

# Year of Young People National Lottery Fund Programme Evaluation

## Final Report to The National Lottery Heritage Fund

August 2020



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## 1. The National Lottery Heritage Fund

At the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we give out money raised by players of The National Lottery to projects that explore and celebrate heritage in the UK. From learning traditional woodland crafts, to capturing treasured memories, we fund heritage projects that are important to you and your community.

Funding starts from £3,000, for heritage projects that make a long-lasting difference by involving the widest possible range of people. Heritage can mean different things to different people. It can be anything from the past that you value and want to pass on to future generations.

We fund heritage projects of all sizes that connect people and communities to the national and local heritage of the UK. Our grants range from £3,000 up to millions of pounds. <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/>

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The Year of Young People National Lottery Fund was a joint funded programme between The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, **sportscotland** and The Spirit of 2012. Funding from this programme comes from the National Lottery thanks to money raised by its players.

Figure 1: Year of Young People National Lottery Fund Programme Summary Highlights



## Executive Summary

### 1.1 Background

SMG was commissioned to evaluate The Year of Young People National Lottery Fund (YoYP National Lottery Fund) in Scotland. This fund was administered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund on behalf of participating distributors (The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, **sportscotland** and Spirit of 2012). Grants of between £3,000 and £10,000 were provided for heritage, community and sports projects that involved young people (aged 8 to 26 years) in highly participatory co-design ways. A total of 92 projects across 24 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas were funded. Activities included: mental health workshops, outdoor skills development, physical activity sessions, theatre, art and creative workshops, volunteering opportunities, peer education and mentoring, heritage and history work, intergenerational networking, and events for specific marginalised groups.

### 1.2 Evaluation questions and method

The evaluation addressed three questions:

1. To what extent were young people involved in planning, delivering, managing and evaluating the projects and what has been the impact of their involvement on the young people, the projects and the organisations?
2. What have been the most effective ways of involving young people in all aspects of the projects e.g. from the inception of the project to its delivery and evaluation?
3. What have the benefits been for young people's wellbeing in terms of mental health, resilience, and physical health?

The evaluation team worked closely with The Fund team, project staff and young people to co-design a set of data collection tools to support online surveys and case study visits.

### 1.3 Sample

Data was gathered via online surveys from 65 Project Leads and 805 young people who had participated in a wide range of activities. The great majority of young people responding were teenagers; most were aged between 12 and 15 years. Participants were evenly split by gender. Most identified as White British. Depth case studies were carried out with 3 projects.

### 1.4 Involvement of young people in the projects

Roughly half of the young people had engaged with their projects more than once: close to one-third had contact on 5 or more occasions. Over half who engaged more than once were involved as volunteers, over two-thirds in a skilled or semi-skilled capacity.

Most reported high-level participation: 83% had involvement in decision-making or leadership, creation and design, or providing their views. Involvement in decision-making was often a new experience and, for many young people, their favourite thing about the project.

Involvement in each stage of project's activity was high - in planning and delivering project activity; in evaluation; and in project management. Most young people reported positive experiences from their involvement in all of these areas.

"The most valuable aspect of the project for me was the key role I was able to play in creative input and decision making processes. Our opinions were meaningfully considered which was unexpected in a work climate where youth input tends to be tokenistic." (Young Person)

### 1.5 Benefits to projects and organisations

Involving young people brought benefits to both projects and organisations at every stage of the process. Project Leads highlighted that involving young people in high-level ways was vital to reach and engage the target population. Organisational benefits were felt in improvements to: engaging and understanding young people, project delivery and management, and partnership working.

## 1.6 Young people's satisfaction

Young people were very positive about their experiences. The vast majority of those who had been involved on multiple occasions reported feeling welcomed, respected, valued, represented, a sense of purpose, and that taking part was fun. Many had learned new and useful things. There was an appetite for longer sessions and more events.

Some of the things that young people liked best about taking part were:

- Collaboration/doing things with others – being treated as equals, and being valued for contributing
- Meeting new people
- Feeling pride as a result of their work
- And the sense of enjoyment and fun in participating

“Sharing and learning skills, games, being respected by the adults and having choices. Being able to be part of the events on lots of different levels and to contribute to making something special happen.” (Young Person)

“The best thing about the project was that all decisions, ideas and planning were generated and implemented by all those involved. The project was ultimately for the young people BY the young people which is incredibly empowering.” (Young Person)

“When all the activities came together it was a great feeling, the numbers of families and young people who attended events we ran was amazing I think we more than doubled our estimations.” (Young Person)

“The organisational skills I learned. All the projects were well attended, and I had great fun and pride when they worked well.” (Young Person)

## 1.7 Impact on young people's health and wellbeing

Data from 101 young people who completed surveys 'before' and 'after' allowed a comparison of self-reported health and wellbeing to be made. Overall, involvement was very beneficial to young peoples' health and wellbeing:

- The amount of physical activity done by the young people increased, with the proportion partaking in two or more hours of physical activity a day rising from 22% to 52%
- Three-quarters said their physical activity had improved 'because' of participation in the project. Many said that physical activity was their 'favourite thing' about the project.
- 90% of young people involved in mental health or wellbeing workshops agreed that their levels of physical activity had improved over their involvement in the project.
- Significant increases were found in young peoples' general satisfaction with life, their happiness, and their feelings of self-worth.

On the whole, young people felt their lives overall were better for having participated in the programme. The before and after survey results show sizeable increases in the proportions of young people reporting: their life is going well; their life is just right; and they have a good life. Also, the proportion that 'wished they had a different life' dropped by half.

“Without question creating a safe and pleasant space for young people to come together and connect with nature while idly talking about their lives, feelings, hopes and fears has been the biggest factor that has contributed to improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing.” (Project Lead)

“Being part of a bigger community, being asked for ideas or for contributions to offer. That my writing/poetry was valued. Welcoming and gives you confidence. Relaxed acceptance. Lots of different people and activities.” (Young Person)

## 1.8 Legacy

Legacy impacts from the YoYP National Lottery Fund that will help organisations with future work have been reported. Specifically, some projects reported that the increased partnership working that the co-design model

led to has created a partnership network that the organisation can draw upon and benefit from in future projects. This is beneficial to the young people, who can be signposted to other organisations, and also the organisation, who can make use of other resources to best design projects and recruit their audience.

"The connection with some of the most at risk young people from across the area - this has really opened a lot of new doors and opportunities to engage with partners we were not engaging with before the project started." (Project Lead)

Additionally, projects that involved young people in high-level roles as peer educators, leaders or mentors are now able to utilise these skilled young people in further projects, and other projects report intention to utilise a co-design model in future work due to the value and benefit they felt from it.

### 1.9 Summing up

The YoYP National Lottery Fund has made a sizable and positive contribution to the lives of many thousands of young people across Scotland. Specifically, it has:

- Engaged young people in high level, co-design ways in a range of projects
- Engaged young people in meaningful ways in these projects.
- Positively impacted physical and mental health and wellbeing through: developing skills, building confidence, trying new things and making friends.
- Encouraged young people to lead healthier and more active lives by providing them with the opportunity, motivation and confidence to do so.

The success of the programme can be attributed in large part to the following features:

- **The young-person-driven approach** – This was singled out by many respondents as being a particularly important element of the project. It was felt that giving young people control from an early stage created a sense of autonomy, generated enthusiasm to see the project through, and created great pride at the end. Additionally, young people in leadership roles inspired others in ways that non-peer project leads could not.

"That this project was young person led was probably the most instrumental aspect of engaging young people from the community. The project benefits from the social capital of the young volunteers supporting its delivery to target their peers and engage with the project with a pre-established trust." (Project Lead)

- **Being iterative and flexible** - As the backgrounds of many of the young participants meant that they were not always able to commit to, or follow-through on, scheduled programmes. As such, being able to adapt and meet needs in another way was sometimes key to maintaining engagement.

#### Case Study Highlight: Belville Community Garden Trust – Young Volunteers' Garden (Greenock, Inverclyde)

This project, which focused on disengaged young people creating a children's garden, experienced some commitment challenges with the participants. Many of the young people were not used to dedicating a lot of time to working on something, and the early, planning stages of the project were difficult for them as they involved sitting at a desk and thinking, which reminded the young people of school. The project overcame these challenges by taking an iterative approach and shaping the activities around the needs and wants of the young people as it progressed:

"When we had our first design meeting with one of the groups we sat them around a table to discuss the design board and you could see their shoulders slumping, going 'oh no, we're back at school'. So in the end we thought 'can this' and we moved the design board outside and walked around the garden with it to get them more active." (Project Lead)

- **Setting clear objectives and goals** - Clear goals from the outset made it clear to young people what they were working towards. Setting goals was also key for leaders, as it made it easier for them to guide projects to adapt and focus on the needs of the participants during an activity session.

Case Study Highlight: Young Movers (YoMo) - A leap towards positive mental health for young people (Easterhouse, Glasgow)

Initially, this project envisioned creating a mental health training toolkit, along with a 'top-tips' leaflet, to equip young people in Glasgow to take care of their mental health. However, after attending some mental health events for research, the young people realised that there were already toolkits and leaflets on the market that they didn't find helpful. Instead, they felt there was a gap in services for face-to-face, young people 'tried-and-tested' mental health support. They changed the project to involve delivering and presenting participatory workshops. Having had clear objectives set at the beginning of the project made this process easier, as the young people were able to rethink what they wanted to create, but had a clear understanding of what it had to achieve.

- **Facilitating partnership working** - For the projects working with under-represented, very specific or marginalised groups, establishing a network of partners helped them to reach more young people than they could have on their own.
- **Creating opportunities for social bonding** – Which improved young people's wellbeing

"Most of these young people were socially isolated with no friends. As a side effect, the classes have become a social group, participants have made friends and are meeting up outwith the classes to prepare meals and eat together." (Project Lead)

- **Providing novel, practical and (very importantly) 'fun' experiences.**

"The broad range of activities provided ensured the young people were best able to develop confidence alongside skills which was the ultimate aim behind the project. With such a wide spectrum of activities the young people were given the fullest opportunity to become engaged and try something new. In both streams, feedback from volunteers and staff surrounded how the growth in the participants' confidence and social skills were evident by the end of the programme." (Project Lead)

The evaluation throws light on an inclusive national programme, with young people involved in all stages in the life of the funded projects, many being engaged in high-level ways and having a hands-on role in decision-making processes. Regardless of the activity being delivered, young people report that their physical activity has improved, and that they were happier and more satisfied with life after taking part. A number of lessons can be learned for future work using a co-design model, which are illustrated below:

### 1.10 Future practice

A number of projects have found the co-design model of working with young people to be valuable and are considering continuing with this approach in future projects - as evidenced by many intending to continue project activity after the end of the funded programme. As co-design was new to most projects, many learned valuable lessons in how to deal with and overcome challenges. Practical tips for utilising co-design, borne out of the feedback from projects on this programme, are as follows:

- ✓ Be flexible and alternate between planning tasks and practical tasks to help to maintain enthusiasm and engagement.
- ✓ Offer practical, hands-on tasks, which are often the most engaging for young people, and help them to see a tangible product of their efforts.
- ✓ Develop a sense of autonomy and ownership: give young people control over the delivery, management and evaluation.
- ✓ Treat young people as equal partners, not service users, as this communicates their value and importance to the project.
- ✓ Avoid difficulties with group work by making sure everyone's voice is heard and welcomed. Encourage compromise so participants are used to this way of working.
- ✓ Plan ahead for some participant drop-off as this is often unavoidable.
- ✓ Working with partners improves the recruitment process for hard to reach groups, and building partnerships can go beyond the project and benefit future work
- ✓ Training young people to be peer leaders and mentors is effective at engaging those who distrust adults and authority to participate.
- ✓ Have clear project goals to help the young people to stay on track and not get carried away with what their project can achieve.

- ✓ Introduce evaluation early to engage young people in the process - ensure they understand its purpose, otherwise they may see it as a criticism of their work.
- ✓ Project Leads need to be on hand to help young people participate in the evaluation process if they require it.
- ✓ Factor-in the other commitments of young people during the planning stage to minimise the risk of the project going off track.
- ✓ Flexibility is key – be ready to change the order or location of activities depending on the situation, e.g. fewer young people turning up than expected, bad weather etc.
- ✓ Encourage all young people to contribute, and ensure the voices of the less confident are heard.

## 2. Introduction

The Social Marketing Gateway (SMG) was commissioned by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2018 to conduct an evaluation of the Year of Young People National Lottery Fund programme (YoYP National Lottery Fund) in Scotland.

Scotland's Year of Young People (YoYP 2018), which occurred in 2018, was a year dedicated to inspiring Scotland through its young people by celebrating their achievements, valuing their contributions to communities, and creating new opportunities for them to shine locally, nationally and on the international stage. The YoYP National Lottery Fund provided grant funding for heritage, community and sports projects that involved young people in highly participatory ways – the aim being for young people to co-design projects, resulting in skills development and improved health and wellbeing.

The evaluation assessed how well co-design was achieved, how integral young people were to the projects, and the impact on their wellbeing. It explored: the extent to which projects met programme objectives; challenges faced and successful models of working; and lessons learned that can inform future practice.

### 2.1 The Year of Young People National Lottery Fund Programme

The Fund operates under a strategic framework envisioned to make a 'lasting difference for heritage and people'. Launched in March 2018, the YoYP National Lottery Fund sought to achieve this for young people, aged 8 to 26 years, by focusing a year of funding and support for projects across Scotland dedicated to improving lives, health and wellbeing. In partnership with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund, **sportscotland**, and Spirit of 2012, £800,000 was made available for grants of between £3,000 and £10,000: celebrating, rewarding and inspiring young people by providing them with an opportunity to showcase their talents and to design and shape projects and policies in their own communities and beyond.

The four goals of the programme were:

1. Encourage positive mental health for young people.
2. Inspire young people to lead active lives.
3. Ensure young people are involved in developing, delivering and evaluating these projects to meet their needs, informed by the 'Year of Young People Codesign Blueprint'.
4. Celebrate and share young people's achievements.

A total of 92 projects across 24 of Scotland's 32 local authority areas were funded. Project activities included: mental health workshops, outdoor skills development, physical activity sessions, theatre, art and creative workshops, volunteering opportunities, peer education and mentoring, heritage and history work, intergenerational networking, and events for specific marginalised groups – e.g. Roma, disabled, and LGBTQIA+ groups.

As well as supporting the health and wellbeing of young people, funded projects were required to embrace the principles of co-design: young people being involved from the early stages in a highly participatory way, engaging in the development, delivery, evaluation and all other decision making processes.

#### 2.1.1 Young Scot's co-design blueprint<sup>1</sup>:

"Co-design is about involving young people much earlier in decision making processes through a highly participative approach, developing informed insights, ideas, recommendations and solutions for policy and practice. Co-design is about much more than basic consultation; it seeks to engage young people with shared power and resources...young people [are] viewed and treated as equal partners."

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<sup>1</sup> Young Scot, 2018, Co-design Blueprint, viewed 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, [https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20190923175906mp\\_/http://yoyp2018.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A-Co-design-Blueprint-Legacy.pdf](https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20190923175906mp_/http://yoyp2018.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/A-Co-design-Blueprint-Legacy.pdf)

Although the majority of organisations involved in the programme already worked with young people, many had not previously involved them in decision making roles. As such, whilst most organisations had strong experience of supporting young peoples' health and wellbeing, for most, co-designing with the young people was a new and, for some, a challenging experience.

The commitment to co-design is reflected in the programme outcomes:

1. Young people will have been integral to the design, delivery and evaluation of heritage, sport or community activities and
2. Young people will learn about and improve their mental health and become more resilient and/or
3. Young people will lead healthier more active lives

The YoYP National Lottery Fund outcomes align closely with Scotland's National Performance outcomes relating to wellbeing, namely: that we are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed by everyone; that we value, enjoy, protect and enhance our natural environment; and that we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe. They deliver against these outcomes by contributing to individual and community wellbeing, improving access to the natural environment and involving a wider range of people in heritage.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions

The evaluation addressed three research questions that reflect the desired programme outcomes:

1. To what extent were young people involved in planning, delivering, managing and evaluating the projects and what has been the impact of their involvement on the young people, the projects and the organisations?
2. What have been the most effective ways of involving young people in all aspects of the projects e.g. from the inception of the project to its delivery and evaluation?
3. What have been the benefits been for young people's wellbeing in terms of mental health, resilience, and physical health?

#### 3.2 Approach

To answer these questions our approach was to work closely with The Fund , project staff and young people to co-design a set of data collection tools. Regular engagement with projects and The Fund then continued throughout the evaluation process, with updates on the evaluation's progress provided at regular intervals.

Young people were involved in the co-design of the research tools. A Project Advisory Group (PAG) consisting of four young people was created to provide insight in the drafting of the tools, assess their clarity, suitability, and suggest any further questions to be added. The process allowed the young people involved to develop extra evaluation skills.

Project Leads were involved in a live webinar learning session to consider first drafts of the tools. This allowed projects to understand how they would be expected to use the tools and provided an opportunity to contribute to their design. This process also helped strengthen buy-in to the evaluation among the Project Leads and built capacity across projects to support the evaluation delivery.

#### 3.3 Evaluation tools

A mix of quantitative, qualitative and ethnographic tools collected data in a variety of ways.

Quantitative data was gathered by three online surveys:

- Young Person's Baseline Survey (Baseline Survey) – collected baseline data on young peoples' demographic characteristics, levels of physical activity and self-reported health and wellbeing.
- Young Person's End of Project Survey (Completion Survey) – collected similar information as the Baseline Survey in order to measure changes between baseline and end of project. It also collected data on the types of activities young people had participated in and how their project experience had impacted them.

- A short version of this tool was created for participants who engaged in one-off activities only.
- Project Leads Survey – gathered project-level information, including how many young people had been involved, the type and level of their involvement, what activities were undertaken, benefits to the project and wider organisation, and engagement challenges and successes. Open questions allowed respondents to highlight key learnings.

Two qualitative, case study tools were used to structure conversations about the project and the participant's involvement: a Project Leads Discussion Guide (PLD) and a Young Person's Discussion Guide (YPD). The PLD and YPD both allowed staff and participants to explain their project journey in their own words, e.g. how they came to be involved; what they did; and so on. Both tools provided prompts to gather insight that might not have been covered in the participant journey.

- The PLD focused on: obtaining a robust picture of the project and how it fitted into the wider organisation's work; how easy or challenging involving the young people in co-design was; challenges that had had to be overcome; and any successes and legacy impacts.
- The YPD gathered insight into: young people's involvement in, and expectations of, the project; if these had been met; and health and wellbeing elements, to determine the extent to which the project had impacted these.

An ethnographic Observation Guidelines tool was developed for use during the case study work. This provided guidance to the researcher on what to look out for whilst project activity was ongoing – e.g. body language, interpersonal relationships and evidence of social bonding.

Using these research tools, the evaluation achieved the following:

- Project Leads Survey: **65 responses**
- Young Person's Baseline Survey: **474 responses**
- Young Person's End of Project Survey: **805 responses** – comprising 412 one off participants and 383 participants who had been involved in their project twice or more.
- Case Studies: **3 projects**

A total of **101** young people completed both a Baseline Survey and Completion Survey, providing comparable self-reported health and wellbeing data between the beginning and end of their project involvement.

The report brings together key findings from all of the above streams of data. Selected vignettes from the case studies are included where relevant to provide further insight.

### 3.4 Reflections on approach and methodology

The methodology successfully engaged with 74% of the funded projects. Data collected was generally high quality and provided a robust sample for analysis. Some further reflections worth noting are:

- The PAG required extra consideration due to ethical guidance – e.g. engagement with those under 16 years was conducted by phone with a parent or guardian present.
- Comparable baseline and end of project data could not be gathered for all – e.g. where projects had already started when the evaluation began.
- Evaluation tools did not work for 'every' project – even with support from Project Leads, some young people were unable to engage due to complex social needs and/or learning difficulties.
- As participation was voluntary, the sample was self-selecting rather than representative – nevertheless, the large and diverse sample achieved does represent a good mix of young peoples' experiences.

### 3.5 Projects and activities

The projects submitting data for the evaluation delivered activity across 21 local authorities in Scotland (Table 1). Amongst them, a reported 10,956 young people were involved in some way, with the numbers ranging from 6 to 1,761 at the level of individual projects.

Table 1: Projects who participated in the evaluation by local authority

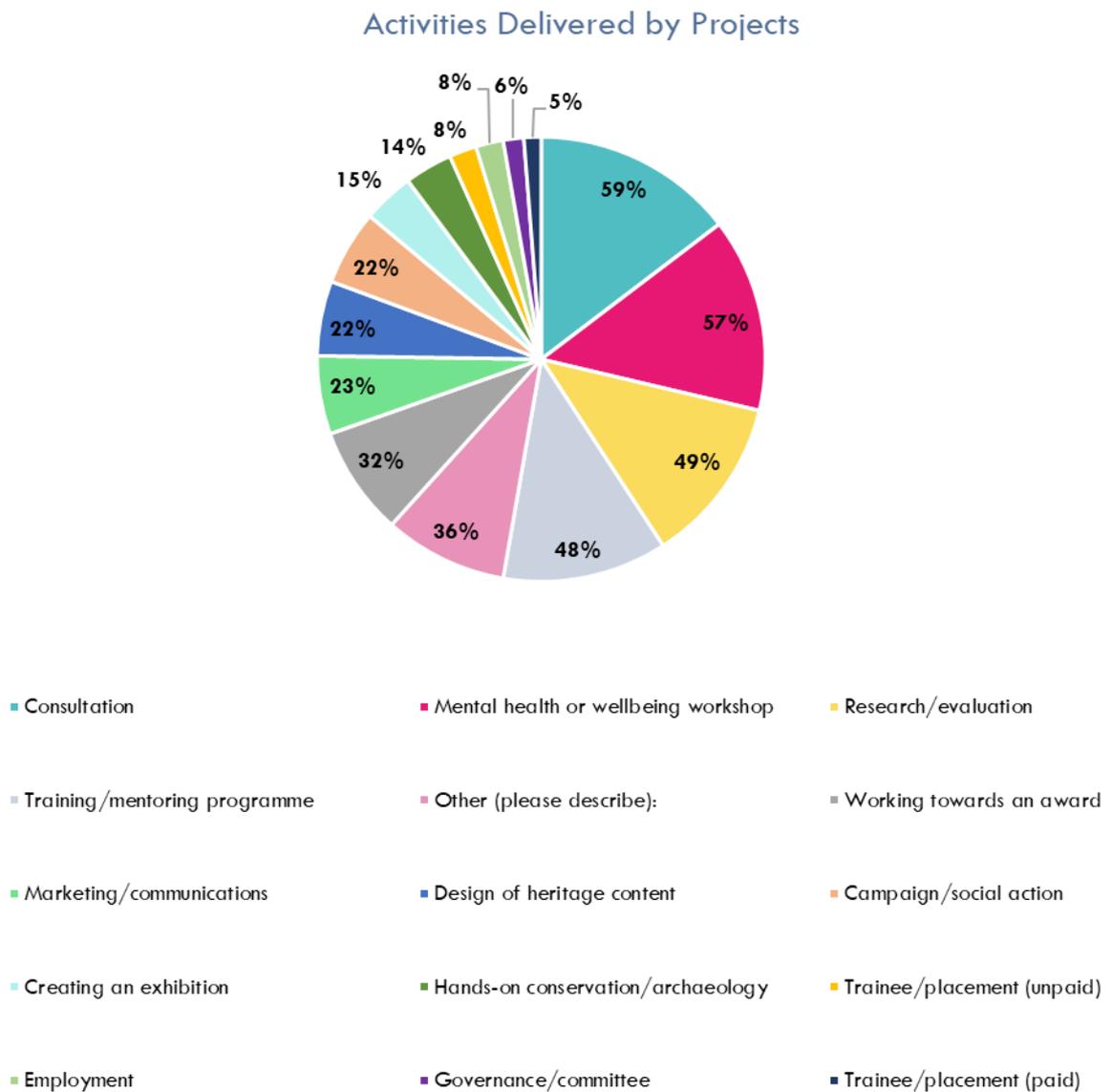
Number of projects in each local authority	Respondents % (n=)
Glasgow	19% (13)
Edinburgh	19% (13)
Fife	7% (5)
Midlothian	4% (3)
Argyll and Bute	4% (3)
Renfrewshire	4% (3)
Dundee	4% (3)
Highland	4% (3)
Shetland Islands	3% (2)
Perth and Kinross	3% (2)
North Lanarkshire	3% (2)
Falkirk	3% (2)
Stirling	3% (2)
Moray	3% (2)
Aberdeen City	3% (2)
North Ayrshire	3% (2)
Inverclyde	3% (2)
West Dunbartonshire	1% (1)
Borders	1% (1)
Dumfries and Galloway	1% (1)
South Lanarkshire	1% (1)
<b>Base</b>	<b>68</b>

Projects covered a broad range of activities and opportunities for young people, the more popular activities reflecting key outcomes expected of the programme (Fig. 2).

- The majority (59%) of projects delivered consultation activities: sessions or meetings during which young people gave advice to shape project development and delivery.
- Over half (57%) delivered activities under the heading of a mental health or wellbeing workshop.
- Opportunities for skills development were fairly widespread: just under half (48%) delivered a training or mentoring programme and around a third (32%) involved working towards an award.
- And around half (49%) involved young people in research and evaluation activities.

Other activities included: designing heritage content; campaigning; exhibiting; conservation work; work placements; employment; committee participation; and apprenticeships.

Figure 2: Activities delivered by projects



Base: 65  
Source: Project Leads Survey

All young people – both those involved only once and those involved more than once – were more likely to be involved in a mental health or wellbeing workshop than any other activity (Table 2), suggesting this is an area of particular interest for them.

For one-off participants, less than 10% were involved in any other listed activities. Some 10% of this group reported being involved in another way not listed, such as: attending an event, gardening, writing a poem or having a group/speaker attend their school.

Larger proportions of young people involved more than once took part in activities other than a mental health or wellbeing workshop. A third were involved in consultation, and almost a third had worked towards an award. Over a fifth were involved in research/evaluation and campaigning/social action or training/mentoring (Table 2).

For this group, other specified activities included: film-making, weekend activities, event planning, theatre, attending an event/sporting activity, social activities, volunteering, nature connection, and gardening.

Table 2: Type of activity young people have been involved in – participants involved more than once and one off participants

What kind of activity have you been involved in? (Select all relevant)	Participants involved more than once	One-off participants
Mental health or wellbeing workshop	52% (193)	69% (287)
Consultation (session/meeting where young people gave advice to shape project development, delivery etc.)	33% (122)	6% (24)
Working towards an award	31% (115)	4% (15)
Research/evaluation	22% (84)	5% (21)
Campaign/social action	22% (81)	1% (5)
Training/mentoring programme	19% (73)	3% (14)
Design of heritage content (gathering, organising and presenting content related to a particular topic)	16% (59)	4% (16)
Creating an exhibition	14% (51)	5% (21)
Creating marketing and communication content	11% (43)	2% (9)
Hands-on conservation/archaeology	7% (27)	5% (21)
Governance/committee	5% (18)	1% (2)
Trainee/placement (unpaid)	4% (16)	1% (5)
Trainee/placement (paid)	1% (5)	1% (2)
Employment	1% (4)	0% (1)
Apprenticeship	1% (2)	0% (1)
Other (please describe):	26% (97)	10% (41)
<b>Base</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>407</b>

Source: Completion Survey

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Young people's involvement and engagement

#### 4.1.1 Type of involvement in project

Over half (54%) of the 372 young people who engaged more than once were involved as volunteers (Table 3), with over two-thirds volunteering in a skilled or semi-skilled capacity (Fig. 3):

- Nearly half were semi-skilled volunteers – e.g. involving training to contribute to the project
- Around a third were unskilled volunteers – e.g. helping with general activities
- A fifth contributed skills like teaching, drawing on accredited skills already acquired.

Table 3: Type of involvement of young people

Which of the following describes the type of involvement you had in the project? (Select all relevant)	Respondents % (n=)
Volunteer	54% (202)
Trainee	7% (26)
Full time employed	1% (5)
Part-time employed	1% (4)
Work placement	1% (4)
Apprenticeship	1% (2)
Other (please write in):	45% (168)
<b>Base</b>	<b>372*</b>

\* multi-choice question therefore %s do not add to 100%.

Source: Completion Survey

Figure 3: Types of volunteer



For some, taking part as a volunteer was one of the highlights of the project.

"I developed my skill set and character through my role as a volunteer coach." (Young Person)

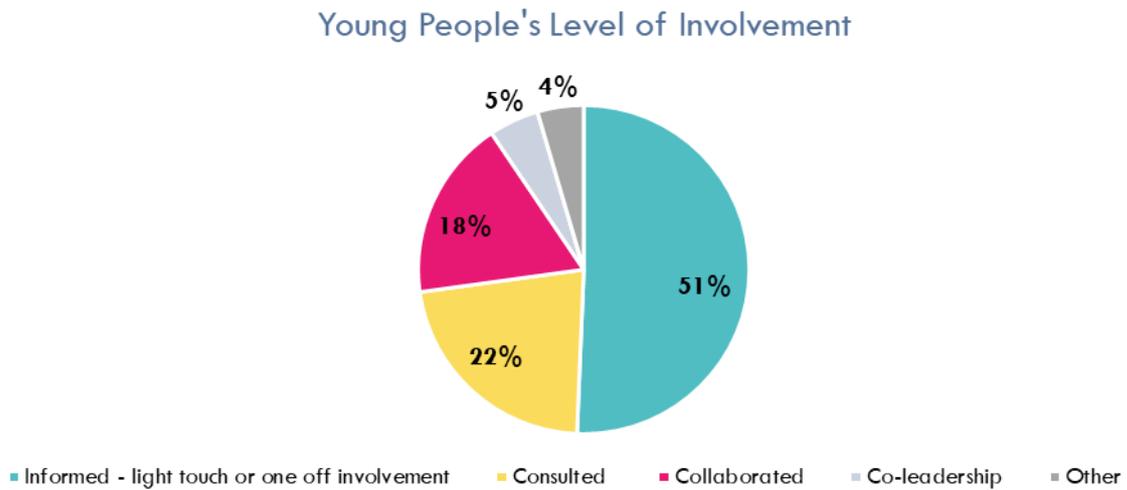
Apart from volunteering, many described their involvement in other ways, e.g. an attendee, participant, group member, guide or youth rep.

#### 4.1.2 Level of Involvement

Engaging young people at a high level was a core programme objective. The 65 Project Leads submitting data reported that 49% of the young people in their projects were involved in a high-level way: consulting, collaborating, or co-leading on the project (Fig. 4). Indeed, 49 of the 65 Project Leads (75%) reported that some young people co-led the project – the highest level of involvement.

A similar proportion (51%) of young people were reported as having lower level, lighter touch involvement.

Figure 4: Young people's level of involvement reported by Project Leads

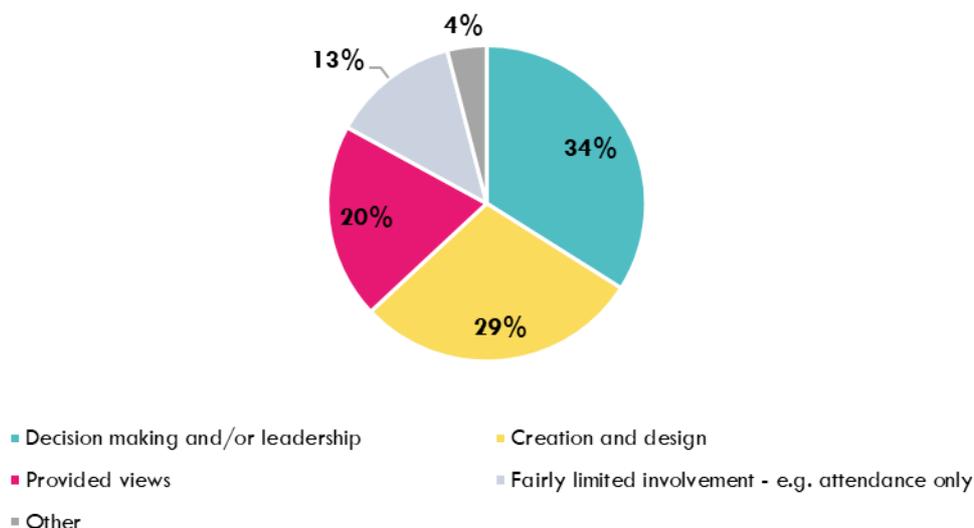


Base: 65  
Source: Project Leads Survey

The majority of young people reported being involved in high-level project elements: 83% had involvement in decision making or leadership, creation and design, or providing their views. Only 13% had only limited involvement in the project activity (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Young people's involvement in different elements of project activity

### Young People's Involvement in Different Project Elements



Base: 378

Source: Completion Survey

All age groups (ranging from 8-11 years old to 24-26 years old) had some involvement in every project element (Table 4). For every age group except those aged 8-11, the largest proportion were involved in making decisions and playing an active leadership role. This was particularly so for those aged 20-23, nearly half (47%) of whom were involved in this way.

12–15 year olds had a broader range of involvement in the project/activity than any other age group, and 16–23 year olds were more likely than any other age group to be involved in decision-making (46%). The youngest age group (8-11 years old) was most likely to play an active part in creation and design (40%) or give views and advice (29%).

Table 4: Level of involvement of young people by age

Which one of the following best describes your level of involvement in the project activity? (By each age group)	8 - 11 years	12 - 15 years	16 - 19 years	20 - 23 years	24 - 26 years
I had a fairly limited involvement - e.g. I just went along to activities	13% (7)	15% (22)	12% (10)	9% (3)	15% (3)
I was asked about my views and/or to give some advice to help the project/activity	29% (16)	20% (29)	16% (13)	13% (4)	30% (6)
I played an active part in the creation and design process for the project/activities	40% (22)	31% (44)	26% (21)	31% (10)	20% (4)
I was involved in making decisions about the project/activities and/or played a leadership role in the project/activities	18% (10)	33% (47)	46% (38)	47% (15)	35% (7)
<b>Base</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>

Source: Completion Survey

Involvement in decision-making was often a new experience and, for many young people, their favourite thing about the project.

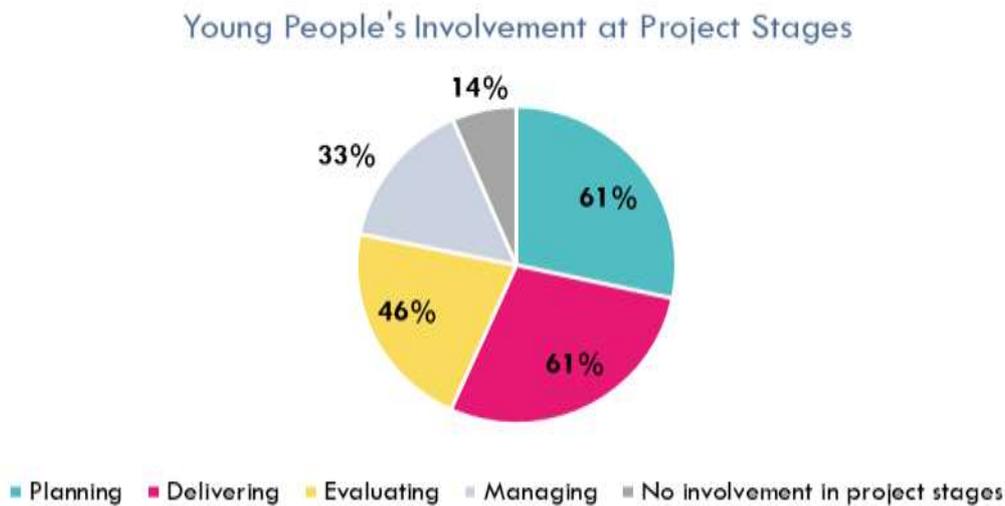
"The most valuable aspect of the project for me was the key role I was able to play in creative input and decision making processes. Our opinions were meaningfully considered which was unexpected in a work climate where youth input tends to be tokenistic." (Young Person)

"I liked choosing what we did and making decisions." (Young Person)

#### 4.1.3 Stages of Involvement

Many young people were involved in each stage of their project's activity, indicating that projects were strongly meeting the objective to involve young people at all stages of decision-making. Nearly two thirds were involved in planning and delivering project activity; nearly half in evaluation; and a third were involved in project management (Fig. 6).

Figure 6: Young People's involvement at different project stages\*



\*multi choice question therefore %s do not add to 100%

Base: 378

Source: Completion Survey

All age groups had involvement at all project stages (Table 5). Management was the project stage with the most notable difference based on the age of participants: fewer younger respondents (8-15 years old) took part in project management (25%) compared to older respondents (16-26 years old), among whom 41% were involved in project management (Fig. 7).

Table 5: Involvement in project stages by age of respondent

Were you involved in any of the following project stages? (Select all that apply) by each group.	8 - 11 years	12 - 15 years	16 - 19 years	20 - 23 years	24 - 26 years
Planning	53% (31)	58% (87)	60% (50)	72% (23)	60% (12)
Delivering	46% (27)	56% (84)	75% (63)	75% (24)	60% (12)
Managing	22% (13)	26% (39)	43% (36)	47% (15)	25% (5)
Evaluating	49% (29)	41% (62)	49% (41)	41% (13)	65% (13)
No involvement in any stage	24% (14)	11% (17)	12% (10)	9% (3)	15% (3)
<b>Base</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>

\*multi-choice question therefore %s do not add to 100%.

Source: Completion Survey

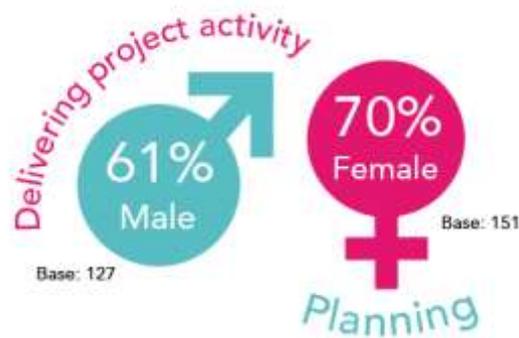
Figure 7: Proportion of age groups that took part in project management



Whilst males and females took part in all project stages, at each individual stage the majority of participants were female. The majority reporting 'no involvement' in any of their project's stages were male (60%).

Males were most likely to take part in delivering project activity (61%); females were most likely to be involved in project planning (70%) (Fig. 8).

Figure 8: Proportion of males taking part in delivery and females taking part in planning



Getting involved in planning was something many young people enjoyed as this gave them the opportunity to put forward ideas and steer the course of the project.

"I helped to plan and run an event, which was a new experience for me." (Young Person)

"I would say my favourite part was planning the event as we got to try a bunch of different workshops to see if they would fit into the type of event we planned on having." (Young Person)

"Going through the planning stage was a fantastic way of gathering everyone's ideas and putting them into practice." (Young Person)

Project management was also a highlight for some.

"Managing a primary school rugby festival, refereeing and coaching was the best bit." (Young Person)

#### 4.2 Benefits to projects and organisations of involving young people

All Project Leads reported benefits from involving young people at every stage of the process to both the project and the organisation.

Benefits to the projects were identified as:

- The vast majority (89%) feeling that involving young people improved delivery of project activities
- A similarly high proportion (86%) feeling that it allowed for target groups to be more effectively engaged, and the project was able to reach more young people (80%).
- Over half (61%) felt that the involvement of young people provided better quality evaluation for the project.
- Nearly half (45%) felt that involving young people improved management.

All projects also felt that there had been some benefits to the wider organisation:

- 97% felt that this process had improved their ability to engage and involve young people
- And 91% felt that their understanding of young people's needs had improved

In particular, some Project Leads highlighted that involving young people in high-level ways was vital in reaching and engaging more of the target population.

"Having a strong team of young ambassadors has been crucial in the engagement of other young people. The commitment and dedication from them has been amazing and has also inspired more young people to want to volunteer at the youth cafe." (Project Lead)

"Our most successful aspect has been using young people as facilitators for the project. This has increased motivation to participate from young people receiving the workshop from their peers as the facilitators have been able to reflect on most up to date social media trends and lived experience." (Project Lead)

### 4.3 Young people's satisfaction with their experience

Generally, young people were satisfied with their involvement in the project at every level of involvement, suggesting that projects were doing a good job of catering for all (Table 6). Those involved in decision making were particularly positive, with 58% strongly agreeing they were satisfied.

Table 6: Satisfaction with level of involvement by level of involvement

How strongly participants agree they were satisfied with their level of involvement in the project/activity, for each level of activity.	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Don't know	Base
I had a fairly limited involvement – e.g. I just went along to the activities	25% (12)	60% (29)	8% (4)	4% (2)	-	2% (1)	48
I was asked about my views and/or to give some advice to help the project/activity	33% (25)	57% (43)	9% (7)	-	-	-	75
I played an active part in the creation and design process for the project/activities	44% (48)	55% (60)	1% (1)	1% (1)	-	-	110
I was involved in making decision about the project/activities and/or played a leadership role in the project/activities	58% (75)	40% (52)	2% (2)	-	-	-	129
Other (please write in):	53% (8)	40% (6)	-	-	7% (1)	-	15

Source: Completion Survey

There was no difference identified in young people's satisfaction with their level of involvement between different activity types – across all activities, young people showed positive levels of satisfaction.

The young people were very positive about their experiences of being involved in the project. The vast majority of those who had been involved on multiple occasions reported that they were satisfied with their involvement and that they were welcomed, respected, valued, represented, felt a sense of purpose, and that taking part was fun (Fig. 9).

Figure 9: Feelings about experience - YP involved more than once



The things that young people involved more than once liked best about taking part were:

- Collaboration/doing things with others – being treated as equals, and being valued for contributing
- Meeting new people
- Feeling pride as a result of their work
- And the sense of enjoyment and fun in participating

“Sharing and learning skills, games, being respected by the adults and having choices. Being able to be part of the events on lots of different levels and to contribute to making something special happen.” (Young Person)

“The best thing about the project was that all decisions, ideas and planning were generated and implemented by all those involved. The project was ultimately for the young people BY the young people which is incredibly empowering.” (Young Person)

“Getting to meet so many amazing people who really cared about challenging the status quo on mental health.” (Young Person)

“When all the activities came together it was a great feeling, the numbers of families and young people who attended events we ran was amazing I think we more than doubled our estimations.” (Young Person)

“Seeing activities I planned becoming successful.” (Young Person)

“The organisational skills I learned. All the projects were well attended, and I had great fun and pride when they worked well.” (Young Person)

Those involved only once had a similarly positive experience. They reported feeling welcomed, satisfied with their involvement, and that the activity felt relevant to them. For three-quarters, their expectations of the activity were met, and the majority felt their involvement was fun (Fig. 10).

Figure 10: Feelings about experience - YP involved one time only



When the young people who were involved only once were asked about their experience, most were very fulsome in their praise about the project as being fun and socially rewarding.

"It was really good I liked every bit. We all got to know each other, we worked as a team really well." (Young Person)

"Great fun with all the different activities/games and being able to make our own fun too. Lots of freedom to play or sit and craft or talk/listen to stories." (Young Person)

"It was really fun, learnt lots about natural cycles and peoples family and ancestors. Enjoyed sharing our family bread with everyone and the games/stories." (Young Person)

"I made new friends." (Young Person)

A number also indicated some of the most useful things they had learned:

"Limit social media use so you don't see as much of the things are upsetting you." (Young Person)

"Not to be rude." (Young Person)

"I will not pay attention to bad things said about me." (Young Person)

Some young people also had suggestions for how to improve the experience, such as: having longer sessions or more events, as this would provide more time to learn and participate. In particular, those attending a mental health workshop called for more sessions:

"Workshops were great, but maybe not enough time to get deep in the topics. But overall very positive experience!!" (Young Person)

"It was very barebones and short, and mental health does not lend itself to short conversations, so it was rather worthless (mental health/wellbeing workshop)." (Young Person)

Additionally, those attending outdoor events felt timing could be improved by having the session during the warmer months:

"The activity could be improved by doing it at a different time of year because it was too cold." (Young Person)

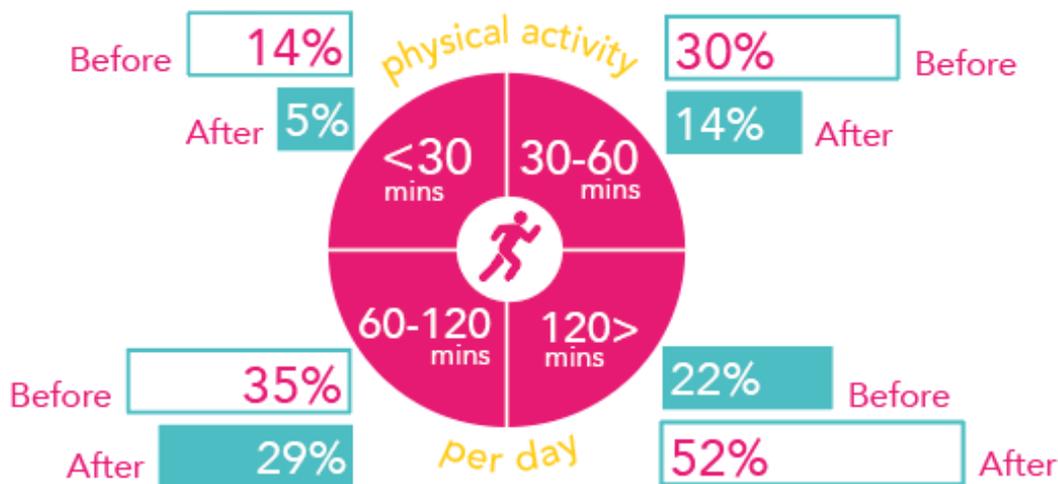
#### 4.4 Impact on young people's health and wellbeing

Data from the 101 young people who completed surveys 'before' and 'after' their project experience allowed a comparison of self-reported health and wellbeing to be made.<sup>2</sup> Overall, findings indicate that involvement in a YoYP National Lottery Fund project has been very beneficial to the health and wellbeing of those taking part. Data from Project Leads, which will also be drawn on as appropriate below, adds further support to what the young people have said.

##### 4.4.1 Supporting active lifestyles

Overall, the amount of physical activity done by the young people increased following participation in their project. They were doing more physical activity on a daily basis at the end of their projects than they were at the start. For example, the percentage of young people taking part in two or more hours of physical activity a day after being involved in the project rose from 22% to 52% (Fig. 11).

Figure 11: Time spent in minutes on sport/physical activities on an average day – before project activity and after project activity comparison

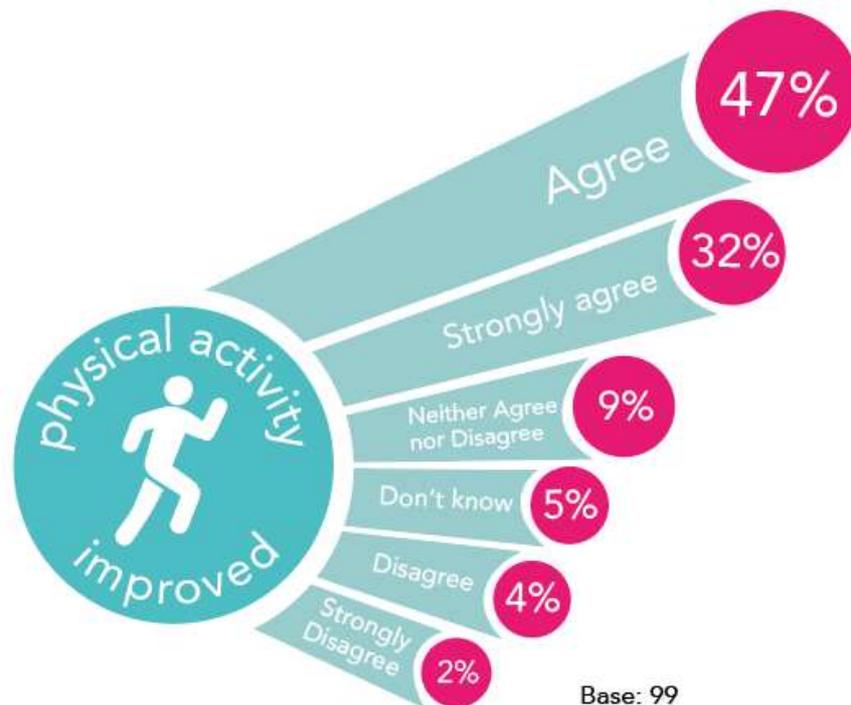


Base: 101

For most of these young people, the project experience itself certainly appears to have been an important contributory factor in creating more active lifestyles. Over three-quarters said their physical activity had improved because of participation in the project (Fig. 12). Furthermore, some young people reported that taking part in physical activity was their favourite thing about being involved in their projects.

<sup>2</sup> Self-reported data was collected from the full sample of Baseline Survey and Completion Survey respondents, providing general level insight. Findings reflect the comparable data from the 101 respondents in all aspects, and therefore validated results from this sample are focused on.

Figure 12: Improvement in physical activity from involvement



"Getting to ride on the more challenging mountain biking courses, doing more mountain biking after school and weekends and planning my mountain biking with my keyworker." (Young Person)

"My favourite bit was doing the cycling and helping others with showing where to go." (Young Person)

There were no gender or age differences in regard to improvement in physical activity. Generally, projects appear to have done a good job of encouraging all ages and genders to embrace a more active lifestyle.

There was also little variation across project activities. All project activities reflect sizable proportions of young people reporting that their physical activity had improved. However, mental health or wellbeing workshops did stand out as particularly strong in this regard, with 90% of those taking part in these activities agreeing that their levels of physical activity had improved over their involvement in the project.

**Case Study Highlight:** Leonard Cheshire - Can Do Sport (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Fife)

This project engaged young disabled people who had little to no prior experience of taking part in sport. Due to their disabilities, participating in sport was something many of the young people worried about, and they assumed many sports were off-limits to them as they did not know if the activities could be adapted to suit their needs. By using a 'taster session' approach, Can Do were able to demonstrate the variety of sports available and allow the young people to see that there are sports they can participate in and enjoy with a disability.

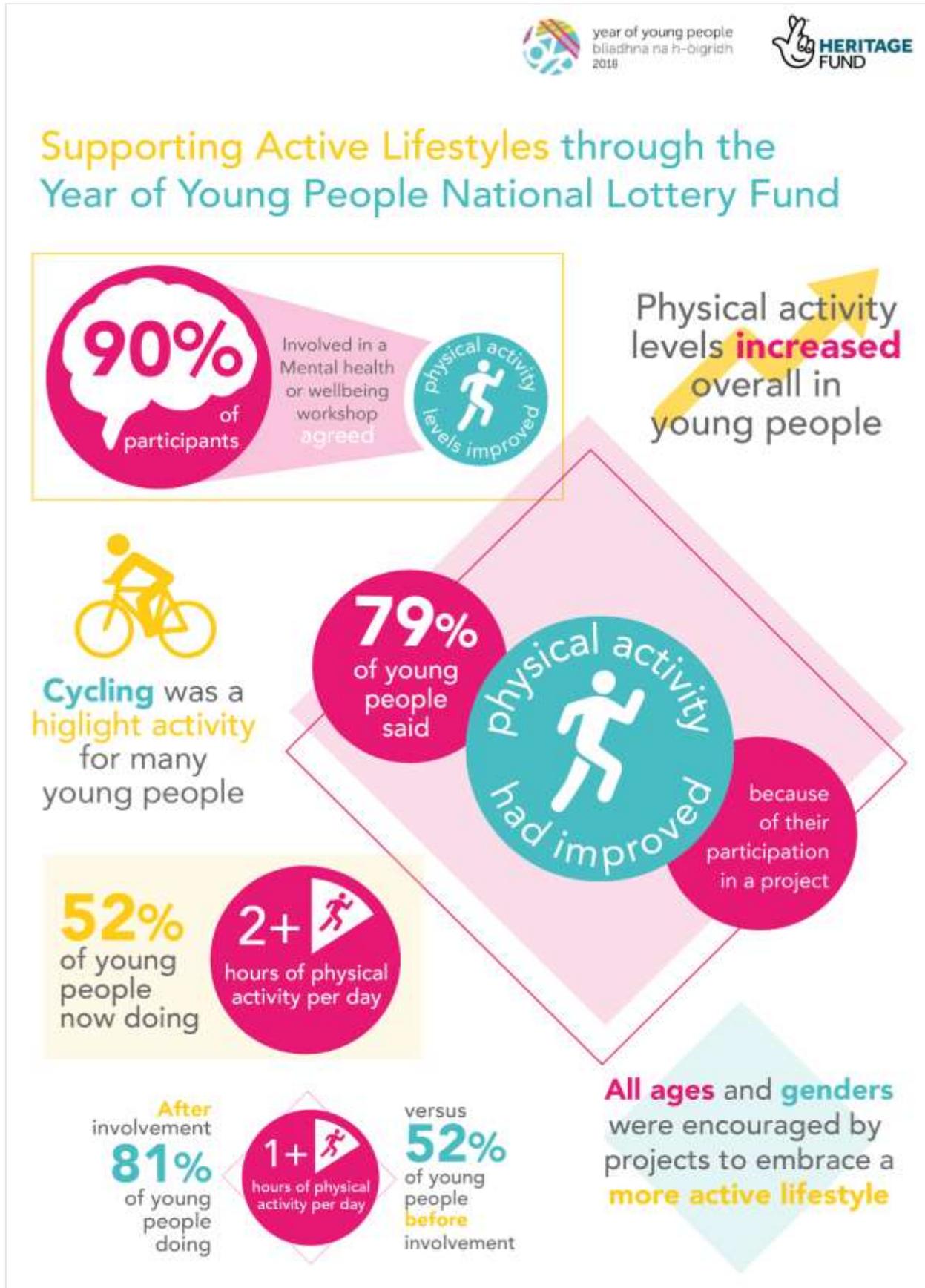
The taster sessions were an effective way of boosting their confidence as it positioned sessions as non-committal, allowing young people to see how an activity could be adapted for them and if they enjoyed it, without the daunting prospect signing up for multiple sessions. It also gave them a chance to try out new things without the anxiety of joining a group or club that was already established, and where everyone had more experience than them. Through the project, the disabled young people involved were able to see that there are many different skills required in different sports, meaning that there will always be sports you can do, even if you can't do everything. This boosted their confidence to try out new things, as they realised they can enjoy and be successful at many sports they previously felt would not be suitable for them.

"[Once the young people got involved] It really opened their eyes that there's a lot of different types of skills involved in doing these things, and you can all do them to an extent, even if there are bits you can't do. All

sport is available to everyone – sometimes you need to adapt things, but it doesn't mean you can't do it."  
(Project Lead)

Figure 13 summarises how YoYP National Lottery Fund projects encouraged active lifestyles:

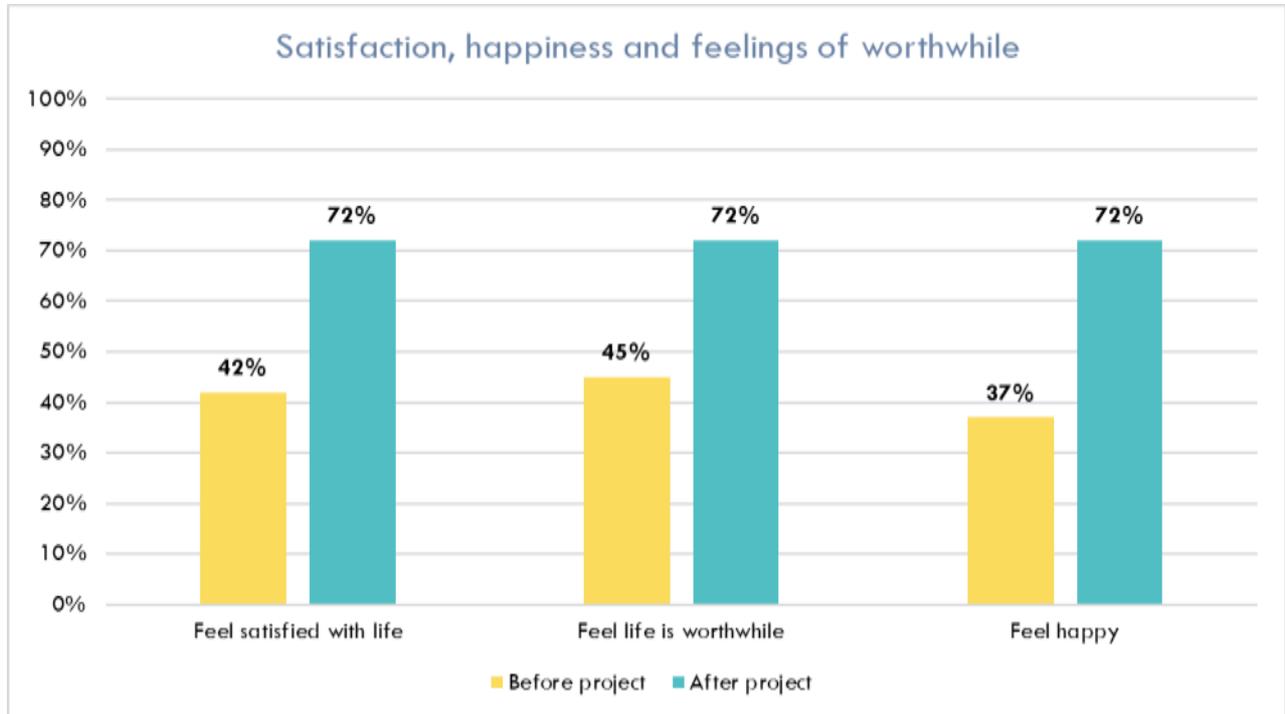
Figure 13: Summary of how projects on the YoYP National Lottery Fund encouraged active lifestyles



#### 4.4.2 Impact on young peoples' mental wellbeing

Young peoples' mental wellbeing has been impacted very positively by their involvement in the projects. A significant increase was found in respondents' life satisfaction, happiness, and feelings of worth between the project's beginning and end (Fig. 14).

Figure 14: Satisfaction and happiness with life – baseline and completion survey comparison

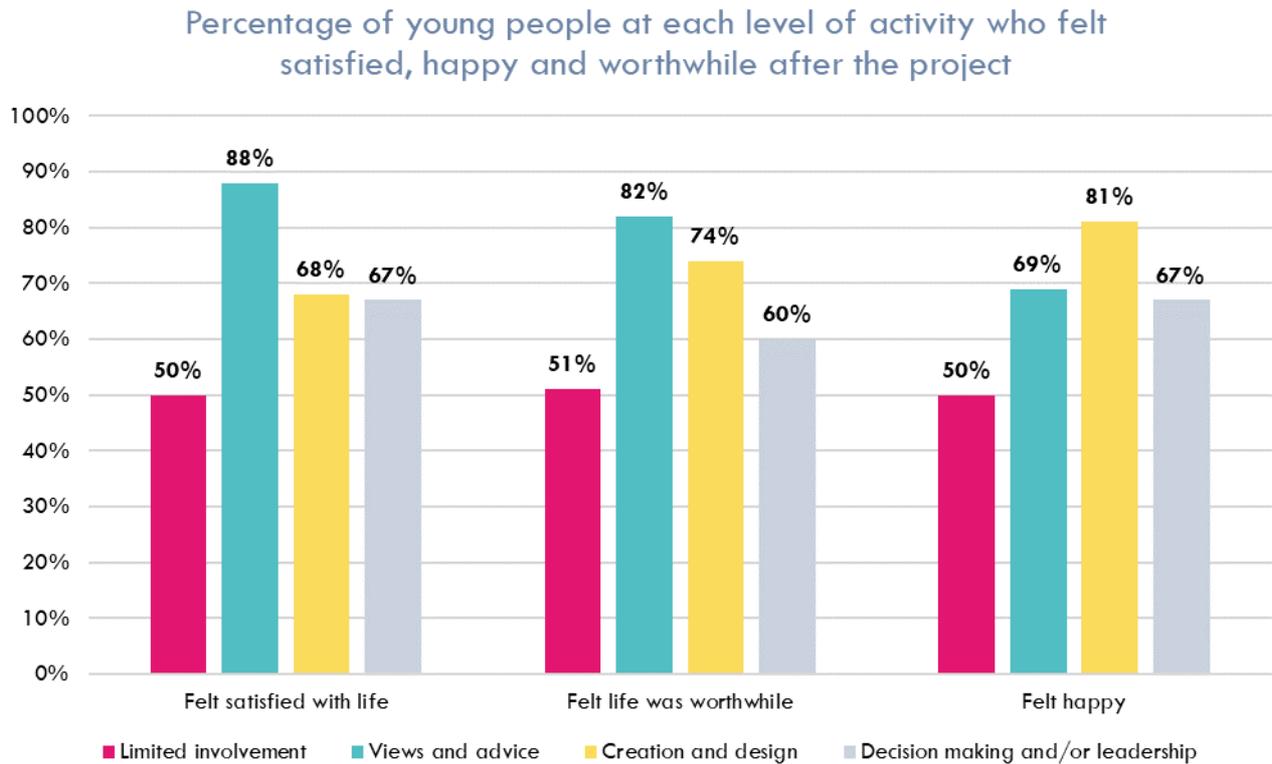


Source: Baseline Survey and Completion Survey  
Base:<sup>3</sup>

A further key finding was that young people involved at any level, beyond simply going along to activities, were more likely to be more satisfied, happier, and feel more worthwhile than those who had only very limited involvement (Fig. 16). For example, whilst 50% of those who had only limited involvement were generally satisfied with their life at the end of the project, the corresponding figure was 88% amongst young people who gave views and advice. This finding underlines that involvement in co-design at any level correlates with relatively high positive feelings amongst young people at the end of their project experience.

<sup>3</sup> From left to right, bases are: 88, 85, 88, 84, 88, 84

Figure 15: Percentage of young people at each activity level that felt satisfied, happy and that life was worthwhile after the project



Source: Completion Survey  
Base:<sup>4</sup>

On the whole, young people felt their lives overall were better for having participated in the programme. The before and after survey results show sizeable increases in the proportions of young people reporting:

- their life is going well
- their life is just right
- they have a good life

Also, the proportion agreeing that they 'wished they had a different life' dropped by half (Fig. 17).

<sup>4</sup> From left to right, bases are: 81 (life satisfaction), 80 (worthwhile life), 81 (happiness)

Figure 16: Young people agreeing with wellbeing statements before and after project activity



Source: Baseline Survey and Completion Survey  
Base:<sup>5</sup>

Physical, sporting, and outdoor manual activities proved to be very effective at positively impacting not only the physical, but the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Project Leads reported that confidence, self-esteem, and general positive feelings were an outcome of taking part in physical activity.

"Being outside and physically active allowed everyone to feel physically tired, healthy and active which is great for positive mental health and fitness." (Project Lead)

Additionally, outdoor activities allowed some young people to connect with the natural environment in ways they do not normally do in more urban settings. Activities in these safe, open settings, away from their normal lives and worries, have benefitted mental health.

"Without question creating a safe and pleasant space for young people to come together and connect with nature while idly talking about their lives, feelings, hopes and fears has been the biggest factor that has contributed to improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing." (Project Lead)

Project Leads pointed out that having role models promoting the benefits of physical activity and health was a great way of engaging the young people and promoting the benefits of an active lifestyle.

"When discussing improving young people's wellbeing a note must be made of the contribution and change the near peer volunteers brought to the participating young people. Not only did they encourage the young people which served as a self-esteem and confidence boost, but they also spoke of their respective passions and how these link to physical activity." (Project Lead)

Project Leads also felt the opportunity for young people to develop relationships with each other and form social bonds with their peers was crucial for their mental health: especially for marginalised groups.

<sup>5</sup> From left to right, bases are: 88, 88, 88, 88, 88, 86, 87, 88, 87, 88

"[I enjoyed] sharing and exploring my skills and learning new ones with my family and friends. Meeting new people even though I'm shy. Being out in nature" (Young Person)

"Most of these young people were socially isolated with no friends. As a side effect, the classes have become a social group, participants have made friends and are meeting up outwith the classes to prepare meals and eat together." (Project Lead)

Confidence and self-esteem were often boosted as young people realised what they were able to achieve through trying a variety of different activities and developing skills in new areas. This was particularly so for those who did not do well in school – it proved to them that they could succeed in other aspects of life and to recognise that people's strengths can lie in many different areas, not simply passing exams.

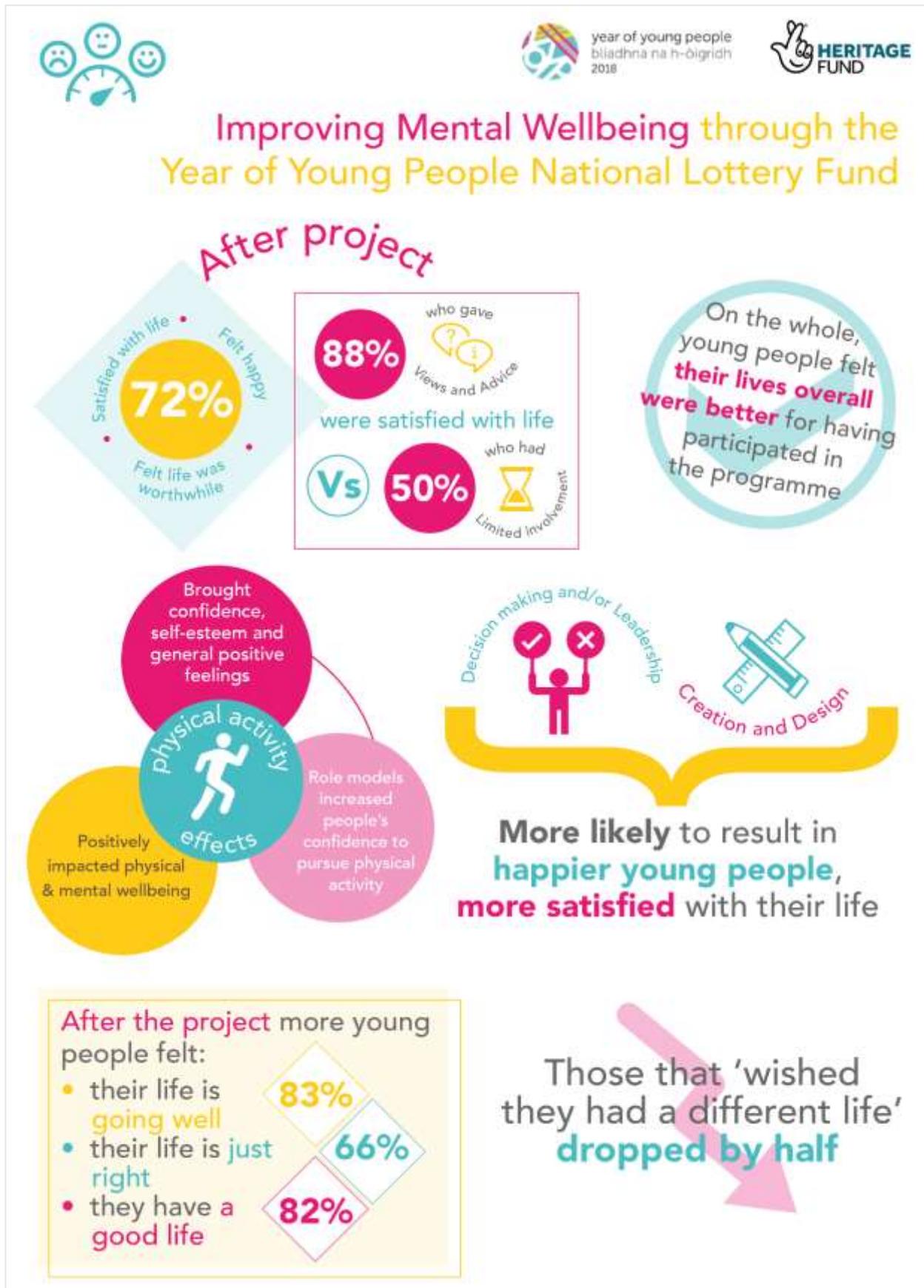
"The broad range of activities provided ensured the young people were best able to develop confidence alongside skills which was the ultimate aim behind the project. With such a wide spectrum of activities the young people were given the fullest opportunity to become engaged and try something new. In both streams, feedback from volunteers and staff surrounded how the growth in the participants' confidence and social skills were evident by the end of the programme." (Project Lead)

Ensuring that the young people felt listened to, valued, and that they were contributing to the project in worthwhile ways, resulted in a positive knock-on to their health and wellbeing.

"Being part of a bigger community, being asked for ideas or for contributions to offer. That my writing/poetry was valued. Welcoming and gives you confidence. Relaxed acceptance. Lots of different people and activities." (Young Person)

Figure 18 summarises how the YoYP National Lottery Fund improved young people's mental wellbeing.

Figure 17: Summary of how the YoYP National Lottery Fund improved young people's mental wellbeing



#### 4.5 Achievements and successes

A broad and diverse mix of projects were funded by the YoYP National Lottery Fund, providing opportunities for young people across Scotland. The evaluation shows that these opportunities had many positive impacts on the young people that participated – from skills development to physical and mental wellbeing. Taking the results as a whole, the programme has made a sizable and positive contribution to the lives of many thousands of young people across Scotland.

Specifically, the YoYP National Lottery Fund has:

- Engaged young people in high level, co-design ways in a range of projects
- Engaged young people in meaningful ways in these projects.
- Positively impacted physical health and wellbeing through: developing skills, building confidence, trying new things and making friends.
- Encouraged young people to lead healthier and more active lives by providing them with the opportunity, motivation and confidence to do so.

The success of the programme can be attributed in large part to its following features:

**A young-person-driven approach** - Giving young people control from an early stage created a sense of autonomy, generated enthusiasm to see the project through, and created great pride at the end. Young people in leadership roles inspired others in ways that non-peer project leads could not. This also helped projects that were experiencing challenges with young people distrusting adults and authority, as peer leaders are more accessible for them.

"That this project was young person led was probably the most instrumental aspect of engaging young people from the community. The project benefits from the social capital of the young volunteers supporting its delivery to target their peers and engage with the project with a pre-established trust." (Project Lead)

**An iterative and flexible approach** -The ability to adapt as things progressed was often vital. The backgrounds of many of the young participants meant that they were not always able to commit to, or follow-through on, scheduled programmes. Additionally, some aspects required of the project did not fit with the needs of the young people. Being able to adapt and meet needs in another way was sometimes key to maintaining engagement. For example, breaking down and rewriting elements of application forms to make them more understandable; offering more outdoor activities than indoor activities; and adapting sessions to fit with the developing wants of the young people.

**Setting clear objectives and goals** - Having clear goals at the outset made it clear to young people what they were working towards. Setting goals was also key for leaders, as it made it easier for them to guide projects to adapt and focus on the needs of the participants during an activity session. This was especially vital in maintaining engagement with young people with complex needs.

"Having a clear structure to the sessions and outlined aims and outcomes was vital in successfully engaging the participating young people. This allowed the sessions to be delivered in an organised and fun way, whilst allowing for flexibility depending on the response from the young people." (Project Lead)

#### Case Study Highlight: Young Movers (YoMo) - A leap towards positive mental health for young people (Easterhouse, Glasgow)

Young Leaders at YoMo expressed an interest in planning and delivering a project that would help young people like themselves to manage and improve their mental health. After crafting objectives to determine what they wanted to achieve, the group initially envisioned creating a mental health training toolkit, including a 'top-tips' leaflet, that would equip young people in Glasgow to take care of their mental health. However, after attending some mental health events for research, the young people realised that there were already toolkits and leaflets on the market that they did not find helpful, nor did these fully achieve what they envisioned the project accomplishing. Instead, they realised there was a gap in services for face-to-face, young people 'tried-and-tested' mental health support, which they felt would be more valuable than a generic leaflet or toolkit as this would add validation to the advice given.

The group changed the project to involve delivering and presenting participatory workshops, where young people could try out a variety of activities from a menu of different workshops. The group also only included activities that at least one of their members had found beneficial in managing their mental health, to ensure they were not promoting something they didn't believe in. Having clear objectives set at the beginning of the project made the process of changing the project easier, as the young people were able to rethink what they wanted to create, with a clear understanding of what it had to achieve.

**Facilitating partnership working** - For the projects working with under-represented, very specific or marginalised groups, establishing a network of partners helped them to reach more young people than they could have on their own.

"I think the partnerships we created really helped focus the group and offer an event that appealed to some of the furthest removed young people." (Project Lead)

Additionally, by utilising partnership organisations, some projects were able to provide extra support outwith the scope of their programme by linking the young people to these other projects – e.g. being able to link young people with mental health support.

**Case Study Highlight: Can Do Sport (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Fife)**

Key to the success of this project was establishing and maintaining vital relationships with partner organisations. Can Do Sport engage with disabled young people – a under-served and underconfident group. Partnership working is important to help remove barriers to engagement, as being signposted by an organisation they already know creates a foundation of trust, as well as a way for Can Do to access its target audience. Can Do maintained partnerships throughout this project, engaging with young people through them for different events. They hope to continue drawing on these partnerships to engage young people in future organisational work.

"It's important for us to work with partners to make sure we're reaching the right people, and reaching as many young people as we can that could benefit." (Project Lead)

**Providing novel experiences** - The projects provided opportunities to get involved in new experiences and activities, many of which had been seldom available before to the young participants. Young people were able, therefore, to identify and develop new interests. Indeed, this aspect of the project experience was mentioned by several young people as the favourite aspect of their involvement.

**Providing practical activities** - Practical activities were particularly engaging for young people. The balance of practical activities and abstract activities (such as thinking and planning) helped to keep the young people engaged. Hands-on work was vital in engaging young people.

**Enabling social bonding** - Engagement was further maintained because the projects provided opportunities for young people to create social bonds and build relationships. Young people enjoyed mixing with peers and older people through intergenerational work in a fun and lively way.

"Getting to meet so many amazing people who really cared about challenging the status quo on mental health." (Young Person)

**Providing fun experiences** – Young people engaged in many ways, often maintaining their involvement over many weeks and months, not just because the activities offered were rewarding in terms of personal development and general wellbeing, but because they were 'fun'. This underlines a more general point recognised in behaviour science, i.e. to encourage and sustain desired behaviour changes, activities offered need to be accessible, rewarding and fun.

"All the projects were well attended, and I had great fun and pride when they worked well" (Young Person)

#### 4.6 Legacy

It looks likely that projects' experience with the YoYP National Lottery Fund will have a positive and lasting effect for some. A number of projects have found the co-design model of working with young people to be

valuable and are considering continuing to utilise the approach in future projects. The intentions for these projects reflect very positively on the YoYP National Lottery Fund.

"Our involvement with Year of Young People has really helped an organisational step change in recognising the value of youth engagement and social action. It has given us the confidence to continue a meaningful engagement with young people including setting up our own junior ranger programme - a recommendation from young people themselves." (Project Lead)

The involvement of young people in high-level roles such as peer educators, mentors or leaders has also had a lasting impact on some projects. This is evidenced by many intending to continue project activity after the end of the funded programme. Furthermore, the training some young people received as peer leaders and mentors has skilled them up to be able to carry these roles on into other projects.

"Giving young people the opportunity to experience other peer educators delivering their workshops has given workers and young people the enthusiasm and drive to create and deliver their own workshops and sessions. This has led to the organisation being able to start work with two other organisations...which will enable young people to start to tackle the issues that they feel are relevant to them and their communities either geographical and/or of interest." (Project Lead)

In addition, for some, the increased partnership working that co-design led to on the programme has created a partnership network that organisations can draw upon and benefit from in future projects. This is beneficial to the young people, who can be signposted to other organisations, and also the organisation, who can make use of other resources to best design projects and recruit their audience.

"The connection with some of the most at risk young people from across the area - this has really opened a lot of new doors and opportunities to engage with partners we were not engaging with before the project started." (Project Lead)

**Case Study Highlight:** Young Movers (YoMo) - A leap towards positive mental health for young people (Easterhouse, Glasgow)

YoMo is an example of a project with a clear legacy impact from the programme. This project ran a positive mental health event designed and delivered by the young people, which attracted over 100 young people from across Glasgow. The YoMo steering group is now keen for the event to become an annual occurrence. However, they don't feel that they should be involved again, as they believe it is important for new young people to make it their own:

"We need fresh ideas. There's no point in our ideas being redone and redone and redone." (Young Person)

As such, the young people have begun to recruit others to YoMo as Young Leaders through their own friend networks, and through YoMo's network. They believe that their success is a demonstration for others that this can be done successfully, is fun, and is worthwhile.

"We can be like 'come on guys, we've shown you it can be done'." (Young Person)

They hope that this process will continue on, and each year new people can take up the mantle of the event.

## 5. Future Practice - lessons and some tips

As co-design with young people was new to most projects, many learned valuable lessons in how to deal with and overcome challenges which can be taken forward for future work. This section summarises some important take-outs and tips drawn from what Project Leads and young people have fed back:

**Engagement** - Challenges relating to achieving and maintaining engagement were common. Positioning the planning and designing processes as attractive could be difficult as most young people were unfamiliar with, and had no experience of, these tasks. Keeping those with multiple commitments or complex lives engaged was

also difficult: participant drop-off being the result. For some, working with others in a group was difficult and impacted their enthusiasm to engage.

**Tips:**

- ✓ Be flexible and alternate between planning tasks and practical tasks to help to maintain enthusiasm and engagement.
- ✓ Offer practical, hands-on tasks, as these are often the most engaging for young people and help them to see a tangible product of their efforts.
- ✓ Young people are more likely to remain engaged if they have a sense of autonomy; control over the delivery, management and evaluation makes the project feel like theirs.
- ✓ Treat young people as equal partners, not service users, as this communicates their value and importance to the project.
- ✓ Avoid difficulties with group work by making sure everyone's voice is heard and welcomed. Encourage compromise so participants are used to this way of working.
- ✓ Plan ahead for some participant drop-off as this is often unavoidable.

**Case Study Highlight: Belville Community Garden Trust – Young Volunteers' Garden (Greenock, Inverclyde)**

This project, which focused on disengaged young people creating a children's garden, experienced some commitment challenges with the participants. Many of the young people were not used to dedicating a lot of time to working on something from start to finish. In particular, the early stages of the project were difficult for them as they involved planning ahead rather than undertaking activity, and the young people were best engaged when they were occupied in physical activity. The planning tasks also reminded the young people of school, as they involved sitting at a desk and thinking, which was a barrier to continued engagement as many had found school a challenging and unsuccessful environment. The project overcame this engagement challenge by taking an iterative approach to project work, and shaping activities around the wants and needs of the young people as the project progressed. This included things such as walking around the garden whilst having planning discussions, and using pictures to create a mood board, rather than sitting at a table and writing.

*"When we had our first design meeting with one of the groups we sat them around a table to discuss the design board and you could see their shoulders slumping, going 'oh no, we're back at school". So in the end we thought 'can this' and we moved the design board outside and walked around the garden with it to get them more active." (Project Lead)*

**Recruitment** - In some cases either reaching the target audience, or engaging with them if they were primarily vulnerable young people who distrust authority, was a challenge.

**Tips:**

- ✓ Working with partners improves the recruitment process for hard to reach groups, and building partnerships can go beyond the project and benefit future work
- ✓ Training young people to be peer leaders and mentors is effective at engaging those who distrust adults and authority to participate.

**Managing expectations** - Some projects worked hard to ensure that while the young people were creating the project themselves, they were also realistic about what they could achieve. As one Project Lead put it, they didn't want to "set the young people up to fail". This required a lot of communication between the Project Leads and young people to keep them on track, as well as robust planning sessions.

**Tip:**

- ✓ Have clear project goals to help the young people to stay on track and not get carried away with what their project can achieve.

**Evaluation** - Engaging young people in actively critiquing their work could be a challenge, e.g. where they perceived this as criticism of something they had worked hard on, rather than as constructive reflection. Some difficulties also arose around the young peoples' involvement in the programme evaluation – i.e. online surveys. This was due to a lack of understanding of how to complete the feedback, or difficulties accessing the internet.

"With regards to evaluating the project, it was difficult to get young people to critically reflect, such was the pride they had in their work, and there is no doubt it was successful, but often critical reflection was mistaken for criticism of something they were very proud of." (Project Lead)

**Tip:**

- ✓ Introduce evaluation early to engage young people in the process - ensure they understand its purpose, otherwise they may see it as a criticism of their work.
- ✓ Project Leads need to be on hand to help young people participate in the evaluation process if they require it.

**Case Study Highlight:** Young Movers (YoMo) - A leap towards positive mental health for young people (Easterhouse, Glasgow)

At YoMo, young people designed and ran their own mental health event. As most of the participants had no prior experience with evaluation, YoMo ran a post-event evaluation workshop to take young people through the process. This way, they were not left unsure of the purpose of evaluating their work, and could not mistake it for criticism. Another useful learning from this project was their inclusion of an 'evaluation station' at their mental health event, which introduced the idea of evaluation early, and allowed the young people to collect feedback from those that attended that they could use in their own evaluation.

**Timescales and scheduling** - Timescales, scheduling of sessions, or timing of events was problematic for young people who had other commitments, e.g. school activities and exams. This resulted in activity becoming disjointed or lengthy, negatively impacting participant enthusiasm. School holidays also played a part, and for projects delivering outdoor activities, bad weather was often an issue.

**Tip:**

- ✓ Factor in the other commitments of young people during the planning stage to minimise the risk of the project going off track.
- ✓ Flexibility is key – be ready to change the order or location of activities depending on the situation, e.g. fewer young people turning up than expected, bad weather etc.

**Social anxiety and lack of confidence** - There were some challenges in getting young people to engage with the group if they lacked social confidence – a particular problem for marginalised groups.

**Tip:**

- ✓ Encourage all young people to contribute, and ensure the voices of the less confident are heard. Being able to show their ideas are being actioned can positively impact confidence and lead to young people contributing more.

**Case Study Highlight:** Leonard Cheshire - Can Do Sport (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Fife)

As this project worked with young disabled people to involve them in sport, there were key challenges in overcoming the social anxiety many had developed from being socially isolated for a long time. Most participants were shy and lacking in confidence, making it harder to ensure their voices were heard during planning sessions, and ensure that the project remained wholly participant-led as some were afraid to speak in a group. The project responded by giving positive encouragement and reinforcement to all young people, encouraging them to input and being mindful to include those who were quieter than others. Once they began doing this, the young people were able to see they were being listened to and their ideas were important to the project, positively impacting their confidence to speak out and offer suggestions as activity progressed.

"Before they know each other it can be tricky, but once they've come a few times and see it can be fun they're more at ease." (Project Lead)

Two further challenges at 'programme level' were identified by Project Leads:

**Funding** - Many projects indicated they would not be able to continue beyond the end of the programme without alternative sources of funding to maintain staff and deliver training. Also, as some young people also struggled to afford transport costs, this is an issue that projects feel should be addressed in future programmes.

"Another key challenge is what happens when the funding runs out. We are now in an excruciating process of waiting, waiting for funding success so that the ideas and conversations the project initiated can continue to grow." (Project Lead)

**Limited scope** - Due to the timescales and funding limitations, some Project Leads were not able to reach as many young people as they would have liked. In the future, they would like to increase the scope of their projects to benefit even more young people. Being able to run more sessions and have more time to work on their projects would be beneficial.

## 6. Conclusion

This evaluation throws light on an inclusive national programme, with young people involved in all stages in the life of the funded projects, many being engaged in high-level ways and having a hands-on role in decision-making processes.

The participation of young people in projects has had clear, positive impacts on their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Regardless of the activity being delivered, young people reported that their physical activity improved, and that they were happier and more satisfied with life after taking part. Young people involved at all levels felt the benefits of the project, but those involved in co-design at any levels showed even higher levels of satisfaction and happiness than those with limited involvement. A significant finding was that the young people felt influential, valued and represented through their projects – which gave them a sense of confidence and pride, and a desire to commit fully to the project. This was clearly an important element for them, and the sense of autonomy they felt played a large part in the success of the projects and wider initiative.

Providing young people with the opportunity to fully participate in and, in some cases, lead, also had wider benefits for the projects and the host organisations. The projects in this evaluation suggested that this experience could change their way of working with young people going forward, as they found youth input so valuable to the goals and objectives of their organisations. Indeed, nearly 100% of the organisations involved in this evaluation reported that their ability to engage young people was improved by the co-design process.

A legacy effect is evident amongst organisations and projects that intend to continue with this model of working. There are also significant and lasting impacts for many of the young people themselves - as well as being able to utilise new skills in the future, those who trained as mentors or leaders with their project may have the opportunity to continue in this role with the organisation in further projects. These legacy impacts are a great and significant outcome of the YoYP National Lottery Fund programme, and highlight the value of co-design working with young people. Going forward, funders could ensure this co-design aspect is built into future programmes to maximise the benefits of their investment.



RESEARCH

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