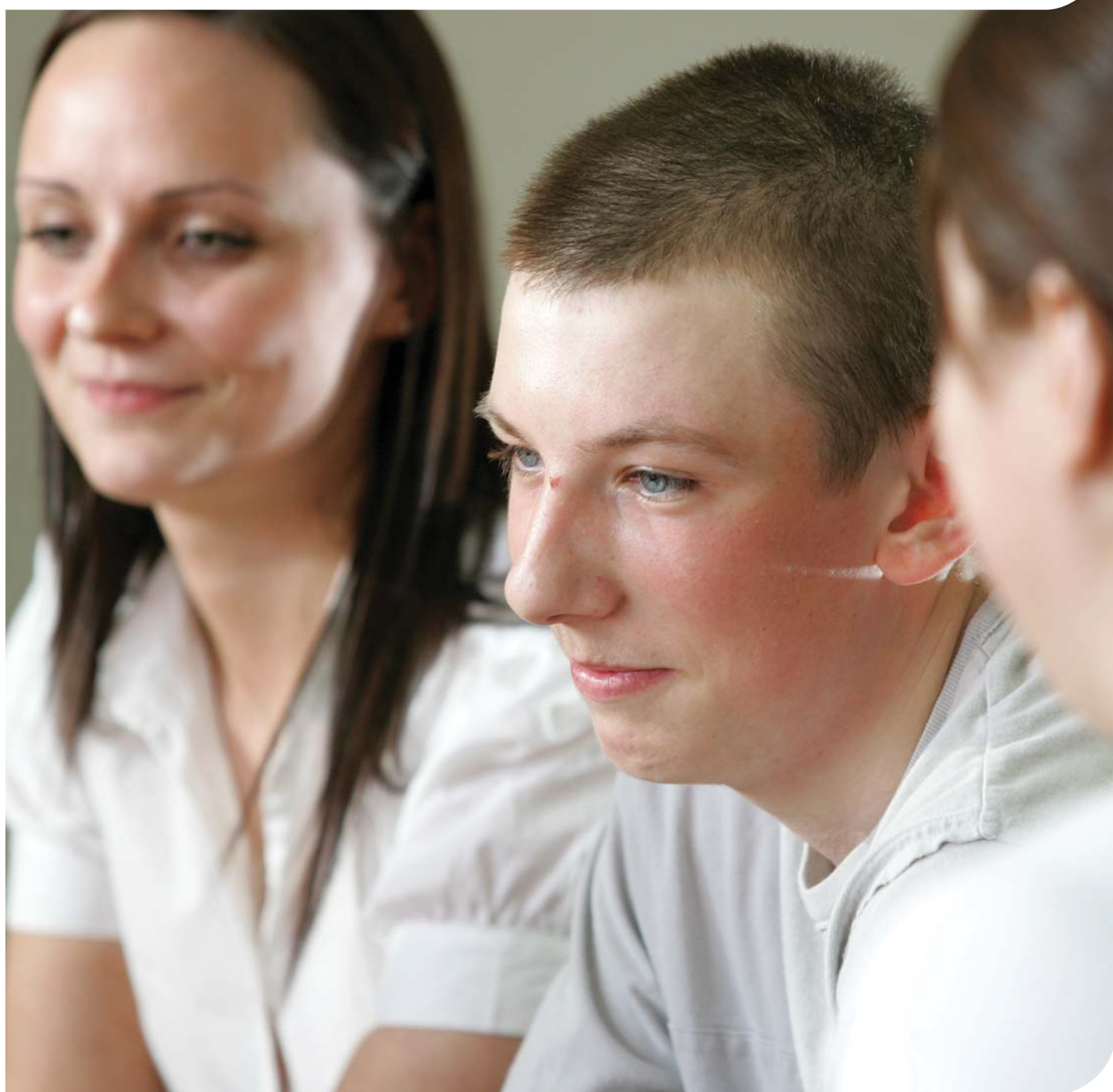


Big Lottery Fund Research
Issue 64

Young People's Fund Year 3 Evaluation Findings

Scotland



Young People's Fund Scotland – Year 3 Evaluation Findings

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We have identified seven values that underpin our work: fairness; accessibility; strategic focus; involving people; innovation; enabling; additional to government.

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Executive Summary

This summary highlights the main findings and themes from the evaluation of our Young People's Fund (YPF) programme in Scotland. It is our interpretation of the year three evaluation report. This report along with reports from years one and two can be found on our YPF evaluation webpage www2.biglotteryfund.org.uk/eval_ypf

Key findings show that:

- ▶ Funding has supported projects that have made young people feel good about themselves and increased their confidence and skills.
- ▶ Through local area panels young people have been able to influence funding decisions in their local area.
- ▶ Young people are involved in the management of projects. Fifty-eight per cent of projects have young people on their steering group, and in half of the projects young people manage certain aspects of it.
- ▶ Project activities are having a wide range of impacts on young people including increased confidence, improved relationships, new transferable skills, as well as better career prospects.
- ▶ Although there is uncertainty about the future of projects, many believe that funding has enabled them to deliver activities that otherwise would not have happened and that projects are likely to continue in some form.

The Young People's Fund in Scotland

£25 million was made available in Scotland to help young people aged 11 – 25 to learn new things and take part in healthy and positive activities that make them feel good about themselves. The programme has funded 202 projects, which focused on outcomes that would enable young people to have:

- more opportunities to gain the confidence and skills and support they need to deal with change in their lives and contribute to their local communities
- more and better opportunities to be involved in making decisions about issues and policies that affect them in their communities
- more and better opportunities to take part in activities that make them feel good about themselves.

Funding in Scotland was split three ways to support different types of projects, including:

- ▶ Local projects to support projects that covered one local authority area.
- ▶ Wider Inclusion projects for projects that covered more than one local authority area and that targeted non-geographic communities.
- ▶ New Ideas to fund projects that tried out new approaches for engaging young people, that carried out groundbreaking work, and that adapted approaches that had been used successfully elsewhere.

In addition 32 Local Area Panels were set up, one in each local authority in Scotland. These were made up of groups of young people that made recommendations to the national decision making Committee on funding applications under the Local Projects funding stream. Two thirds of the members of the committee, which made decisions on all projects, were aged under 25.

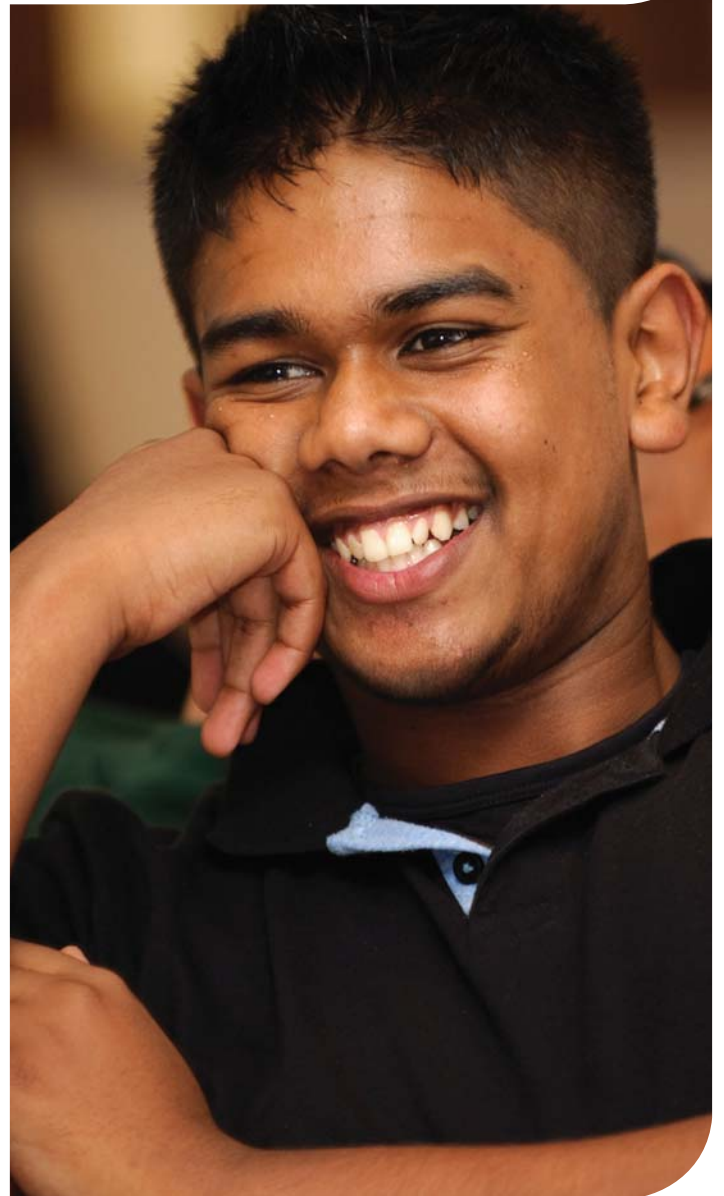
The Evaluation

In 2006 we commissioned GEN Consulting and Wavehill Consulting to undertake a five-year evaluation of the Young People's Fund programme across the UK.

The evaluation aims to assess the impact of involving young people in every stage of projects from their design and delivery to review. The study is also looking at how successful the programmes have been in achieving what they set out to do and how project activity is impacting on young people.

The research methods used in the study included a desk based review of emerging policy in the youth sector, case study visits to projects, interviews with stakeholders, a telephone survey of a sample of projects, focus groups and interviews with young people, and a review of the local area panels.

This summary focuses on the main findings from the evaluation of the Scotland programme.



‘Young people's self-esteem has improved and they believe that they can access opportunities’

Niche

Progress towards outcomes

Findings from the evaluation have shown that the Young People's Fund in Scotland is achieving what it set out to do. The programme has supported projects that have made young people feel good about themselves, developed their confidence and skills, and be involved in making decisions about issues that may affect them. Projects have been meeting these outcomes through a variety of different activities, for example:

- ▶ The NICHE project has helped young people develop the skills and confidence they need to move into employment or training by providing volunteering opportunities and peer support.
- ▶ Through the Bridge Centre Motorcycle project young people have been able to deal with changes in their lives and have been able to make the transition to secondary school.
- ▶ By engaging young people through dance and drama the Express Yourself project has helped young people to develop confidence and feel good about themselves.

The programme aimed to target a number of groups of young people and support particular types of activity. Findings show that nearly all funded projects are supporting young people who are dealing with problems in their lives or who have got particular issues to face, with 92 per cent of projects engaging with this group. Furthermore 73 per cent of projects are working with young people to develop positive relationships with their family and friends. The different types of activities provided by projects help young people to gain skills and confidence, become healthy and make positive changes to their behaviour.

Niche

This project works with young people in Glasgow to raise their aspirations and to give them the skills they need to take up employment or training. The project works with a range of young people who are: offending or have offended, experiencing behavioural issues or addiction issues, excluded from school, or being affected by homelessness. The project also engages with young people who have left school with a lack of skills and qualifications, who have low self-esteem, and who may need to develop life skills or receive advice about training and employment.

The project works in two phases. Young people take part in relationship and skill building workshops, which help them to think constructively about any issues that they may be facing. The second phase builds on these workshops and provides opportunities for young people to volunteer and access peer support.

Through this project young people have gained life skills, improved confidence and become more aware of the opportunities that they have in terms of work and education. Young people's self-esteem has improved and they believe that they can access opportunities and make more of their lives as a result of engaging in the project.

Young people's involvement

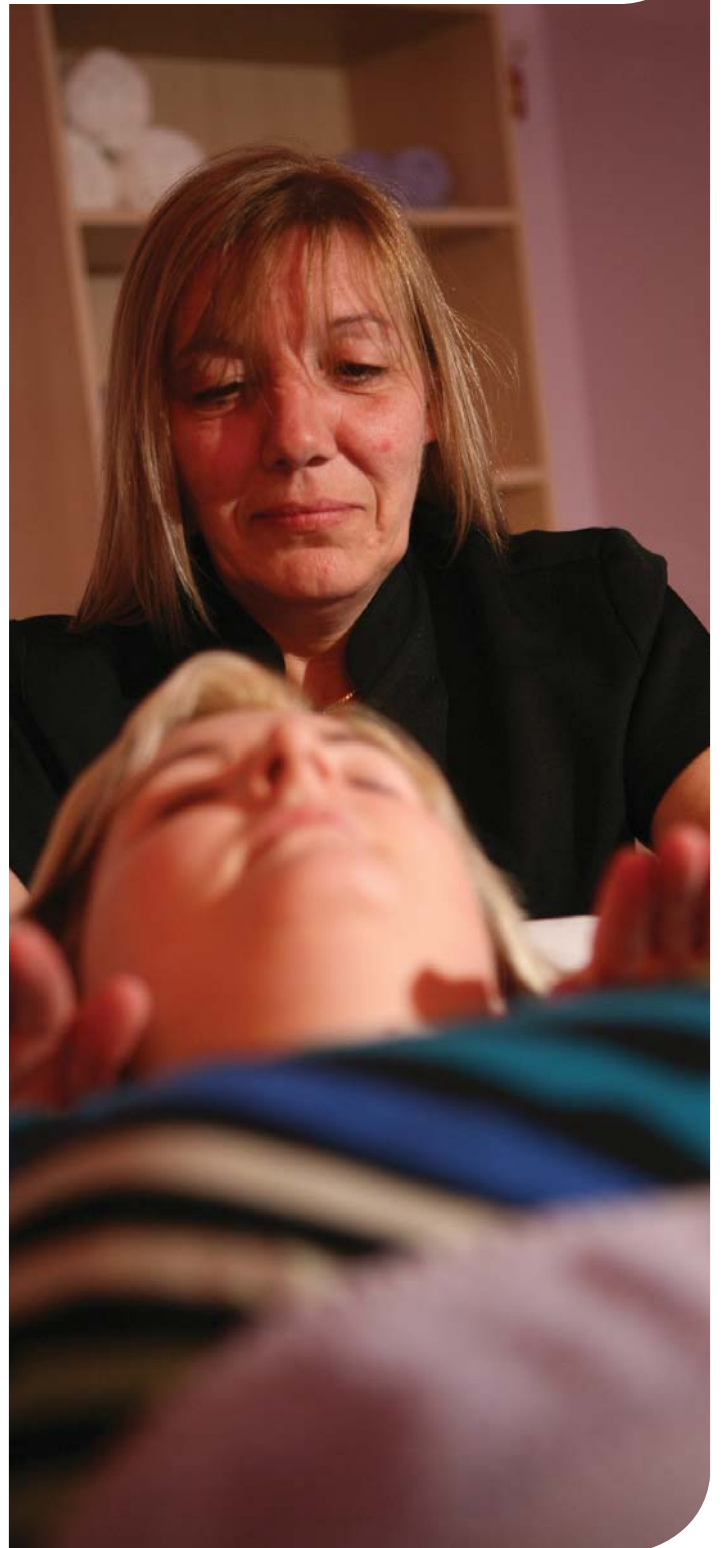
The Young People's Fund aimed to support projects that encouraged young people to get involved in all stages of the projects from designing to running and reviewing activities. The programme in Scotland was unique in that it set up 32 local area panels (LAPs) across the country to get young people involved in deciding what activities the programme should support.

These panels consisted of a group of young people, supported by an adult panel worker, coming together to consider and comment on funding applications for their local area. They made recommendations to the National Committee, which was largely made up of young people and who made the final decision on what was funded. This approach was set up to enable young people to have the chance to take part in influencing projects and activities at a local level, and to get young people involved in making decisions about issues that may affect them and their community.

Some of the main reasons why young people took part in these panels were to learn new skills and to get involved in their community. Those involved in the panels said that making decisions and giving something back were important factors affecting their decision to take part. For example:

- ▶ In Shetland young people liked the idea that they could make a difference to their local area and contribute in a meaningful way.
- ▶ In Renfrewshire young people wanted to make a difference to their local area but also wanted to have fun.

To recognise the work of the panel members, a unique qualification was made available for young people. This Certificate in Participative Democracy enabled panel members to improve their communication and decision making skills and develop their negotiating skills. Young people valued the qualification and the recognition of their work on the panels.



Feedback from the panel members suggests that they have gained confidence and learned new skills, particularly as a result of achieving the qualification. A number of young people explained that the skills gained from participating would help them in later life. Panel members commented that:

- working on the panel made them more confident and more competent in their job.
- they feel more motivated and confident in putting their opinions across, especially in their jobs.
- participating in the panel improved decision making skills and increased their confidence. The positive experience had encouraged them to be involved in more volunteering activities in the future.

The evaluation also explored how young people were getting involved in project activities and looked at the level of involvement. Findings suggest that projects in Scotland have a relatively high level of youth participation. For example, in 25 per cent of projects surveyed, young people have come up with the idea for the project and continued to take the lead with support from staff. In 68 per cent of projects staff designed the project but young people were consulted as part of the decision making process with their opinions being taken seriously.

One of the main ways that projects involve young people is by asking them for feedback. Findings show that 92 per cent of projects have involved young people through informal feedback, whilst 85 per cent used a more structured approach for feedback. This enables young people to be involved in and influence the ongoing development of project activity.

Express Yourself

This project, which works across South Lanarkshire, enables young people to express themselves through dance and drama. This helps to build their confidence and gain experience of volunteering.

The project works mainly with teenage girls and supports them to become peer educators and to deliver dance and drama workshops. Through this work they are given the opportunity to plan, deliver and evaluate their own activity. They feel that having been participants themselves, they are well-placed to know what works and what the young people enjoy doing.

The survey of funded projects showed that young people are not as involved in the management of projects as in other areas. Despite this, in 58 per cent of projects young people are represented on project steering groups and in 50 per cent of projects they manage certain elements of the main project.

‘Young people build their confidence and gain experience of volunteering’

Express Yourself



Fairways

The Fairways project helps young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to make the transition to adulthood. It offers a wide range of activities for the young people. This includes peer mentoring, and one-to-one support with professional staff.

The project involves the young people in the planning of activity through its Advisory Group, which is made up of project staff, young people and peer mentors. The Group provides a steer on the types of activity that are delivered through the project and has been involved in the recruitment of staff to the project.

The Advisory Group engenders a much greater sense of buy-in from the young people and is an effective means of generating support amongst them. Relationships between young people and project staff are two-way instead of one-way and this has led to greater mutual respect between staff and young people. The young people have developed negotiating and communication skills, and learnt how to put forward their opinions in a constructive way.

Impact of involvement

On young people

Overall project workers felt confident that as a result of participating in projects young people will experience a wide variety of benefits in the future. The main benefit highlighted by young people is increased confidence, although other benefits include feeling valued, improved relationships with others, greater social awareness, and developing new transferable skills. For example:

- ▶ The Fairways project has helped young people to take charge and make decision about their lives.
- ▶ Young people who are actively involved in the Express Yourself project as peer educators say that being involved in this way has many benefits, particularly in their current and future employability. They have improved their communication skills and timekeeping, and feel more independent.
- ▶ Through St Joseph's Learning Partnership project young people have used their experience in volunteering to make positive decisions about their career choices.

On projects

Through YPF funding projects have been able to engage with more young people and get more young people actively involved in the projects. Eighty-three per cent of projects felt that young people have become more involved in the project as it has progressed.

The survey of project workers shows that YPF has enabled:

- ▶ 67 per cent of projects to expand the role of young people that are actively involved.
- ▶ 65 per cent have increased the number of young people that are actively involved.
- ▶ 63 per cent of projects to give young people the skills to be more actively involved.

‘A sense of buy-in from the young people is an effective means of generating support amongst them.’

Fairways

Legacy of YPF

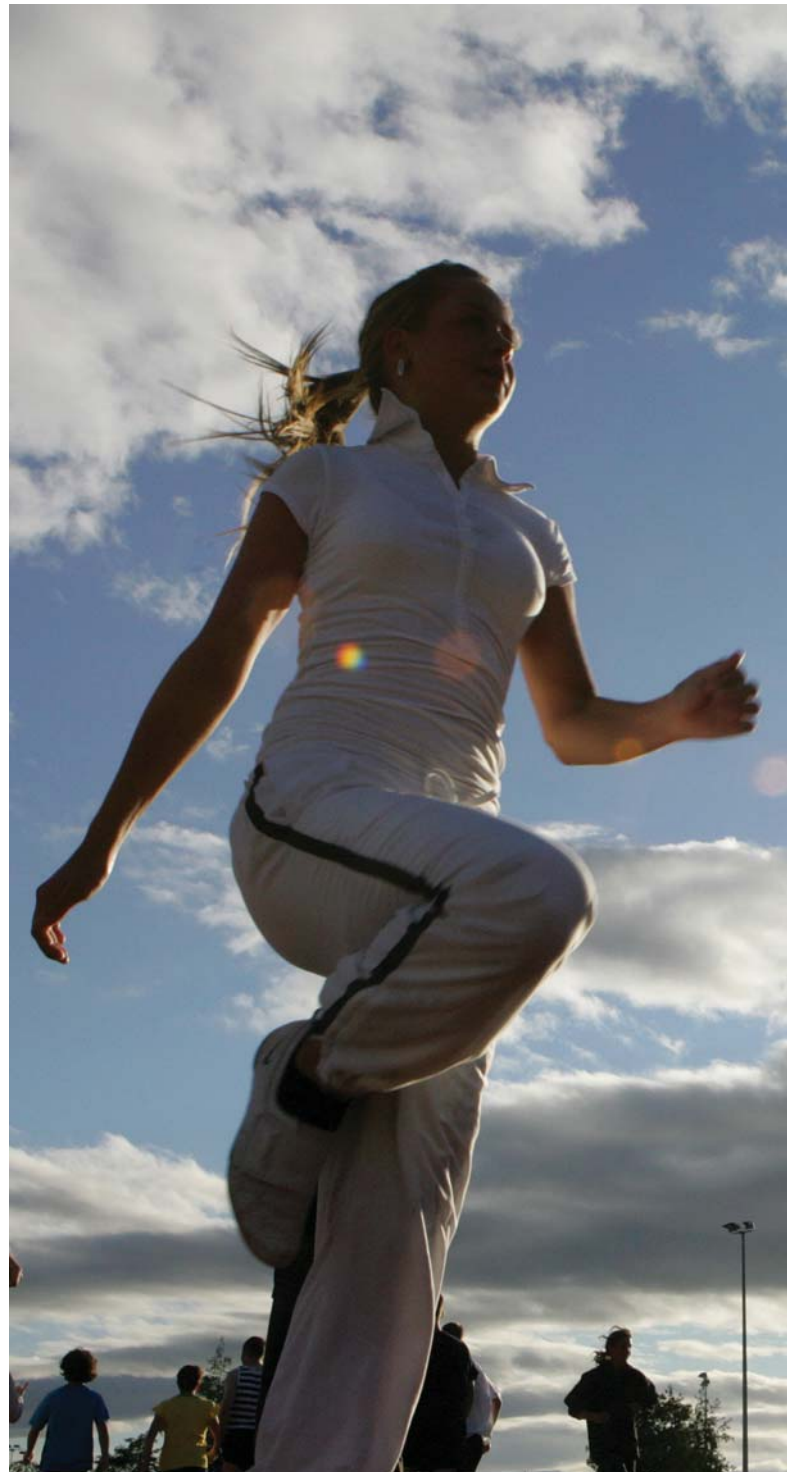
It is currently too early to judge the lasting impact of YPF in Scotland, however it is clear that the programme has enabled projects to deliver activities that would not have been possible without the funding. Project workers believe that their project is likely to continue in some form after the grant ends and that YPF funding has provided a stable platform which projects can build on. There is however some uncertainty, just under a third of projects state that their activity will continue while 40 per cent said that it might continue. A further 17 per cent said that some aspects of the project will carry on.

Findings from the survey of projects showed that all funded projects are working in partnership with other organisations with 87 per cent working with the voluntary sector and schools. Almost three quarters work with community learning and development organisations, and over half of projects work with the police.

Project workers believe that working in partnership brings a number of benefits, such as:

- ▶ Sharing resources, expertise and contacts. This can help expand delivery to the target groups, but also means that projects become more aware of groups that they could be targeting. The knowledge that partner agencies bring helps to enhance the service that young people receive.
- ▶ Avoiding duplication. By working in partnership, it is clear who is responsible for which area of delivery and resources can be tailored to each agency's specific role.

The evaluation found that the main challenge of partnership working was finding the time to commit to it properly. This is not just the time on the part of the project workers, but also how much time partner agencies are willing to commit. Another challenge is that although the partners are working together, they may have differing agendas and can find reaching agreement difficult.



Next Steps

Over the next year the evaluation will focus on measuring the longer-term impacts on young people. The views and opinions of both project workers and young people involved with the project will be gathered. Further information about the evaluation and full reports can be found at www2.biglotteryfund.org.uk/evalu_ypf



