prevent drug use, create a microgrant scheme and attract further funding, and redevelop Canal Park (lights, Astroturf access, basketball provision, litter and needle pick-ups). **Literacy intervention**: providing literacy support for parents and young people and building parents' confidence in supporting their children with learning. **Tigerbay employment partnership:** promote jobs and support applications, sign up employers to pay a real living wage, tackle under-representation in the workforce, provide job security and development, and scale up the Tigerbay Security model. **Establishing diversionary activities:** work with the community safety partnership to establish diversionary activities embedded in grassroots organisations.
Hope for Cheetham, Cheetham Hill, Manchester	**Sporting activities:** offer activities like football, boxing, and dancing in safe spaces (including girls-only activities to consider cultural restrictions).

(5 years)	**Detached youth work:** detached youth work in key hotspot areas (including those led by women to better engage with girls and those that include local police officers to build trust with the community). **Mentoring**: Big Brother/Big Sister programmes focusing on the most vulnerable young people and wider mentoring programmes in schools, with a focus on education and employment. **Life skills:** years 5/6 participate in awareness raising and trauma-informed workshops (e.g. child sexual/criminal exploitation, healthy relationships), employment/education training delivered in partnership with local businesses, general drop-in life skills support (e.g. CVs, job applications), and social skills training with vulnerable young people within schools. **Programme management**: develop/deliver inclusive grants processes, with a focus on building the sustainability of local organisations, and map needs and provision within Cheetham Hill. **Capacity, training, and support:** provide one-on-one support to local organisations to help build their capacity and build on existing capacity building that is funded in the area. **Strategy, systems, and fundraising:** pursue match funding; engage with businesses to support education, employment and training activities; engage and coordinate activities with strategic partners; facilitate engagement with the police to encourage referrals and trust building with local young people; and develop and deliver a targeted communications plan.
The Great Yarmouth Place project, Nelson/central and Northgate Wards, Norfolk (3 years)	**Literacy**: design, implement, and monitor literacy interventions, approaches, and strategies; provide pupil assessments for school years 5–9 across all three years of the intervention; design and implement targeted interventions and assessments for students with special educational needs and disabilities; develop communities of practice; and design training and capacity building with teaching staff. **Youth offer:** map the existing youth provision, design and develop an enhanced youth offer, develop a youth panel, and design and deliver two safe spaces. **Education, employment, and training (EET)**: rreview the use of risk of NEET (not in education, employment or training) indicators across years 9, 10, and 11; perform post-16-years provision mapping; develop, deliver, and evaluate the future framework; develop a community of practice for EET; launch, implement, and evaluate the Secondary School EET Pilot, providing additional careers support in schools; and design, implement, and evaluate the Engagement Coach Pilot, providing one-on-one support for a cohort of young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET.

7.3 Appendix 3: Site level case studies

Site-level case studies offer a comprehensive overview of each local area, including the CRCP and lead coordinators, local action plans, and key achievements from year two of delivery. They also outline, perceived challenges, anticipated outcomes identified through the year two evaluation, along with next steps for future implementation. The following pages present case studies for:

- Aston Villa Foundation YEF NF, Newton and Lozells, Birmingham.
- The Youth Resilience Programme, Barkerend, Bradford.
- Citizens UK YEF NF, Butetown and Grangetown, Cardiff.
- The Great Yarmouth Place Project, Norfolk.
- Hope for Cheetham, Manchester

(Year 2 Case Study 2024-2025)

The Aston Villa Foundation has driven initiatives through collaborative systems, promoting safe and prospering neighbourhoods, and leadership facilitation; reaching 474 young people to date. To support a collaborative and responsive system, a system-wide community pledge has been developed by the steering group, emphasising collective action and listening to the voices of young people. It has aimed to address health inequalities, focusing on local parks and schools. Community Chest Grants have funded educational workshops on internet safety, drug awareness, and gang prevention, alongside mentorship programmes offering networking opportunities, CV support, and mental health discussions. Additionally, grants have supported physical and recreational activities such as hiking and gym sessions. The lead co-ordinator continues to facilitate the steering group, focusing on strengthening community relationships and ensuring effective programme delivery.

Action plan key activities

Strategic Theme A

Support a collaborative and responsive system

1. Develop a system-wide strategic pledge.
2. Work towards establishing Lozells and Newtown as a "Restorative Neighbourhood".
3. Co-design (with families) and pilot approaches to family advocacy.

Strategic Theme B

To promote a safe, welcoming, and prospering neighbourhood

1. Distribute small grants to support environmental improvement.
2. Distribute a "Community Chest" and "Flexible Response Fund" to support grassroots organisations delivering youth activities and community responses to incidents of serious youth violence.
3. Fund the creation of a Neighbourhood Development Forum.
4. Enhance links between businesses and the community.

Lead co-ordinator role

1. Provide support to the steering group and implementation of the action plan.
2. Commissioning and procurement of service delivery leads.
3. Management of funds and monitoring and evaluation.
4. Recording and reporting of programme progress and impact.
5. Community and stakeholder relationship management and communications.

Key achievements delivered in Year 2*

A system-wide **community pledge** has been curated by the steering group, focusing on working collectively and listening to young people and the wider community.

Family Advocacy

- Partnerships with Birmingham Children's Trust and Empower U helped the parents and carers group become self-sustaining, resilient, and recover from trauma.

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

- Trained and certified 8 (Q2) parents and carers through MHFA England.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

- Reflective relationship-building training sessions.

Building a Culture of Leadership

- Embedded group training and shared contributions.

Community Chest Grants have enabled delivery partners to...

- Run educational and awareness workshops including, internet safety, vaping and drugs awareness, and risks of gang association.
- Provide mentorship to young people through networking events, entrepreneurship and CV support, and mental health discussions.
- Run physical and recreational activities including hiking and gym sessions.

Environmental improvements work stream

- Allocated £80,000 to tackle health inequalities — £60,000 for projects in 10 schools (6 out of 10 have been recruited so far) and £20,000 to develop four green spaces, promoting youth engagement and community wellbeing.

- The **lead co-ordinator** continues to support steering group facilitation. They continue to work on developing relationships with the community.
- **Sharing programme successes** through media posts, blogs, website, videos and radio interviews.
- **Committed to transparency**, open communication and maintaining a strong presence.
- **Rebuilding physical spaces** by re-establishing fortnightly meetings.

Challenges*

Capacity and infrastructure challenges

"This is community-based, I'm just helping the community volunteering, and I don't get paid from it. So, it's just really time consuming." (Delivery Partner)

"The building that we were using was being taken over and also with the youth funding cuts, some of the staff have to leave to go home earlier, which means the building has to close earlier on some days. So that's really had an impact this term with our numbers. So from having the first term around 170 young people, we're now down to like 20-30 young people. Our youth club used to be Friday, which was obviously the main attraction, but now it's moved to a Thursday." (Delivery Partner)

Assembling the right team

While there have been many successes, there have also been challenges, including some complaints about poor practice, and personal disagreements in how the funds are being utilised. Pre-existing dynamics have hindered progress and delayed some programme activities – *"A challenge has been getting the right people to be inside the working groups."* (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

Implementing all streams

"My concern would be that we've set up part of the streams, which is amazing, which is great, but there are two really big ones that we haven't even looked into yet and we've only got two years of delivery left." (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

Safety of young people

"When there's issues going on, it can have an impact on the numbers. Parents don't want to let children out to walk to us, or maybe it's their friends that are in the problems, so they personally don't feel safe coming out in case they're a target." (Delivery Partner)

Supported families facing multiple disadvantages

Many families are experiencing intersecting challenges of care proceedings, (mental) health, neurodivergence, discrimination and systemic inequality – *"For some of them, they wasn't eating until they came to that session. So it was just like, actually [I'd] rather that they come here and eat food rather than not eat at all."* (Delivery Partner)

Low engagement from young people

"Many felt disconnected due to past experiences before we restarted the group. […] Some young people struggled to see their role in this new phase." (Delivery Partner – Y2Q2 report)

Outcomes & Impacts*

Building young people's confidence and agency

"We use gym as a tool to then help guide them and strengthen them and give them their support ... we know how much it builds confidence and gives them resilience and also includes like teamwork." (Delivery Partner)

Creating a legacy

"We've created a brand. I don't know how we've done it, but our logo, I've got it everywhere. So, we've created a brand." (Delivery Partner)

Improved relationships between schools and families

"We always go by; it takes a village." (Delivery Partner)

Consistent effort in learning from setbacks

Actively worked on setbacks through accountability, training, and rebuilding trust (Y2Q2 report).

- Implementing the job opportunities stream to engage businesses and communities in providing support for unemployed young people.
- Implement parent support group supporting families of victims of serious violence.
- Continue to progress the contribution that the steering group makes to the overall project.
- Launch round 2 of the Community Chest Grants.

> *"How we build more capacity in the future, and that is a conversation that we are having, something that we will discuss in our next session in a couple of weeks time ... to help us improve, bring the programmes into life."* (Site

- Environmental improvements efforts are progressing with schools and park groups actively exploring funding opportunities, commissioning projects, and planning timelines with local communities.
- Launch the Neighbourhood Development Forum grants, supporting at least four community organisations to deliver activities that empower young people to take positive action and have a voice in their community—through initiatives like community forums, social action campaigns, and leadership qualifications.
- Under the Restorative Neighbourhood theme, five organisations were invited to submit proposals, with one to be commissioned to implement the action plan objectives.
- The Businesses within communities strand is focused on identifying key individuals for a working group, allocating funds for maximum impact, and selecting organisations to spearhead this initiative.
- Commence the 2 remaining working groups and grant criteria for the Neighbourhood Development Forum and Business links in the community.
- Restart monthly steering group meetings to review the action plan and keep spending in check.
- Begin all environmental projects

*Based on year 2 evaluation findings

Barkerend Youth Resilience Programme Year 2 Case Study

Overview

The Barkerend Youth Resilience Programme is a place-based program which aims to create a positive environment in which young people can grow up, in order to build youth resilience and protect young people from the risks and harms of exploitation and violence. In year 2, the project has supported and delivered a number of interventions including: youth prevention work centred on sports, wellbeing, and arts and crafts; sports and physical activities such as a football summer camp; creative activities including arts and crafts; and a number of community social events with the main event being a party in the park wherein community members, steering group, and delivery partners attended. This has resulted in increased collaborations between community and the project delivery partners, between and among local delivery partners, and enhanced trust within and by the community. By the end of year 2 delivery the programme has reached 1,817 children and young people.

Action Plan Themes

Strategic Theme A

Build capacity through partnerships, collaboration, training, and small grant facilitation. Key activities:

1. Capacity building.
2. Training.
3. Young people's forum.
4. Small grant facilitation.

Strategic Theme B

Engaging vulnerable young people for better mental health. Key activities:

1. Youth Worker support.
2. Awareness and education on vulnerabilities.
3. Connecting with mental health support.

Strategic Theme C

Role modelling, mentoring and career pathway support. Key activities:

1. Promotion of positive role models.
2. Mentorship.
3. Career pathways support.

Key achievements in Year 2*

Strategic Theme A

A variety of youth-focused community activities were supported through 14 small grants awarded for projects starting January 2025. These included:

- Creative & Skill-Based Workshops:
  - Rap, DJ, graffiti and self-defence sessions, youth club Boy's Kitchen.
- Sports & Wellbeing:
  - 6-week boxing and nutrition programme separate sessions for boys and girls.
  - Summer activities like gender-specific swimming, mini-quad biking, trampolining, and a social/sports club across various venues.
  - Day session at an outdoor pursuits centre.
- Annual Youth Forum with 75 young people involved in project activities.
- Greenspace groups delivered park clean-ups

Strategic Theme B

- For Girls: Cooking and dessert workshops, monthly wellbeing sessions with a residential weekend, mindfulness, body image and mental health awareness, and discussions on hygiene, menstruation, culture, and religion at local faith centres, and learning about making ethical career choices at local secondary school.
- For Boys: Healthy eating workshops and sports sessions through faith settings.
- Mixed Activities: Badminton coaching, youth club sessions,

Strategic Theme C

- Self-defence training and awareness sessions.
- Better Education Better Lives programme at local secondary school providing GCSE support for vulnerable students.
- DJ/music workshops as part of Role Modelling and Career Support plans.
- Boxing training and career insights from a local pro boxer.

Main Challenges*

Issues with data sharing/management/protection

"We're still not quite there with other providers doing their own thing. For example, some may run small grant activities on their own, but some of the young people attending those activities may also be involved with other providers. It's tricky to manage, especially with data protection rules. We need to be careful about sharing info, especially since some activities could be sensitive. When so many providers are running activities in the same area, there's going to be some young people attending multiple programs" (Lead Co-ordinator)

Breakdown in relationships and communication

"There's been a personnel change in the policing. The neighbourhood policing inspector role was previously held by [name] but at one of our launch events for a small grant activity this Wednesday, someone introduced themselves as taking over his position. It was good to make that connection, but whenever there's a change like this, especially in neighbourhood policing, it can have an impact. The officers spend so much time building relationships within the community, and then those connections can be disrupted when there's a change in leadership". (Lead Co-ordinator)

Under-engagement from some external statutory partners

"We've worked with them showed them what we're doing, their plans, they haven't reciprocated, it's not a two-way relationship. It's us providing them with information about what we're doing and if that's what keeps them happy, fine, we'll do that, we have nothing to hide. Even when we are asked for the application, we would ask them for their contacts and other people they're working with as well to share them." (Steering Group Member)

Inconsistency with deliverables related to funding

"I think the other barrier is that I know it's hard, but due to the funding, we can only deliver an X number of sessions. For example, the girls' multisport session, it takes a lot of effort and energy to get that up and running but after eight to 10 weeks, when it's finished, it's finished. Then you've lost that cohort of girls, you've lost that relationship, you've lost that contact, then now we're building it all back up again. It's a nuisance more than anything because there's no sustainability." (Delivery partner)

Administrative delays

"It's just constantly reminding, chasing, giving the heads up a few weeks beforehand and slowly hanging out, seeing your report. Yeah. Where's your report? Kind of thing." (Steering Group Member)

Outcomes & Impact*

Diversity in collaborations

"I'm doing it in collaboration with a couple of other organisations. The one I chose this year [organisation name] because I think the work they do is very unique in terms of supporting children with the with the education and the booster classes, and they did amazing stuff last year last year and I thought I've got to continue with that again. And this year I chose to work with a new organisation, [organisation name] a mosque [name]. For me, that was great because what they've done as well is not just for the students who are at the mosque, it's open to anybody within that vicinity. That area to come and be a part of it and a lot of, especially in South Asia and the Muslim Community, they see Mosques as a safe space and some of the kids that are at the mosque are the same kids that never get to go to the youth centre and stuff." (Delivery partner)

Enhanced collaborations between community & delivery partners

"We've seen some great collaborations form between our community partners and delivery partners, especially ones that were part of the programme from the start. In the first year, some of them were doing their own thing with

small grants, but this year they've started teaming up and going for some of the larger grants in our activity programme, which has been really positive and successful" (Lead Co-ordinator)

"The co-design phase allowed community groups and young people to express their needs, and now, the activities reflect that input. Those who were part of that initial phase recognise the direct link between community feedback and what is happening now." (Lead Co-ordinator)

Community Trust

"Knowing particularly that parents have the trust of those people, so parents are comfortable letting their children go out to attend activities. Especially for girls, there is mistrust and hesitation around letting the girls out to attend activities if they don't know what that activity involves, or they don't know who's delivering that activity. Having female led instructors and letting them come in and see that this is going to be a female only space for the time that the activity is running, and it gives some reassurance for parents. That continues to be really successful" (Lead Co-ordinator)

"For me it was my mum, without her I wouldn't have done any of the classes, she was the one who pushed me. I feel like for me tell the parents fist, but I think overall it should be angled at both parents and children." (Young Person)

Young people's improved self-confidence

"I haven't been coming [to rapping lessons] long. Last week there were four people watching me, I would just say that I've improved a lot because I used to stutter a lot and take a lot of time." (Young Person)

"I think it was learning about being safe online, I know I can seem fun, but I can also be naive and like there has been times where I have had run ins online with people which has led to threats and complications in school. So, I think this training would help me not get in similar scenarios in the future." (Young Person)

Making pragmatic decisions to increase sustainability

"It's about creating a foundation for future collaborations and partnerships that are sustainable in the long term ... the focus is on making sure it benefits young people and balancing both quantity and quality" (Lead Co-ordinator)

"We were faced with two very worthy applications on one of our large grants, and we had to think about how to choose between them since both were equally deserving of funding and could do great work, both met the criteria, etc. It came down to which one of these was more likely to help build sustainability within the neighbourhood. We had to ask ourselves if what we are building now will work not just for this programme, but for the future too." (Lead Co-ordinator)

Role modelling for other organisations

"Another project focused on urban regeneration asked us to share our templates for recruiting third-party organisations and how we give out small grants … I showed them what we did, and they were like, "Wow, you just made our lives so much easier." So, that's another positive impact." (Lead Co-ordinator)

Next Steps*

- Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in delivery plans including less represented groups like the Gypsy and Traveller communities
- Engaging more vulnerable and minority groups such as:
    - Underserved ethnic groups
    - People with learning disabilities or neurodivergence
- Addressing past years' challenges and create better resilience
- Continue to distribute the funding in a structured/ phased way going forward
- Allocate the small grants and start delivery for some of the activities
- Look into communication and dissemination for the programme's outcomes

> *"Within this we are saying for people that have learning disabilities or neurodivergent should be involved in the [grant] application process. I'm thinking OK, next year may be looking at those who are additionally vulnerable, what are the ways to engage?" Delivery partner*

*Based on year 2 evaluation findings

Citizens UK, Butetown and Grangetown, Cardiff (Year 2 Case Study 2024-2025)

Citizens Cymru Wales uses community organising techniques to strengthen grassroots organisations supporting young people, ensuring they have a seat at the table in local decision-making. It helps young people to develop as local leaders and get involved in making change. Working in the neighbourhoods of Butetown and Grangetown, its action plan includes seven interventions, underpinned by the assumptions that 'It takes a village to raise a child' and 'Anger without power leads to rage'. Tiger Bay Employment partnership includes local agency Ffair Jobs, which has secured commitments from local employers to pay the real Living Wage. Local sports clubs are providing football and boxing classes as well as mentoring and educational support. A mental health intervention employs navigators to help young people access services, while a literacy strand connects civil society around the learning needs of young people. In each intervention young leaders are being trained in community organising techniques, with a particular focus this year on winning cheaper bus fares for children and young people.

Action plan key activities	Key achievements delivered in Year 2
Theme 1: Microgrant and capacity building. • Create a microgrant and capacity building scheme for grassroots organisations providing targeted support for young people at risk	• Grants scheme ready to roll out from June 2025 with an assessment panel drawn from the community.
Theme 2: Establish a Youth Action Zone in Butetown and Grangetown. • Build relationships with police and develop a charter for working together including anti-racism training and a jobs compact • Youth leadership academy to train young people as leaders	• The creation of an action team to liaise with South Wales Police and strengthen relationships • Meeting with the PCC • Creation of a youth leadership academy
Theme 3: Emotional wellbeing navigator embedded in the community. • Develop links between the community and mental health services • Support young people with access issues • Tackle stigma	• Have successfully recruited and employed two mental health navigators. • Mapping local services
Theme 4: Community Organiser to develop the power of local people and lead local campaigns. • Listening to young people in local schools, colleges and sports clubs and creating campaigns around their issues • Campaign around the redevelopment of Canal Park to ensure young people's voices are heard and asks are developed including turning on floodlights and astroturf resurfacing • Campaign around local bus fares	• Listening and building the campaigns and actions around local bus fares • Wins on the campaign around the redevelopment of Canal Park
Theme 5: Literacy intervention. • Literacy support for parents and CYP. • Build parents' confidence in supporting their children with learning.	• Employed an additional learning needs navigator to link young people and their families to support • Sports clubs supporting children and young people in their schoolwork
Theme 6: Tigerbay employment partnership. • Promote jobs and support applications • Sign up employers to pay the Real Living Wage • Tackle under-representation in the workplace locally • Scale up and rollout the Tiger Bay Security model	• Engaged local employers in signing contracts committing employers to pay a real Living Wage, equality through blind applications and offering permanent jobs • Created website to post job opportunities • Tiger Bay Security model expanded into other

Theme 7: Establishing diversionary activities.

- Establishing diversionary activities in grassroots sports clubs supporting young people at risk
- Using sport as an incentive to support young people more widely including in education and mentoring

and Tiger Bay Football Club

- Revision sessions in the run up to exam period at Tiger Bay ABC
- Workshops on stop and search and other key issues with young people at F4S
- Trips for young people to a theme park and hiking and biking trips
- Football coaching and mentoring at Tiger Bay football club
- Securing additional funding from the Violence Reduction Unit over the summer period.

Challenges

Difficulties to collect and show impact data

"I think we need to get much better at how we capture the impact both from an employer side and an individual side. The hard thing with this is we can do these events and support them, but it's really hard once people are in these places for us to know 100% how they found out or how they got on or how they felt supported." (Delivery Partner)

Hard for grassroot organisations to have a seat at the table

"We got involved in numerous consultations. But I would hear about these really late. It would get posted really late on social media or somewhere." (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

Maintenance of relationships

"I think relationships change, people move jobs, that's hard for us to do, and sometimes they're great, they tell us who the other person is, and we get in touch. Sometimes they don't do that, they just leave without telling us. And we have to find the new contact." (Delivery Partner)

Outcomes & Impacts*

Safe spaces for CCYP to engage in activities, reduce isolation and youth violence

"These activities, they allow all of us to just come together, like I said, there'll be in one place at one time rather than being out on the streets because as much as we love our community, there's always negatives, especially with any community in the UK, there's always crime going on, and the youth tend to get involved with maybe drugs, for example, or maybe other sort of crime. But it allows to keep the youth off the streets, and that's the most important thing because obviously the youth are the future of the community rather than having them being involved in other things." (Young Person)

Increased wellbeing, empowerment, and resilience of CCYP

"It helps you communicate with people as well, because a lot of youth have problems communicating so it helps them communicate with people with similar backgrounds. It also helped them find a passion for something they like rather than just being at home on playstation all day, they can go out, maybe find a sport they enjoy. And it just gives them something to look forward to." (Young Person)

Stronger relationships among stakeholders in the community

"Good thing we have as part of this work, this approach of all of our partners together is that we work closely with each other and can chat and share opportunities and use local venues to make stuff happen. Which is great because I think there's relationships on the ground." (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

More opportunities for CCYP thus reduction in CCYP getting involved in violence

"If people can get living wage jobs that are local, that are well supported, that provide job security and development, there's a huge pull factor away from other main ways of generating income I suppose, which is what drives a lot of people to that." (Delivery Partner)

Identifying CCYP in need of support getting meaningful employment

"When they do come across a young person in their centre, unemployed, not in work, not in training, they'll try and divert them as early as possible into the employment intervention." (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

Next steps

- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Navigator to start working with the community.
- Additional Learning Needs Navigator to start working with the community.
- To continue to develop long-standing relationships with local authorities.
- Begin microgrant work intervention by establishing a working group for this strand.
- Youth leadership academy to continue.
- Continuing to work with CCYP on their campaign for more affordable transport and liaising with institutions of CCYP to identify common issues.
- Number of institutions and leaders campaigning to broaden.
- ALN to start working with CCYP and engage in services and partnerships.
- Action team to meet with the Police and launch of the Charter.

"I think I'm really looking forward … really showcase … all the things we've been doing because it's amazing and there's some really great people doing some great things and all those stories to be shared." (Site Lead)

(Year 2 Case Study)

Right to Succeed has led initiatives in youth engagement, literacy, and employment and education, all developed through extensive community consultation and the creation of a Youth Panel to ensure young people's voices shaped the programme. In the Youth Offer, a range of diversionary activities—including youth clubs, gaming spaces, and arts venues—have been introduced, alongside taster sessions in music, bike maintenance, and cookery to increase engagement. In Literacy, the CUSP Reading Scheme (Curriculum with Unity Schools Partnership) has been implemented to support early reading, while schools have been encouraged to adapt teaching methods, supported by new resources such as question booklets and teacher training. In Employment and Education, engagement coaches work with at-risk youth, offering career guidance and mapping clear post-16 pathways. Collaborations with the Job Centre and other partners have provided tailored support both within and outside of Job Centre settings, giving young people greater access to employment and education opportunities. The programme reflects a strong commitment to youth voice and community-led action.

Action plan key activities

Youth Offer

- Map the existing youth provision and services.
- Design and develop an enhanced youth offer.
- Develop a youth panel.
- Design and deliver two safe spaces.

Literacy

- Design, implement and monitor literacy interventions, approaches, and strategies.
- Pupil assessments for school year 5-9, across all three years of intervention.
- Design and implement targeted interventions and assessments for students with SEND.
- Develop community of practice.
- Design training and capacity building with teaching staff and CPD programme.

Education employment and training (EET)

- Review use of Risk of NEET indicators across years 9, 10 and 11.
- Post 16 years old provision mapping.
- Develop, deliver and evaluate the futures framework.
- Develop community of practice for EET.
- Launch, implement, and evaluate Secondary School EET Pilot, providing additional careers support in school.
- Design, implement and evaluate Engagement Coach Pilot, providing 1:1 support for a cohort of young people identified at risk of becoming NEET.

Key achievements delivered in Year 2

Youth offer:

- Delivered taster sessions in music, bike maintenance, cookery, and textiles.
- Introduced gaming and arts activities as positive alternatives to involvement in violence and crime.
- Ran an eight-week cookery course, enabling CYP to gain a health and hygiene certificate, leading to a year-round offer in Year 2.
- Worked with partners to repurpose a disused café as a hub to engage and support vulnerable young people.
- Youth activities in secondary schools, including regular lunchtime sessions.
- Established two Safe Spaces, offering consistent access to trusted adults and five weekly sessions of social, physical, and creative activities.

Literacy:

- Encouraging schools to find what approach works best for their primary school by using individualised programs
- Development of teaching methods through CPD to develop children's reading skills
- Supporting a range of different interventions, chosen by schools to support Reading for Pleasure.

Education employment and training (EET):

- One-to-one engagement coaching programs in schools
- Showing year 8&9's job opportunities & college days out
- Increasing quality and access of work experience as well as year-round placements and volunteering opportunities.
- Signposting to organisations which offer support
- Engaged 20 young people in work experience pilot, 3 of which have been offered part time employment and 1 in further training.

The following quotes are from individuals involved in the programme. While they reflect personal experiences and perspectives, they may not represent the views of all participants and are specific to the programmes they were directly engaged in.

Challenges

Initial difficulties with engagement of schools

Early challenges in recruiting schools for delivery. One delivery partner, noting early success with one school but difficulty expanding to others, however since then 8 schools have been successfully recruited to the programme.

"It was tricky getting into schools at the very beginning. So, we got into one school and that's been really successful, and they've sort of soaked it all up. I think where we've had issues is trying to get into other schools, so we only ever got into one school. But hopefully that's going to change." (Delivery Partner)

Encouraging young people to engage with each other

Some programmes observed that young people were not connecting well with peers outside their usual friendship groups. Other partners felt their programmes helped CYP make new friendships beyond their typical social circles and school environments.

"The feedback we're getting from the young people is that they don't like mixing with certain people outside school. It's very clear groups of friends and apart from school, they really don't mix and that's been a real kind of struggle." (Delivery Partner)

Being limited by location centred support

Funding budgets mean that some provisions cannot be offered to young people living outside a catchment area, creating challenges for funders who struggle to provide activities for a wider group of young people.

"It feels really uncomfortable offering a service to some of the young people depending on where they live and not being able to support their best friend, who happens to live the next road across, and they don't fall into that ward. That's not great. I think that doesn't sit well for community harmony." (Delivery Partner)

Providing deeper support for young people

Limited time and resources have made it challenging for delivery partners to provide comprehensive support to all young people beyond what short sessions can offer.

"you've all these young people wanting help, and you can't help them all in two hours and you can't fix their problems either because their problems aren't black and white. When you're seeing that kid every week, how do you fully support them other than safe space." (Delivery Partner)

Outcomes & Impact*

Created a safe space for young people to express themselves

"We work with communities to give them empowerment with events and getting them to learn about the arts, just see what young people want, give them a voice and work with them to feel empowered and feel better about their futures" (Delivery Partner)

Building young people's confidence

"Yes, it's definitely boosted confidence in some of us." (Young Person)

Developing children's early reading skills
"The educational stuff is life changing, legacy changing, generational change, so I think there's lots of benefits." (Steering Group Member)

"If you don't read then you won't succeed in life. Basically." (Young Person)

Encouraging young people to find opportunities for EET within the local community
"I think it is about like raising their aspirations, not feeling that they have to go down a path that they don't want to, there are opportunities for them to access" (Delivery Partner)

Promotion of partnerships between delivery partners
"Effectively, those partners just got together and said let's just try it and see what happens. It's having amazing results. I think that is a real strength of what we've achieved so far is that organisations are working together much more effectively." (Site Lead co-ordinator)

Supporting partnerships between schools to help academic development
"So, we've got primary schools very separated, never used to talk, very different ethos's of schooling. They met and talked, head teachers talked, now there's a real join-up" (Delivery Partner)

Improved collaboration between smaller community groups to applying for funding grants together
"Having organisations who would be bidding against each other for money standing on stage, bidding together for money, successfully achieving bids for money." (Delivery Partner)

Next Steps

- Expand the range of schools that are utilising the engagement work and investigate engagement with young people already NEET within the community.
- Continue to encourage developments of relationships across different sectors and workstreams working in the area.
- Continue to evaluate with partners and stakeholders to design a potential sustainable model.

"We need to just be really, really careful about what our sustainable model looks like ... we're starting to have those conversations internally now" (Site Lead Co-ordinator)

- Continue with regular consultation around progress of the programme as a whole and to identify any areas that need further attention
- Support partners to effectively and consistently evaluate impact of their services and activities to support further development.

*Based on year 2 evaluation findings

Hope for Cheetham, Manchester (Year 2 Case Study 2024-2025)

Hope for Cheetham currently reaches around 1,546 children in the area. Now in its second year of funding, the programme offers a diverse range of activities. Arts and creative sessions include drama, performing arts, music, and arts and crafts. Sports and physical activities remain a major focus, making up 55% of the programme's activities, with a wide variety of sports on offer – some of which are so popular that they are oversubscribed. Educational and skill-based activities include homework clubs, tuition, and training in technology, digital media, and video/photography, alongside leadership programmes and peer mentoring. Youth engagement and community support are provided through detached and outreach youth work, safe spaces, and wellbeing initiatives. These include discussions on challenging topics, role modelling, and active listening. Educational trips and outdoor learning have also been a success. Children have enjoyed museum visits, participated in climate change projects, and explored the topography and geography of the local area through hands-on experiences. The partnership has recently held an open event for young people to vote for next year's activities.

Action plan key activities	Key achievements delivered in Year 2*
Theme 1: Sporting activities. • E.g. football, boxing and dancing in safe spaces (including girls-only activities to consider cultural restrictions).	 • Football, cricket, basketball, cycling, dodgeball, swimming, gym, table tennis, pool, snooker, air hockey. • Estimated well over 600 sessions delivered this year on weekdays and weekends. • Young people are beginning to mix together.
Theme 2: Non-sporting activities. • E.g. cooking, music, film-making in safe spaces (including girls-only activities to consider cultural restrictions).	 • Drama and performing arts, music, arts and craft, drone flying and video- and photography- related activities. • Young people are learning to express themselves. • Violence-related and social action topics are being linked to the activities and being reflected on.
Theme 3: Detached youth work. • Detached youth work in key hotspot areas. • Led by women to better engage with girls. • Inclusion of local police officers to build trust with the community.	 • Engagement work with young people at risk and guidance towards positive activities.
Theme 4: Mentoring. • "Big Brother"/ "Big Sister" programmes focusing on the most vulnerable young people. • Wider mentoring programmes in schools, with a focus on education and employment.	 • Youth workers, coaches and peer-to-peer mentoring. • Positive relationships and showing young people alternatives. • Mental health 1:1 support.
Theme 5: Life skills. • Years 5/6 participate in awareness raising and trauma-informed workshops e.g. Child Sexual/Criminal exploitation, healthy relationships, drug trade and grooming, safe social media use. • Employment/education training delivered in partnership with local businesses. • General drop-in life skills support – e.g. using public transport, homework, CVs/ job applications. • Social skills training with vulnerable young people within	 • Homework clubs, tuition classes, hands-on experience on alternative work routes (creative, arts, digital media), collaborations with local professionals. • Specialists talks around violence, group discussions, awareness raising, openly sharing fears and experiences.

- Develop/deliver inclusive grants processes, with focus on building sustainability of local organisations.
- Map needs and provision within Cheetham Hill.
- Co-ordinate/participate in the governance of the strategy.
- Support evaluation and learning and engaging with YEF partners.

- Straightforward and accessible applications.
- Gradual introduction of youth-led decision-making.
- Engaged and collaborative partners.
- Support, facilitation, and scaffolding from the Lead in form-filling, and monitoring evaluations.

Theme 7: Capacity, training and support.

- Provide 1-1 support to local organisations to help them build their capacity.
- Building on existing capacity building funded in the area.

- Collaborative capacity building, skills sharing, and training between partners with different experience.
- Investment in trust and relationship building.

Theme 8: Strategy, systems and fundraising.

- Pursuing match funding.
- Engagement with businesses to support the education, employment and training activities.
- Engaging and co-ordinating activity with strategic partners.
- Facilitate engagement with the Police to encourage referrals and trust building with local young people.
- Development and delivery of targeted communications plan.

- Match-funding project aims reached.
- Involvement of local authorities and the Police.
- Showcased project in local newspaper.
- In-depth evaluation report by Shared Future CIC.
- 7 new partners added based on young people's asks.
- Implementation of universal commissioning.

Other action plan themes:

- Conflict interruption and diversion.
- Core support.
- Community/young people engagement and research.

- Violence interruption work in collaboration with the Police.
- Community and young people increasingly included in the decision-making process (panels, consultations, participatory budgeting), and youth engagement strategies being implemented.
- 200 community members (130 young people) participated at the Choose for Cheetham participatory budgeting event, with an area where parents could learn more about the project.

Challenges*

Environmental factors and safety

"If you come on up the road to go through there, it's like pitch black as well. So, when we're coming through there at night, obviously, we have to walk all the way around, when the trees and leaves are coming back you can't see in there. […] There is not much light, you know?" (Mother)

Moving around to join the activities

"We've had a lot of bad weather recently and it's been very cold, very wet. Everybody lives within walking distance. Practically, I would say most people tend to come by walking, so if it's absolutely and utterly pouring down, you may not get as many hanging round." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"There's a lot of effort to be made in helping the Asian community as well. A big challenge is that many parents aren't as committed as others. For example, they may not take their children to activities regularly, like playing in games every Sunday, because they don't have cars or can't afford the transportation. Some parents work on weekends, which makes it even harder." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Cultural differences and needs

"The sort of things that we can do with the young African children, we are advised not to do with the young South Asian children; the sort of songs and dancing for one, and also the girls are encouraged to do certain things, and the boys are not encouraged to do those things." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Family issues and poverty

"They don't always come on time. And I think that is not because they don't want to be there on time, but I think they do have quite a few issues at home. In that some of them are young carers for parents and they might not be able to get out of the house on time, because they've got to do things for parents. I also do think that it's quite a […] deprived area. So most of the children are in poverty and food poverty, and I think there is a lot of hunger and therefore there's a lot of illness. I think […] education is a low priority for some of the parents. And I think, because of that, because they're not encouraged to go to school, almost 100% of the time. Sometimes they do struggle with authority, a little bit, even though ours are very fun, they can be easily distracted." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Third sector's capacity and resources

"It's been a challenge a bit with capacity to go out and actually build that and it's resulted in a lot of us having to use sort of personal currency." (Lead Co-ordinator)

"We need to add it's from a voluntary capacity, so we are not paid workers. […] I should say that I'm not at the stage where we can actually employ myself to deliver the activities, so it's done on a voluntary capacity." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Observed Outcomes*

Partnership working

"I'm involved in lots of different consortiums and meetings […] within Cheetham, […] but I find that […] this is probably the best attended out of all of the meetings because everybody realises the difference it can make for the community and there's real outcomes on it, because there's money and stuff that goes with it." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"I think, the organisations are more realising that working together as partners are best for everyone, best for the young people, best for themselves, best for the future." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Conflict resolution skills and decreased anti-social behaviour

"Teachers often mention that the kids are learning the value of hard work and teamwork, simple but important lessons. They realise that working as part of a team makes a big difference. They learn to balance working individually while cooperating with others, and they genuinely take that on board. Sometimes, at the end of the sessions, we've had situations where there's been a disagreement or argument between two kids. We talk to them about it, ask questions, and help them reflect on what happened. You can see that they start to understand why cooperation and teamwork matter through these experiences." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"Like I said, the Police have said that the number of young people caught on anti-social behaviour outside the building. […] There used to be fights outside the building every day. Lots of members of the public wouldn't come in and use the place because there's always gangs of kids messing around. But now they know that they have somewhere safe, that they can get some time for themselves. […] The [anti-social] behaviour has drastically dropped." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

Awareness and open communication

"The situation […] about the young boy who got stabbed, I think that has impacted the community greatly. And especially those that we're working with. […] The young people have been speaking up about the terror of and the numbers of people that are engaged in [it] and why would anybody want to bring a knife to school every day and all of that sort of stuff." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"Sometimes you get some kids that are always out there, dead noisy and then suddenly come in and they're really, really quiet. So, we just go and have a quick private chat. Just checking in that they're all OK and you know, if there's anyone and the kids know that they can come and just talk to us anyway." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"I want to go into civil service so that kind of helping young people and making the change from kind of government and kind of being able to help young people in any way possible. I do feel that this is kind of a stepping stone to that." (Young Person)

"We worked recently with a student from Manchester University. He had a whole team, and part of our team was working with him and so they've got that privilege to do that, to work with somebody on a piece of film that was […] publicised by the BBC. […] They got very, very involved with a real responsible piece of filming that was highly recognised and then that came out in December. […] So, they felt really a part of something and very obviously engaged as well." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

"I think it helped [her] especially with the spellings and her maths. So, this week she actually has come home with a certificate for writing. I do think it does help her." (Mother)

Inclusion and empowered young people

"We've had some feedback from parents of young people […]. This is just an example from last week, in one of our open evening or open day design sessions, just saying that they feel like their voices are being heard and they're non-engaged kids. They've never had that opportunity to be heard before and feel like their opinion is valued and it was so sweet. It was so lovely." (Lead Co-ordinator)

"It's kind of easy to say ok, we do want young people to have a say in what goes on, but again, to actually be in the place and the position to see what best fit young people and not hearing that from older people was obviously very beneficial." (Young Person)

Next steps*

- Decrease scaffolding and support the delivery partners to be sustainable.
- Continue working in collaboration.
- Secure income and funding beyond the current funding cycle.
- Expand on the activities: perform in professional theatres, increase number of educational trips, more frequent youth club sessions, homework clubs.
- Hire additional staff.
- Invest in technology for some of the activities.
- Reach more young people.
- Make including young people in the decision-making a priority.
- Move away from a structured approach and towards a co-created model.
- Keep upskilling groups, expand capacity, and share the workload.
- Implement youth-led fun day.
- Launch of Schools Funding to increase engagement and collaborations between organisations and schools.
- Start youth-led social action fund youth consultations.

"[We need] to work together to try and generate income for the future, for when this ends. So, it's not just going to end and then we all just disappear. So, it's about legacy at the end of the five years. […] Shoots or roots are starting to hopefully embed now, that in three years or so, three years when money does finish that we are here and we're going to continue the work." (Steering Group Member/Delivery Partner)

*Based on year 2 evaluation findings

7.4 Appendix 4: Research tools

7.4.1 Topic guide YEF NF Programme –Steering group members and other partners

Introduction

Aim: to ensure the participant understands the aim of the evaluation, how the interview will be conducted and how the data will be used.

- Introduce self and evaluation team.
- Introduce research, aims of study and interview topics.
- Discuss voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and potential caveats.
- Describe interview process (about 60 minutes) and confirm recording.
- Ask if they have any questions and obtain verbal consent.

Context

Aim: to understand the participant's background and involvement in the project

1. Can you tell me about the service that you work in/organisation or group you represent and your role?
2. Can you tell be about your specific role in the *(local programme name)*?

Activity/interventions (selected delivery partners only)

Aim: to understand the delivery, outcomes and impacts of selected action plan activities and interventions to develop case studies and inform the wider evaluation.

As a delivery partner, we would like to ask you some questions about *(activity/intervention name).* This will be used to develop short case studies on action plan activities and interventions and will *also* inform the wider evaluation.

3. What was the process like applying for funding to deliver your activity/intervention?
    - Application process
    - Your capacity as an organisation to apply for funding
    - Decision making process
    - Etc.
4. Can you tell me about the activity/intervention you/your organisation/group delivers as part of the YEF project.
    - How does it aim to reduce youth violence?
    - What is delivered?
        - Where, how, why and to whom?
    - How engaged are participants?
        - Is there a need for the activity/intervention?
        - Do participants fully engage or drop out?

        - What are the reasons for this?
    - What are the key facilitators to implementation?
    - What are the key barriers to implementation?
    - What are the intended outcomes or impacts of it?
        - Have these been observed? For whom, how, why and in what context?
        - What are the key elements of the activity/intervention that lead to these impacts?
        - Do any other elements affect that likelihood of impacts (e.g. external factors / individual circumstances)
    - What is working well and less well?
    - What are the key areas for improvement?

Implementation (Steering group members only)

Aim: to understand the participant's views on the implementation of the project and action plan

The following question focuses on the *(local programme name)* and specifically the action plan.

5. Which activities/actions have been implemented to date?
6. What are the roles of different stakeholders in delivering the action plan?
7. What are the key enablers and barriers to implementing the action plan?
8. Overall, how well are the different components of the action plan being delivered?
    - Are there any elements that are behind/not running well? If so, why?

Outcomes and impact

Aim: to understand the participant's views on the outcomes and impacts of the project and action plan

9. What evidence is there of impacts on intended outcomes for individuals and community groups?

To what extent are strong sustainable collaborations being formed between delivery partners, young people, and the wider community?

10. Have you observed any other outcomes or impacts of the project or action plan across the community or partnership?

Reflections and next steps

Aim: to understand the participant's views on areas for development and sustainability

11. What are the key components that are critical to the future success of this project?
12. If you were to do this again, what changes would you make?
13. Do you think the project and action plan is sustainable?

7.4.2 Topic guide YEF NF Programme –Children/ young people and local community members.

Introduction

Hello, my name is *[research's name]*, and we are carrying out a study to look at how the *[activity/intervention] (s*) has been implemented and what impact it may have had for those taking part. Please be aware that (even when working within in a group) you are always welcome to stop the

interview/focus group, ask any question or have a break to step out or consult privately with the researcher if you feel you need to.

Background

1. Before we start, I'd like to start with some questions about you. Could you tell me a bit about yourself?
   Age; gender; school.
2. Could you tell me a bit about your local area?
   - How long have you lived in the area?
   - What do you like about the area? Why?
   - What do you think could be better? Why?

Experience and understandings of *[activity/intervention]*

Questions	Prompts (these are additional questions that we may ask)
Can you tell us about the first time you came to *[activity/intervention]*? Can you describe what happens at *[activity/intervention]*	• *How did you hear about [activity/intervention]?* • *How did you get involved?* • *Why did you take part?* • *What were you looking forward to? If anything? – why?* • *What were you not looking forward to? If anything? – why?* • *What were your expectations at the beginning? What were you hoping to achieve?* • *How did you feel the first time you took part? Why did you feel that way?* • *Did that change after you had attended?* • *How long have you taken part for?* • *How often do you attend?* • *What happens when you attend – what different activities do you take part in?* • *Who is [activity/intervention] aimed at? (Who can attend?)*
Can you tell us what works well about *[activity/intervention]*?	*Prompts:* • *the content/things you do,* • *the people delivering [activity/intervention],* • *the length of the sessions,* • *the location.* • *other service users/peer support*

Can you tell us anything that you would improve or change about *[activity/intervention]*?	*Prompts as above*

Outcomes and impact

Questions	Prompts
Can you tell us about what you think the overall aim of *[activity/intervention]* is?	Prompts: • New *skills and abilities*, improved *health* hand *well being*
What difference has *[activity/intervention]* made for you?	• *Have the aims described above been achieved?* • *If yes, can you tell me more about how [activity/intervention]* have *made this happen?* • *Why has [activity/intervention] made a difference for you?* • *If* no*, why do you think this is?*
Do you think there have been any other impacts?	• Prompts: *on your family members, friends, adults who support you e.g. at school*.
Do you think there is anything that might stop *[activity/intervention]* being successful?	

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about *[activity/intervention]* that we haven't talked about?

Support for children and young people (Children 10-18 years old)

1) In your local area, what local support or activities are there for children and young people?
    a. What does it involve?
    b. Who is this for? Can all who need to access do so?
    c. What impact does it have (why)? Are these impacts the same for all?
    d. Do you think local support/activity has been designed based on their what they have said and needed?

2) What more could be done to support children and young people in regard to local support or activities?
    - What activities would you like to see/are needed?
    - Why? How could this be implemented?

Support for children and young people (adults)

3) In your local area, what local support or activities are there for children and young people?

a. What does it involve?
b. Who is this for? Can all who need to access do so?
c. What impact does it have (why)? Are these impacts the same for all?
d. Do you think local support/activity has been designed based on what they have said and needed?

4) What more could be done to support children and young people to influence the design and running of local support or activities?
   - What types/specific activities do you think are needed?
   - Why? How could this be implemented?

5) In your local area, do you think children and young people are supported to make positive decisions that affect their lives?
   e. No: why not?
   f. Yes: How are they supported? Is this the same for children and young people? What impact does this have (why)? Are these impacts the same for all?

6) What more could be done to support children and young to make positive decisions that affect their lives?
   - Why? How could this be implemented?

Thank participants for their time and explain what happens next/how their data will be used.

7.4.3 Online survey: Steering group members and delivery partner survey questions

1) Location

- ☐ Birmingham (Lozells and Newtown)
- ☐ Bradford (Bowling and Barkerend)
- ☐ Cardiff (Butetown and Grangetown)
- ☐ Norfolk (Nelson ward, Central and Northgate, Great Yarmouth)
- ☐ Manchester (Cheetham Hill)

2) Your role within the project

- ☐ Steering group member *(also known as core group member)*
- ☐ Delivery partner (skip to section 2 delivery)
- ☐ A steering group member and a delivery partner

Section 1: Partnership working (steering group members only)

The next few questions will focus of steering group participation. Please consider your answering in relation to the YEF Neighbourhood Fund Project *(local project name to be inserted here)* which aims to *(local or programme level aim to be inserted here)*.

Synergy

Please think about the people and organisations that are participants in your partnership. By working together…	Extremely well	Very well	Somewhat well	Not so well	Not well at all
How well is your partnership able to identify new and creative ways to solve problems?					
How well is your partnership able to include the views and priorities of the people *(children, young people, and communities)* affected by the partnerships work?					
How well is your partnership able to develop goals that are widely understood and supported amongst partners?					
How well is your partnership able to identify how different services and programmes in the community relate to the problem *(reducing youth violence)* the partnership is trying to address?					
How well is your partnership able to respond to the needs and problems of the community?					
How well is your partnership able to implement strategies that are most likely to work in the community?					
How well is your partnership able to obtain support from individuals and organisations in the community that can either block the partnerships plans or help move them forward?					
How well is your partnership able to carry out comprehensive activities that connect multiple services programmes or systems?					
How well is your partnership able to clearly communicate to people in the community how the partnerships actions will address the problems that are important to them?					

Leadership

Please think about all of the people who provide either formal or informal leadership in this partnership. Please rate the <u>total effectiveness</u> of your partnership's leadership in each of the following areas:	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Taking responsibility for the partnership						
Inspiring or motivating people involved in the partnership						
Empowering people involved in the partnership						
Communicating the vision of the partnership						
Working to develop a common language within the partnership						
Fostering respect, trust, inclusiveness, and openness in the partnership						
Creating an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced						
Resolving conflict among partners						

Combining the perspective resources and skills of the partners						
Helping the partnership to be creative and looking at things differently						
Recruiting diverse people and organisations into the partnership						

Efficiency

Please choose the statement that best describes how your partnership uses financial resources, in-kind resources, and time.	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
How well does the partnership makes use of financial resources.						
How well does your partnership use in- kind resource (e.g. skills, expertise, information, data, connections, influence, space, equipment, goods).						
How well does your partnership use the partner's time.						

Administration and management

We would like you to think about the administration and management activities in your partnership **please** rate the effectiveness of your partnership in carrying out each of the following activities	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Coordinating communication amongst partners						
Coordinating communication with people and organisations outside the partnership						
Organising partnership activities including meetings and projects						
Applying for and managing grants and funds						
Preparing materials that involve partners and help them make timely decisions						
Performing secretarial duties						
Providing orientation to new partners as they joined the partnership						
Evaluating the progress and impact of the partnership						
Minimising the barriers to participate in in the partnership meetings and activities (e.g. by holding them at a convenient place and time, by providing transportation, and childcare)						

Non-financial resources

A partnership needs non-financial resources **in order** to work effectively and achieve its goals. For each of the following types of resources, to what	All of what it needs	Most of what it needs	Some of what it needs	Almost none of what it needs	None of what it needs	Don't know

extent does your partnership have what it needs to work effectively?						
Skills and expertise (e.g. leadership, administration, evaluation, law, public policy, cultural competency, training, community organising).						
Data and information (e.g. statistical data, information about community perceptions, values, resources, and politics).						
Connections to target populations						
Connections to political decision makers, government agencies, and other organisations/groups						
Legitimacy and credibility						
Influence and ability to bring people together for meetings and activities						

Financial and Other Capital Resources

A partnership also needs financial and other capital resources **in order** to work effectively and to achieve its goals. For each of the following types of **resource is** to what extent does your partnership have **where** it needs to work effectively?	All of what it needs	Most of what it needs	Some of what it needs	Almost none of what it needs	None of what it needs	Don't know
Money						
Space						
Equipment and goods						

Decision-making

	Extremely comfortable	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	A little comfortable	Not at all comfortable
How **comfortable** are you with the way decisions are made in your partnership?					

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Almost none of the time	None of the time
How often do you **support** the decisions made by the partnership?					
How often do you feel that you have been **left out** of the decision-making process?					

Benefits of participation

For each of the following benefits, please indicate whether you have or have not received the benefit as a result of participating in the partnership	Yes	No
Enhanced ability to address an important issue		
Development of new skills		
Heightened public profile		
Increased utilisation of my expertise or services		
Acquisition of useful knowledge about services programmes or people in the community		
Enhanced ability to affect public policy		

Development of valuable relationships		
Enhance ability to meet the needs of my community or clients		
Ability to have a greater impact than I could have on my own		
Ability to make a contribution to the community		
Acquisition of additional financial support		

Drawbacks of participation

For each of the following drawbacks, please indicate whether or not you have or have not experienced the drawback as a result of participating in this partnership	Yes	No
Diversion of time and resources away from other priorities or obligations		
Insufficient influence in partnership activities		
Viewed negatively due to association with other partners or partnership		
Frustration or aggravation		
Insufficient credit given to me for contribution to accomplishments of the partnership		
Conflict between my job and the partnerships work		

Compared benefits and Drawbacks

	Benefits greatly exceed the drawbacks	Benefits exceed the drawbacks	Benefits and drawbacks are about equal	Drawbacks exceed the benefits	Drawbacks greatly exceed the benefits
So far, how have the benefits of participating in this partnership compared to the drawbacks?					

Satisfaction with Participation

	Completely satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	A little satisfied	Not at all satisfied
How satisfied are you with the way the people and organisations in the partnership work together?					
How satisfied are you with your influence in the partnership					
How satisfied are you with your role in the partnership					
How satisfied are you with the partnership's plans for achieving its goals					
How satisfied are you with the way the partnership is implementing its plans					

Section 2: Delivery of activities (Delivery partners only)

What types of activities are you/your organisation involved in running as part of funding you have received for The YEF Neighbourhood Fund (tick as many that apply).

- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Skill based activities (i.e. cooking, music, art etc)

- ☐ Education/learning (GCSE help, literacy, reading/writing)
- ☐ Improving knowledge (safety, violence prevention, mental health)
- ☐ Mentorship
- ☐ Employment and training
- ☐ Environmental improvement
- ☐ Other
    - If other, please state what type of activity/intervention you run.

Who is the target group for you activity/intervention (tick as many that apply)

- ☐ Boys
- ☐ Girls
- ☐ Both boys and girls
- ☐ Those at risk of NEET (not in employment, education, or training)
- ☐ Those with additional learning needs
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please select which best fits your activity/intervention.

- ☐ Drop in sessions
- ☐ Structure intervention with a set number of children/young people
- ☐ Other (please specify)

How well do you feel….

	Very well	Well	Adequately	Poorly	Very poorly
…the delivery activities are engaging with the target group of young people to prevent youth violence?					
Please explain your answer:					
…supported by the leaders/those who have funded you to undertake your activities?					
Please explain your answer:					
… the funding you received covers all your activities that you have been commissioned to run.					
Please explain your answer:					
… you accounted for additional costs in your application i.e. staff time, facilities, bills etc.					
Please explain your answer:					
…all elements of your activity/intervention being delivered?					
Please explain your answer:					

What has worked well or has been key to the success of delivering your activity?

(Free text) _____

What challenges have you faced in delivering your activity?

(Free text) _____

What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

(Free text) _____

What strategies have been effective in attracting young people to participate in the project?

(Free text) _____

Impact and Outcomes (all participants)

What positive changes have you observed so far for children and young people as a result of the Youth Endowment Fund, Neighbourhood fund (if any)?

(Free text) _____

What positive changes have you observed so far for the local community as a result of the Youth Endowment Fund, Neighbourhood fund (if any)?

(Free text) _____

What positive changes have you observed so far for partnership working as a result of the Youth Endowment Fund, Neighbourhood fund (if any)?

(Free text) _____

Have you noticed any early indicators of reduced youth violence as a result of your activity or the project over all?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**
- ☐ **Too early to tell**
- ☐ **If yes, please describe: _____**

What potential long-term impacts do you foresee if the project continues on its current trajectory?

(Free text) _____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping the future of the project and ensuring its success in reducing youth violence.

We are currently interviewing delivery partners to find out more about their activities. If you would like to tell us more about your activity, please leave your contact email and one of our research team will be in touch to arrange an interview for a convenient time**.**

Email: (Free text) _____

In additional, this year's evaluation report would like to include young people's voices and their experiences of participating in the programme. The evaluation team feel it's very important that they are represented in the report and have the opportunity to share their views. Please let us know if it would be possible to organise a short focus

group with young people attending your activity. If this is something you can help facilitate, please leave your contact email address and someone from the research team will be in touch to organise.

Email: (Free text) _____

Thank you again for participating in this survey