



Evaluation of Young People's Fund

Year 5 Report

A report to Big Lottery Fund

December 2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
OVERVIEW OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND	1
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION	1
METHOD	1
OVERALL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	4
IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE	5
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	6
IMPACT ON YOUTH SECTOR ORGANISATIONS	8
IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES.....	9
KEY LEARNING FROM THE EVALUATION	9
1 INTRODUCTION	11
EVALUATION OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND	11
YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND	11
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION	11
REPORTING STRUCTURE	12
2 STUDY METHODS	13
3 OVERVIEW – THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND ACROSS THE UK	16
INTRODUCTION.....	16
SETTING UP YPF.....	18
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	20
ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	25
BENEFITS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	25
LEGACY	35
CONCLUSIONS.....	36
4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN ENGLAND	40
INTRODUCTION.....	40
SETTING UP YPF.....	43
ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	48
ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	53
LEGACY	65
CONCLUSIONS.....	66

5	YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN SCOTLAND	70
	INTRODUCTION.....	70
	SETTING UP YPF.....	73
	ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	77
	ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	81
	LEGACY	90
	CONCLUSIONS.....	91
6	YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN NORTHERN IRELAND.....	94
	INTRODUCTION.....	94
	SETTING UP YPF.....	97
	ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	99
	ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	104
	LEGACY	113
	CONCLUSIONS.....	113
7	YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN WALES	117
	INTRODUCTION.....	117
	SETTING UP YPF.....	120
	ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT.....	122
	ACHIEVING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	124
	LEGACY	137
	CONCLUSIONS.....	138
8	CONCLUSIONS.....	141

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of Young People's Fund

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) established the Young People's Fund (YPF) in 2004 with an original budget of £200 million across the UK to fund projects to improve the lives of young people. The overarching aim of YPF was to actively involve young people in all stages of projects through design, delivery, management and evaluation. Within this each country set its own aims and outcomes and developed its own programme, in line with national policy contexts. Programmes also aligned well with changing external policy priorities.

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

In 2006, BIG commissioned GEN Consulting and Wavehill Consulting to carry out a five-year evaluation of the Young People's Fund. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- assess the success of each programme in meeting its aims and outcomes
- assess the impact of project activity on young people
- assess the impact of actively involving young people in planning and running projects
- identify the key lessons for BIG, policymakers and other stakeholders.

BIG was also interested in learning more about effective ways of involving young people and whether the longer-term impacts could potentially result in savings to the public purse.

Method

The evaluators used a mix of research methods in each year of the evaluation, with a focus on case studies and interviews with funded projects and young people. As the evaluation covered four countries and five years, approaches and focus varied in order to add value to the findings overall. In year five the evaluation team: reviewed the findings of the first four years; carried out telephone interviews with 25 young people in each of Scotland, England and Northern Ireland; carried out a survey of 150 young people in Wales (where the methods varied slightly from the other three countries); conducted four in depth case study visits in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland and two in Wales; established and facilitated a good practice discussion group on Facebook and; developed seven thematic good practice guides.

Programme Overview

An overview of the country programmes, their outcomes and funding allocations is below.

Evaluation of Young People's Fund – Executive Summary

England			
Amount	Aims and outcomes	Structure	Target Groups
£77.6 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage and involve young people in all stages of the projects and programme. To achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being healthy Staying safe Enjoying and achieving Making a positive contribution Economic well being To make a difference to the community 	<p>The programme was split into three strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National grants (£27.6m): to make grants to national charities for youth-led projects that would make a significant difference to young people. Grants to organisations (£40m): to run local projects providing services that young people are involved in. Grants to individuals (£10m): funding to individual and groups of young people to run projects that will make a difference in their community. This strand was administered by the award partner UnLtd and its partners. 	<p>Young people aged 11 to 18 and up to 25 for those who find the transition to independent adult life difficult. Priority given to those who face difficulties and are at a disadvantage when it comes to getting involved in activities</p>
Scotland			
£25 million	<p>Funding was made available to help young people to learn new things and take part in healthy and positive activities that make them feel good about themselves. The outcomes were that young people would have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>Funding in Scotland was split three ways, including:</p> <p>Local projects – £11.4m to support projects that covered one local authority area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider inclusion projects – £2.85m for projects that covered more than one local authority area and that targeted non-geographic communities. New ideas – £4.75m was available to fund projects that tried out new approaches for engaging young people, carried out groundbreaking work, and adapted approaches that had been used successfully elsewhere. 	<p>Young people aged 11-25 with priority given to young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With no opportunities to volunteer, or facing barriers to volunteering. Dealing with many and complicated problems. Who do not have positive relationships with family, friends or community. Teenage girls
Northern Ireland			
£15.6 million	<p>The programme aimed to put young people at the centre of creating, planning and delivering projects that would achieve four main outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation of young people Improved health and well-being for young people Increased achievement and learning for young people Wider family and community support for young people. 	<p>It has been split into two strands with £10.8 m allocated to Change UR Future, and £4 million allocated to the Big Deal, which supports individuals and groups of young people and develops strategic programmes to support young people as decision makers. This strand is delivered by the award partner YouthNet and its partners.</p>	<p>This programme targeted young people up to the age of 25 at greatest risk of exclusion and offending.</p>

Evaluation of Young People's Fund – Executive Summary

	<p>Projects also had to focus on the crossing cutting themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of conflict and tackling sectarianism • transition from infancy to young adulthood • additional needs of vulnerable, socially excluded and disaffected young people. 		
Wales			
£13.2 million	<p>Aimed to help young people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy life and achieve their potential. • Develop skills and contribute to their communities. • Choose positive activities which discourage anti-social behaviour. 	<p>Projects were funded under three strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it Happen funded projects that were developed and undertaken by young people. It aimed to support young people with ideas for activities or projects that helped other young people or their local community. • Bridging the Gap supported large-scale projects that engaged with the most difficult to reach and challenging young people. • Reaching Out focused on engaging young people in activities by undertaking prevention, outreach and intervention work to fill a gap in local provision. 	<p>This programme targeted young people aged 10 -19 at risk of exclusion and/or offending.</p>

Overall programme performance

Reaching Young People

The Young People's Fund has supported a wide range of services and activities across the UK, with about 700,000 young people taking part in projects. YPF focused on supporting projects that provided activities for disadvantaged or vulnerable young people. Some projects responded by engaging specifically with young people facing such challenges as leaving care, falling into drug and alcohol misuse or losing touch with the education system. Other projects were open to all young people and hoped that bringing a range of young people from different backgrounds and levels of disadvantage together would lead to better mutual understanding of the issues they faced, and of responses to them.

In England, for instance, a telephone survey of 207 projects conducted in year four showed the groups of young people that projects were able to reach, highlighting that almost two thirds (61 per cent) reported that they had reached young people living in deprived areas and over half (56 per cent) were engaging with young people at risk of exclusion. Case-study projects adopted a range of approaches that enabled them to reach and engage disadvantaged young people successfully.

The evaluation was not however able to conclude whether universal or targeted provision was more effective at engaging the hardest to reach. The variety of provision and approaches, together with the absence of targets and standardised measurement indicators, made a comparison unreliable. But project staff consistently highlighted the value of peer recruitment and word of mouth in effectively reaching young people. Vulnerable and marginalised young people are more likely to trust friends and other young people as a source of information and advice than they are adults.

Meeting the aims of the programme

YPF projects have delivered activities through changes in the political administrations across the UK and through a period of economic recession. In spite of this changing climate, the broad aims of YPF and the diversity of projects that were funded ensured that activity remained relevant and well-aligned with external policy priorities

More defined aims and outcomes that closely reflect national policy can also have a positive impact. They can help avoid duplication, and ensure that activity fills recognised gaps in provision. Examples of where this has been successful include, in England where the programme was aligned to the Every Child Matters outcomes and in Wales where all projects were linked to their local children's and young people's partnership.

The broad aims meant that YPF could support a diverse range of projects that were in turn able to tailor activity to meet the needs of young people. Project activities included learning and skills, personal and social development, physical and mental health and well being, enhanced support networks and stronger, resilient communities. While the broad aims were a strength of the programme, they also presented some challenges. Projects were given

flexibility to set their own outcomes and targets. However, this made it difficult to undertake a reliable and comprehensive assessment of the programmes' achievements as a whole.

Programme Design and Implementation

The variety of funding routes provided through the different strands and structures was a success of YPF. For example, the strand that provided grants to individuals in England enabled young people to genuinely initiate, deliver and manage their own short-term projects, while larger grants to organisations provided longer-term opportunities that gave stability for young people. This is especially important for young people with chaotic lives as it provides ongoing development and social opportunities.

Involving young people in the funded projects was an integral part of YPF. Young people were involved in different ways and at different stages of the programmes. For example in many projects, young people were involved in the decision-making process of what types of activities should be funded. Each country had its own decision-making committee which included young people. In Northern Ireland young people were involved in decision-making panels for small grants applications and in Scotland local area panels were set up in the 32 local authorities where young people were able to contribute to decisions about what to fund in their local area.

Each of these mechanisms provided meaningful involvement opportunities for young people, giving them a range of skills including communication, negotiation, decision making and team working. The evaluation demonstrated the significant impact that small amounts of funding can bring about as young people who received small grants developed technical, personal and social skills which have enhanced their aspirations and prospects and facilitated their involvement in other activities.

Impact on young people

Participating in YPF projects has had a significant positive impact on young people. Benefits included increased confidence, improved relationships, more proactive engagement, communication skills and increased achievement and learning. These benefits met, and in many cases exceeded, the expectations of young people.

YPF has helped young people to develop their behavioural skills. For example findings from the year four survey of 174 young people across the UK showed that more than 97 per cent felt that going to a YPF project had helped them to develop new skills, meet new people, feel more confident and have fun.

Furthermore some young people also reported that participating in YPF projects had helped them to develop skills for future employment and change their outlook to make more positive choices. In particular, YPF activity has had a positive impact on young people's experience of and attitude towards school. Of the 155 young people who responded to this part of the year four survey:

- 64 per cent of said they enjoyed school more as a result of their involvement in YPF activity.
- 52 per cent felt they were behaving better at school as a result of YPF activity.
- 40 per cent thought they were achieving better grades as a result of YPF activity.

The evaluation also showed that young people have been supported into further and higher education, for example 24 per cent surveyed said that they planned to stay at school for longer as a result of involvement in YPF activity and hoped to find and sustain employment. In addition involvement in YPF activity diverted some young people away from anti-social or offending behaviours. In year four, 18 per cent of the 174 young people surveyed reported that attending a YPF project had helped keep them out of trouble with the police.

Positive interaction with adults and peers, feeling listened to and empowered within the project environment were key features which facilitated the benefits highlighted above. In addition, the skills of staff were very important in facilitating and sustaining engagement and bringing about positive impacts. Vulnerable young people often benefited from having positive adult role models they could trust and could talk to. This emerged across the UK but particularly in Wales where 140 young people, from the year five survey, were asked to identify what it was about their YPF project that helped them. 30 per cent said that having someone friendly to talk to and 25 per cent said having someone (at the project) who they could trust and who was supportive made a difference to them.

Regardless of the specific programme aims, simply bringing young people together to take part in a positive activity where they can meet new people and challenge themselves to try something new can benefit young people. Those who were facing challenges also benefited from the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from other young people.

Active Involvement

This section focuses on the active involvement of young people in planning and running projects rather than simply taking part in project activities.

Overall, BIG's requirement to involve young people in this way has led to a change in culture among projects and staff. This has also given significant numbers of young people a valuable chance to be actively engaged in services that affect them and to develop new skills that will benefit them in the future.

The level of involvement and the ways young people were actively engaged varied significantly from project to project. In most cases young people were involved in providing feedback on activities. This included informal verbal feedback on activities and more formal, structured feedback through surveys and evaluation forms. Fewer young people were engaged in higher-level

involvement activities such as being a representative on a management committee or board, or managing a specific part of a project.

The table below shows the percentages of young people involved in different types of activity across the UK

Average percentage of young people actively involved

Means of involvement	Mean % of young people
Review activity through informal feedback	74%
Review activity through structured feedback	66%
Engage other young people	44%
Design activity	36%
Deliver activity	28%
Manage certain projects	23%
Youth forum / steering group	19%
Recruitment of project staff	11%
YP rep on management committee / board	8%

Source: Wavehill Survey of YPF Projects 2009 – 289 responses

Throughout the evaluation projects highlighted a number of barriers they faced in achieving active involvement. These include low levels of skills and confidence among young people, lack of staff expertise in the area, and limited resources. Projects worked to overcome these barriers through a variety of approaches including:

- identifying a range of involvement activities to suit the variety of young people engaging with the project
- identifying a level of activity that suited the young people taking part
- effectively communicating the benefits that young people can gain from being involved
- providing training and support for young people to develop their confidence
- providing additional resources such as transport, childcare and meals to make it easier for young people to take part.

The benefits that staff and young people reported from being actively involved were largely similar to those reported by project participants. The scale and intensity of impacts was however greater for those young people who were actively involved. Actively involved young people highlighted enjoyment of project activities, skills development, increased confidence, increased engagement and improved relationships as benefits. The evaluation also found evidence of developing employability skills, including presentation and communication skills, leadership, and assertiveness. Young people reported feeling empowered by their role in their project; they valued the trust that was placed in them and the opportunity to be heard and to have an influence.

In Scotland the Local Area Panels were a unique and innovative approach to involving young people in decisions that affect their local community. This was a particular strength of the Scotland programme. About 500 young people were involved in the 32 panels. The skills that young people learnt and networks they developed resulted in sustainable benefits for them and their local areas. Findings from Volunteer Development Scotland (who undertook an evaluation that gathered views from 187 members) found that 51 per cent of young people involved in the panels said they had accessed volunteering or employment as a direct result of being involved in the panels.

Impact on youth sector organisations

The evaluation found that YPF funding has had a positive impact on the vast majority of projects across the UK. The year-four telephone survey of 388 projects showed that 93 per cent of staff felt that funding had helped them to actively involve young people, 88 per cent to improve links with partners, and 87 per cent to raise their profile with funders and stakeholders.

Financial support

YPF was a vital source of funding for the projects, enabling organisations to provide services and activities for young people that would not have otherwise been provided. As part of the year-four survey, project staff highlighted that 62 per cent would not have operated without the funding and 22 per cent said that they would have operated but on a smaller scale.

Building capacity and skills development

The evaluation showed that projects were able to develop their approaches to involving young people in their project, to expand the role of active involvement and to test new ways of working with young people. The year-four survey found that 81 per cent of projects were able to support greater numbers of young people to be actively involved, and 80 per cent were able to expand the role of young people who were already involved. A further 71 per cent felt they were able to give young people the skills they needed to be actively involved. Projects particularly benefited from the involvement of young people through more targeted services, cost savings, new ideas and satisfied participants. Young people can help adults understand the needs of their client groups and how to meet them - resulting in more tailored, useful services.

Project staff played a significant role in influencing the young people who attended the projects and so contributed to the benefits that young people gained. For example, the 140 young people surveyed in Wales felt that the benefits they gained from the project were linked directly to the project staff.

Partnership working

The evaluation found that projects had benefited from newly established and strengthened partnerships, both formal and informal. Partnerships were most commonly with schools, but projects also regularly worked with other voluntary organisations. The benefits from these partnerships included:

- ability to reach a wider group of young people and provide a whole package of support through cross-referral.

- sharing of knowledge, good practice and resources to bring about more efficient and effective working.
- a joined-up approach to service delivery that avoided duplication and offered young people a range of support that better met their needs.

In Wales, the development of effective partnerships was supported in a more formal way. Projects were required to fill gaps in local provision, and so all were linked to their local Children's and Young People's Partnership, ensuring a more strategic approach to partnership working.

Impact on communities

YPF projects have had a positive impact on communities, most commonly by helping to reduce the likelihood of young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and by developing active citizenship, which encourages young people to make a positive contribution in their communities.

Where young people were involved in positive activities, brought together with other young people or were supported in their personal social development, evidence showed that they were less likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour. The year-four evaluation showed that from a survey of 174 young people 18 per cent reported keeping out of trouble with the police as a result of YPF; this figure rose to 20 per cent in the following year.

In terms of active citizenship, young people reported that as a result of YPF they become more involved in volunteering and in their local community. For example in Scotland the telephone survey of 51 young people in year four and 25 young people in year five found that 33 per cent and 15 per cent respectively had been helped by their project to get involved in community activity, while 29 per cent in year four and 20 per cent in the following year stated that it had helped them to participate in volunteering.

Some projects provided activities that helped to improve relationships between young people and adults in the community. For example Open 2 Access, a funded project in England, operated an inter-generational programme to break down barriers between young and older residents in a local area. Young people took older residents shopping, and took part in gardening, litter picking and maintenance work. These activities helped to change negative perceptions.

Key learning from the evaluation

- Offering a range of funding routes, such as small grants direct to young people and larger grants to organisations to provide stability for young people helps projects to reach a broader range of young people.
- Using a common set of indicators across different programmes enables a more comprehensive assessment of performance.
- Taking account of wider policy priorities and linking up with local infrastructure makes programmes more successful in filling gaps and in meeting young peoples' needs more holistically.
- In order to engage young people who are hard to reach, applications should develop explicit plans for targeting.

- Peer recruitment can be an effective mechanism for engaging harder to reach young people, who are more likely to trust their peer group as a source of information and advice than they are adults.
- Projects looking to achieve lasting impact should be encouraged to plan for sustainability from the outset and review at different stages throughout the project lifecycle, from the application stage to the end of funding. Reporting on social impact can offer additional persuasive evidence.
- Funders seeking to promote active involvement should offer clear guidance about expected levels of involvement by young people, as well as ways of achieving this
- To ensure young people are involved in shaping services that affect them, funders should encourage projects to consider how young people will be involved in decision-making processes and in planning and running activities (where relevant).
- Using more youth-friendly funding application forms and monitoring processes helps to increase youth involvement and the rate of monitoring returns.
- Projects should include budget provision in their funding bids for training and updating staff skills in working and communicating effectively with young people.

1 INTRODUCTION

Evaluation of the Young People's Fund

1.1 GEN and Wavehill Consulting were commissioned in 2006 to undertake a five year evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) across the UK on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). This report is the final report, which draws together the findings of all five years of the evaluation.

Young People's Fund

1.2 The Young People's Fund was established in 2003 with an original budget of £200 million¹ available across the UK to fund projects for young people.

1.3 This included four ring-fenced strands in England, totalling £79.9 million to improve the lives of young people. These strands are not included in this evaluation.

1.4 The remaining funding, which is the subject of this evaluation, was divided between the four countries of the United Kingdom, with each country designing a programme allied to the specific policy context within that country. This approach ensured that the individual country programmes reflected the policy directions that had been agreed by their respective administrations.

1.5 Each of the four programmes further divided their funding allocation into a number of strands. Each strand offered variable levels of funding to different groups meeting differing funding criteria. The specifics of the programme in each country are discussed in greater detail in the individual country chapters.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

1.6 The evaluation was tasked with assessing:

- The success of each of the four country programmes in meeting their aims and outcomes.
- The impact of project activity on young participants.
- The impact of involving young people in their project, such as in design, delivery, evaluation and management of activity.

1.7 Over the five years of the evaluation there were a number of areas in which BIG was particularly interested and which the evaluation looked at in specific detail. These have been reported fully by reports in years one to four and are considered in this final report. They were as follows:

Involvement

Objectives:

¹ The total funding is now £211.3 million due to a further £5 million being awarded to the programme in Scotland and a further £5.8 million awarded to the programme in Northern Ireland at a later date.

- To assess the effectiveness of the programme in involving young people in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of the programme and projects. In addition BIG was interested in the different levels of involvement and the characteristics of those involved.
- To make an assessment of the longer-term impacts of the programme on young people.

Areas of particular interest included:

- How successful the Local Area Panels in Scotland were in promoting the goal of involvement and in meeting the outcomes of YPF in Scotland.

Delivery

Objectives:

- To assess the effectiveness of the different delivery mechanisms applied in terms of meeting the aims of the programme.

Areas of particular interest included:

- How successful the programme in Wales has been in meeting local need and filling gaps in provision.

Good Practice

Objectives:

- To highlight what worked in terms of meeting the aims of the programmes and the impact that involving young people in all areas has had on them, the community and the sustainability of projects.

Areas of particular interest included:

- Examples of good practice in meeting the hardest to reach/disadvantaged groups of young people and in particular meeting the needs of 10 to 18 year olds in Northern Ireland.

Reporting Structure

1.8 This report draws together and summarises the findings from each year of the evaluation, including the evidence collected during year five. It is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the study methodology in year five.
- Chapter 3 provides an overview of findings from across the UK.
- Chapter 4 details the findings from England.
- Chapter 5 details the findings from Scotland.
- Chapter 6 details the findings from Northern Ireland.
- Chapter 7 details the findings from Wales.
- Chapter 8 discusses the conclusions and the lessons learned.

2 STUDY METHODS

Introduction

2.1 The methodology for the fifth year of the evaluation was re-scoped in order to look back and assess the YPF's achievements over five years, to capture and disseminate the learning that has been accumulated by projects during their funding period. It also took account of the fact that the majority of projects have now reached the end of YPF funding.

2.2 BIG identified seven themes that the year five research should explore. These were:

- reducing anti-social behaviour
- improving behaviour at school
- encouraging active citizenship
- working with young people leaving care
- working with young carers
- working with ex-offenders
- actively involving young people in project delivery.

2.3 Following discussions with BIG staff and in accordance with the brief, there was less emphasis on primary research in this final year, and greater emphasis on synthesising the evidence gathered over the previous four years to tell the narrative of YPF. There is also a focus on the dissemination of research findings. Although there was less primary research in year five of the evaluation, YPF may still be having an impact, both on the young people that participated and were actively involved in projects, and on the organisations themselves (strategically and operationally). To capture this impact, the evaluation team focused on three key themes:

- Analysing previous years' findings: Analysing all previous evaluation findings, distilling the overall findings on all aspects of YPF including project operation and management, methods of engaging and involving young people and the nature and extent of short and long-term outcomes achieved for projects and young people.
- Primary research: Conducting primary research with project staff and young people, capturing the extent to which any previously achieved outcomes have been sustained.
- Capturing good practice and ensuring effective dissemination to projects and the wider youth sector: Developing good practice guides and case study examples of good practice as appropriate in key areas of YPF focus

(such as involving young people). Disseminating key learning from the evaluation through attendance at events and seminars.

2.4 Our proposal for year five was informed by meetings with YPF staff in each country. Although the evaluation was structured around a consistent set of overall themes, points of emphasis and detail differed slightly according to the aims, priorities and outcomes of each country's YPF programme.

2.5 In Wales, the country staff opted to follow a different approach in order to assess the sustainability of impacts on young people and this is described in the following section.

2.6 A detailed description of the methods employed in previous years is available in the evaluation reports for each year.

Year five methodology

2.7 In year five of the evaluation the methodology comprised:

- Analysis of findings for all four countries and the UK overall across all four years, drawing out and synthesising the key findings from each.
- Targeted telephone interviews with 25 young people in England and Scotland and 26 in Northern Ireland (76 in total) to identify outcomes and sustainability of impacts.
- Telephone and face to face interviews with 150 young people in Wales.
- Four in depth case study visits with projects in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and two in Wales. The aim of these was to gather case study evidence and further qualitative data on sustainable outcomes and good practice.
- Development of good practice guidance according to agreed areas of focus.
- Establishment and facilitation of a good practice discussion group on the social networking site Facebook.

2.8 We aimed to involve additional young people by using the Voxur video interviewing system at country events. However, the number of country events was more limited than anticipated and the one that took place in England did not have young people in attendance.

Telephone survey with young people

2.9 We carried out a telephone survey with young people who benefitted from project activity in each country. The survey explored the outcomes associated with participation and active involvement, the impacts of achieving these outcomes on the lives of young people and the people around them and the sustainability of outcomes over the medium to long term.

2.10 The young people involved in the year five survey (in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) were largely those who had participated in year four. This allowed an assessment of sustainability of outcomes to be made in year five.

2.11 Due to a low response rate to the year four survey in Northern Ireland, it was necessary to boost the sample in year five and involve a new cohort of young people in addition to those surveyed in year four. In Wales the team worked through project leads to gather the contacts details for young people and achieve the 150 interviews. This was in line with the methodology requested by country staff in Wales.

2.12 Wavehill Consulting completed the telephone surveys of young people in each country. While quantitative evidence from the survey of young people (in years four and five) provides an indication upon which to base assumptions of impact, the scale of benefits achieved, the social return on investment (SROI) and the sustainability of outcomes, the sample cannot be considered representative of YPF participants as a whole. Care should be taken in the interpretation of survey findings and quantitative evidence should be viewed in conjunction with qualitative and case study evidence to achieve a comprehensive overview.

Case Study Visits

2.13 Case study visits with 14 projects (four in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and two in Wales) were conducted to gather qualitative evidence and illustrative examples of good or innovative practice in working with young people.

2.14 The case study projects were selected to reflect the seven good practice themes that were the focus of the evaluation in year five.

2.15 To engage projects in this strand of the research the team initially contacted every project, for which we had current contact details, via email. The initial email set out the seven good practice themes and requested projects to respond with examples of the ways in which they made a contribution to one or more areas. The team selected projects for inclusion in case study research on the basis of themes they highlighted and geographical distribution.

2.16 Case study visits involved:

- In depth interviews with the project manager (if still working with the organisation) or project workers.
- Interviews with young people, although this was sometimes difficult to achieve because young people were not always in attendance or had left the project. In these situations young people were asked to take part in telephone interviews to discuss the impact of participation in YPF activity.

2.17 Data from project visits was used to develop stand-alone case studies which are included in this report (following each country chapter). They are also drawn upon throughout the country chapters to illustrate key findings highlighted and for the basis of the Good Practice Guides (presented separately).

3 OVERVIEW – THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND ACROSS THE UK

Introduction

Background

3.1 The cumulative findings of the evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) programme across the United Kingdom (UK) from 2006 to 2011 are presented in this chapter. The chapter provides a synthesis of the findings set out in the previous four annual reports (2006 to 2010), along with findings from the fieldwork carried out in 2010-11. The 2010-11 fieldwork involved:

- Qualitative case study visits to four projects in each of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and two case study visits to projects in Wales. These involved interviews with staff and, where possible, young people.
- A telephone survey of 25 young people in each of England and Scotland, 26 in Northern Ireland, and 150 young people in Wales.

3.2 The fieldwork in Wales differed to that in the other countries by placing a greater emphasis on the telephone survey of young people. This was because there was a requirement in Wales to better understand the long term impacts of YPF on young people who had left the intervention. In practice, the tracking by projects of young people post-intervention is not strong and so only 25 per cent of the survey cohort in Wales had left their project, while 75 per cent were still at their project or had only recently left.

3.3 This chapter explores:

- The design of the programme in each country.
- The set up of YPF and its funded projects.
- The active involvement of young people.
- Outcomes from the programme for young people, projects and the wider community and the sustainability of these.
- The YPF legacy.

Programme design

3.4 YPF was established in 2003 with an original budget of £200 million available across the UK to fund projects that work with young people. A further £11.3 million was allocated at a later date. This funding was divided between each of the four countries of the UK as follows:

- £77.6 million in England (£27.6 million for National Grants, £40 million for Grants to Organisations, and £10 million for Big Boost).
- £25 million in Scotland (£24 million for grants to projects, and £1 million for Local Area Panels).

- £15.6 million in Northern Ireland (£11.6 million for Change UR Future, and £4 million for Big Deal).
- £13.2 million in Wales (£6 million for Bridging the Gap, £6.2 million for Reaching Out, and £1 million for Make it Happen).

3.5 A further £79.9 million was ring-fenced in England for other programmes and was not part of YPF or this evaluation.

3.6 The overarching aim of YPF across the UK is to actively involve young people in all stages of the project through design, delivery, management and evaluation. Within the structure of the overarching aims of the YPF programme across the UK, each country set its own aims and outcomes and developed its own programme designed to meet those aims and outcomes and to reflect the specific policy context within that country.

3.7 While the policy context differs in each of the four countries, there are common themes across each, namely:

- An overall aim of reducing poverty, increasing social inclusion and maximizing the potential of every individual.
- The recognition that achieving this means ensuring that individuals are healthy, educated, safe and equipped to participate in the economy.
- An understanding that ensuring wellbeing in each of these areas requires active participation in order to ensure that services meet the needs of individuals and are therefore effective and used.
- A recognition that maximum impact can be achieved by engaging as many individuals as possible in activities that benefit their community.

3.8 Further details of the policy context and design of the programme in each country are provided in the individual country chapters. Each country developed a programme with a number of strands, with each strand offering variable levels of funding to different groups, and meeting differing funding criteria. While each country operates a unique programme, there are common characteristics in their design. An overview of these structures is given below:

- Significant long term grants to projects are awarded in each of the four countries, in the form of:
 - England – National Grants and Grants to Organisations
 - Scotland – Local Projects, New Ideas and Wider Inclusion
 - Northern Ireland – Change UR Future
 - Wales – Bridging the Gap and Reaching Out.
- Small grants programmes were developed in three of the four countries in the form of:
 - England – Big Boost

- Northern Ireland – The Big Deal small grants programme
- Wales – Make it Happen.
- Unique elements were used in Scotland and Northern Ireland, namely:
 - Scotland – Local Area Panels
 - Northern Ireland – Change UR Future strategic programmes.

Setting up YPF

Background

3.9 The YPF programme was launched in 2005 and in total 702² projects received significant long term funding, and are estimated to have worked with in excess of 710,000 young people³. Most commonly, projects were funded for three years, however in Scotland funding was available for up to four years and in Northern Ireland and Wales, for up to five years. In addition:

- 3,356 young people aged 11 to 25 received awards of £250 to £5,000 through Big Boost in England to run their own project.
- Around 500 young people were involved in a Local Area Panel (LAP) in Scotland.
- 723 young people and organisations received awards of between £500 and £2,500 through the Big Deal small grants programme in Northern Ireland.
- £3 million is being used in Northern Ireland to fund targeted work with three age groups through strategic programmes.
- 159 small local projects received up to £5,000 each through the Wales Make it Happen programme.

Reach of the programme

3.10 While funding was awarded to projects across the UK, in each of the four countries there was variation in the level of funding awarded in each geographical area. For example in some of the English regions awards were made at a level equal to £6.46 per head of population⁴, while in other regions awards equated to around £2.98 per head of population (based on size of the population of young people).

3.11 This disparity was particularly marked in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Scotland award values ranged from £3.98 per head in one local authority area to £63.43 in another, while in Northern Ireland they ranged from £1.35 per head to £50.86 across the areas. Take up was monitored and outreach activities undertaken to increase the applications in areas with low rates. This was a

² 412 in England, 201 in Scotland, 52 in Northern Ireland and 37 in Wales

³ Calculation based on a survey sample of 50 per cent of projects in 2009 who provided an estimated figure on the number of young people they had engaged with since they had received YPF funding

⁴ Per head of population calculations based on the young people age eligibility criteria in each country

positive approach adopted by BIG despite the fact that for some areas, the number of applications remained low.

Involving young people in the application decision making process

3.12 The YPF programme aimed to actively involve young people in all stages of the project and programme, and so in Scotland Local Area Panels (LAPs) were developed to enable young people to contribute to the decision making process in the local project strand. In all four countries, young people were represented on the decision making committees.

3.13 The approach taken in Scotland included the largest number of young people, with around 500 young people being involved in one of the Local Area Panels that were established in each of Scotland's 32 local authorities. A further 10 to 15 were involved in the National Committee which made the final funding decisions. The LAP model in Scotland was highly successful and brought significant benefits to the young people involved, including the opportunity to gain a formal qualification for their involvement. Thirty two panels were required in order to achieve a local focus but due to the small number of applications in some areas, some LAPs assessed only one or two applications.

3.14 The Big Deal small grants programme in Northern Ireland facilitated young people's decision making panels, but on a smaller scale than in Scotland. The programme held panel meetings in 11 locations, and over a three year period 128 young people aged 7 to 25 participated in 80 panel meetings and made decisions about 723 applications⁵. While the scale was smaller than in Scotland, there were considerably more applications to assess because the panels were assessing small grants applications, rather than large grants applications. This meant that each panel meeting assessed between 9 and 11 applications.

3.15 In England, the Big Boost small grants programme involved 24 young people in decision making panels, with representatives from these panels sitting on the management steering committee. This approach was successful and the role of panel members expanded from making decisions on grant awards to offering advice to projects and helping them link to other successful projects.

3.16 In all three countries panel members developed a wide range of skills, including communication, negotiation, decision making and team working. In Scotland and Northern Ireland where there was a local focus, young people were able to develop an understanding of issues affecting their communities.

3.17 It is clear from the evidence that involvement in the panels can bring significant benefits to young people. In the future, BIG should consider how young people can be involved in the decision making processes used to distribute grant funding. It is a model that could also be applied to other target groups.

⁵ Youthnet (2010), The Big Deal Small Grants Programme: Evaluation Report, available at www.thebigdealni.com

Project views on setup process

3.18 Project staff reported that the YPF application process (in the large grants strands) was a relatively positive process in comparison to many others they had been involved in. While the process was considered to be lengthy and complex, it was not considered to be overly so. The complexity of the process was considered by projects to be commensurate with the levels of funding available.

3.19 While the process was viewed positively by staff, this traditional approach to applying for funding poses significant barriers to actively involving young people in the process. The process is overly complex for individuals and groups who are not experienced in applying for funding, and it can exclude young people. Given YPF's emphasis on actively involving young people, this was considered a weakness in the application process. In many cases it was necessary for adults to take the lead in completing the application, with input from young people on the types of activities to be included. In future there may be potential to develop a process in which young people could take more of a lead in making the case for the need for the project, perhaps through production of a DVD, photograph boards or other media.

Active Involvement

Overview of active involvement in projects

3.20 With active involvement an overarching aim of the YPF programme it has been a feature of the evaluation each year. The year one evaluation found that most projects were able to actively involve young people in the application process, when the project idea was being developed. At this stage, active involvement most commonly involved consultation with young people to explore the need for the project and what elements it should contain to best meet their needs.

3.21 Once funding was awarded, some projects found it very challenging to continue actively involving young people once the project was set up. As a result, the number of projects that actively involved young people in the early stages of project delivery was lower than the number that involved young people in the application stage.

3.22 One reason for this was that the application process took some time and often the young people who had been involved at that stage had moved on by the time the project was established. The new groups of young people that the projects were now engaging with were not always ready to be actively involved without some capacity building work. Most significantly however, in some cases newly established projects with newly recruited staff did not have the necessary processes, infrastructure and staff skills to actively involve young people from the outset. This was something they expected to develop over time.

3.23 The evaluation evidence confirms that levels of active involvement grew over time as organisations, staff and young people developed their capacity for active involvement. Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of projects reported a growth in active involvement over the lifetime of the project. Project staff credit

YPF funding with helping them to nurture active involvement, with the majority reporting that YPF helped them to:

- Involve a greater number of young people.
- Expand the role of young people who are actively involved.
- Give young people the skills to be actively involved.
- Give staff the necessary skills to actively involve young people.

3.24 YPF has helped make a cultural change amongst projects and project staff as well as giving significant numbers of young people a very valuable opportunity to be actively engaged in projects that affect them and develop new skills that will benefit them in the short, medium and long terms.

3.25 While levels of active involvement grew and the ways in which young people were actively involved expanded, the most common method of active involvement continued to be informal and formal consultation. There is significant value in involving young people in this way. By asking for feedback projects are giving young people a voice and if their feedback is implemented they will feel empowered, more satisfied with the project's provision and ultimately benefit more from the activity.

3.26 The use of these methods alone does not however guarantee that feedback will be put to best use when shaping services and so other methods of involvement are important. The range of involvement methods and the extent to which young people are actively involved in the project, varied significantly from project to project. Some of the YPF funded projects are involving young people in a significant way and in some cases, the projects are young person led.

3.27 An example of a project that is young person led is SOLE (Shout Out Loud Everyone), which is described in full in the England chapter (case study example one, year five [England]). SOLE is a youth forum, where the young participants plan, deliver and manage activities. The forum is made up of a group of between eight and 13 young people who run regular youth forum meetings (including preparing agendas, chairing the meetings, arranging refreshments and preparing minutes) to identify issues for young people in the area and develop solutions. The young people decide on a programme of activities, which the project staff help them to deliver and manage. An area of significant activity for the youth forum is fundraising to ensure their planned activities can be delivered. This includes organising fundraising events, as well as completing applications for funding. This type of activity has helped some of the young people to keep out of trouble, get a job and build their confidence.

Quantifying active involvement in projects

3.28 As would be expected, significant numbers of young people are actively involved in what would be regarded as lower level involvement activities, such as providing feedback, with fewer young people engaged in high level involvement

activities such as being a representative on a management committee or board. This is a reflection of the nature of these activities. Table 3.1 shows the percentages of young people involved in each type of involvement activity, as reported in the survey of project staff carried out in 2009 as part of the fieldwork in year three of the evaluation.

Table 3.1 – Average (mean) percentage of young people actively involved in different ways (UK wide)

Means of involvement	Mean % of young people
Review activity through informal feedback	74%
Review activity through structured feedback	66%
Engage other young people	44%
Design activity	36%
Deliver activity	28%
Manage certain projects	23%
Youth forum / steering group	19%
Recruitment of project staff	11%
YP rep on management committee / board	8%

Source: Wavehill Survey of YPF Projects 2009 – 289 responses

3.29 The balance of young person involvement compared to staff involvement varies from project to project. Some projects are young person led, while others are led by staff but with varying degrees of input from young people. A useful tool for measuring this balance is Hart's Ladder of Participation⁶, which describes eight degrees of participation from tokenism to citizenship from rung one on the ladder where there is no involvement to rung eight, where young people work in partnership with adults.

3.30 The evaluation found that staff and young people most commonly identify their project as being on rung four, five or six of the ladder. Hart describes involvement from rungs four to eight as 'true participation'. Hart is clear that between rungs four and eight involvement is meaningful and that operating at rung eight is not necessarily better than operating at rung four. The level of involvement has to be appropriate for the young people involved and involvement at the level of the middle rungs is often necessary to enable young people to develop skills that will enable them to be involved at a higher level. Rungs four, five and six are described as follows:

- Rung four – Staff decide on the project and participants volunteer for it. Staff respect their views.

⁶ Hart, R. (1992), Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

- Rung five – The project is designed and run by staff but participants are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
- Rung six – Staff have the initial idea but participants are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Their views are considered and they are involved in taking decisions.

3.31 The evidence showed that young people are more likely to take the lead over adults in the evaluation of project activity. Young people were least involved in project management, with this tending to be adult led. It is not clear why this is the case, it may be that the attitudes and approaches of adults towards project management discourages or at least does not encourage young people to get involved. Adults may explicitly or implicitly exclude young people, it may also be that young people self exclude as they find project management tasks less attractive than evaluation activities; for example providing feedback on activities that they have taken part in and their suggestions for the improvement and ongoing development of projects.

Overcoming barriers to active involvement

3.32 Actively involving young people is challenging for a number of reasons. Staff need to have the necessary skills and projects need to have the necessary structures and processes in place to facilitate active involvement. However as the YPF projects began to develop these, staff reported that the biggest barrier to active involvement was gaining the commitment and enthusiasm from young people.

3.33 Projects reported that some young people only wanted to be involved in projects as participants of the activities. Where this was the case projects respected this decision, recognising that it is important that young people have the choice. Unsurprisingly, some projects report that it is often the more confident, less difficult to engage young people who are most willing and able to be involved at first. Some projects that work only with hard to reach young people found it particularly challenging to actively involve young people because of the nature of the client group.

3.34 Some projects have successfully overcome some of the barriers to active involvement, and the good practice guide on active involvement developed as part of this evaluation provides further detail on this. Some of the ways in which barriers can be overcome include:

- Developing a progression route within the project which allows young people to become more involved over time following an initial capacity building phase and with ongoing support.
- Involving participants in managing one particular element of the project, such as a community event. In this way young people can immediately benefit and see the outcome of their work.

- Supporting staff to help them identify opportunities for involvement. In England projects could access support from Participation Works to develop the ways in which young people are involved.
- Sharing of good practice through documents and information is also useful to help staff consider new ways of working. This evaluation has developed a good practice guide and social networking site to support this.

3.35 In Scotland, Granton Youth Centre Peer Leaders in the Community project (case study example three, year five [Scotland]) successfully worked with 47 young people and supported them to be peer educators. The peer educators designed and delivered sessions on gang violence to children in secondary schools across Edinburgh. Staff had to work with the group to overcome tensions between young people from different areas and different socio-economic backgrounds. This involved facilitating interaction to help break down barriers and demonstrates the importance of staff skills in facilitating active involvement.

3.36 The vast majority of young people involved in the survey of young people in years four and five of the evaluation were satisfied with the level of their involvement in their project. This includes both young people who had been involved and those who had not.

3.37 While there is evidence that projects successfully actively involved young people, the balance of young person involvement compared to adult involvement, and the number of young people involved was lower than might have been expected from a programme that has active involvement as a main aim. This was highlighted in earlier evaluation reports, and as a result, when the YPF 2 programme was rolled out in England, BIG took steps to address this by incorporating more stringent application assessment criteria and by funding Participation Works to support projects with active involvement.

Active involvement through small grants programmes and Local Area Panels

3.38 In addition to awarding large grants to projects, each of the country programmes funded a strand that put the active involvement of young people at its core. Namely the small grants programmes in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales; and the Local Area Panels in Scotland.

3.39 Through interviews with the co-ordinators of these strands and a sample of young people who were involved, the evidence shows that these strands were successful in securing high levels of involvement. For example, the young people involved in the Local Area Panels in Scotland received training and support to assess the project applications for YPF and to make recommendations on whether funding should be awarded. This ensured that young people were involved in the decisions on what was funded in their local areas. The Big Boost in England gave small grants directly to young people to run their own project. The young people received support to complete their own application, the money was awarded directly to them, and they were responsible for spending it appropriately and evaluating their project.

3.40 Young people who were beneficiaries of these strands were truly involved in leading the projects and so were operating on rungs seven or eight of Hart's Ladder of Participation⁷.

- Rung seven – Young people initiate and manage projects / actions. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.
- Rung eight - Young people initiate and manage projects / actions and share decision making with adults, using them as mentors and advisors. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

3.41 These strands were allocated a comparatively small amount of funding in relation to the funding that was allocated to projects, yet they have had a significant and lasting impact on the young people who were beneficiaries. It is clear that these strands have been a highly successful feature of YPF. This demonstrates the significant impact that relatively small sums of money can have and so is an element that should be considered in future funding design either as an overall funding approach or as a strand of a programme.

Achieving programme outcomes

Benefits for young people

3.42 The aims and outcomes for each country programme are broad and as such the vast majority of projects contribute to several of the programme outcomes. However in each country there is one outcome that is considered to be the main project outcome by over 40 per cent of projects. These are:

- England – Young people enjoying and achieving more at school and in their lives.
- Scotland – Young people 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.
- Northern Ireland – Increasing the achievement and learning of young people.
- Wales – Young people enjoying life and achieving their potential.

3.43 Despite the differences in individual country programme aims, the most common primary aim of YPF projects across the UK was helping young people to develop new skills, in particular interpersonal and social skills, to grow in confidence and to have fun. Projects successfully achieved these aims.

3.44 This was clear in the findings from the surveys and qualitative research with young people during the evaluation. When asked about whether or not they had experienced a particular benefit, almost all young people (97 per cent or

⁷ Hart, R. (1992), *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

more in year four and 87 per cent or more in year five) involved in the survey reported that going to a YPF project had helped them to:

- develop new skills
- meet new people
- feel more confident
- have fun.

3.45 The evidence shows that, regardless of the specific aims of the country programme or the specific aims of the project, simply bringing young people together to engage in a positive activity where they can meet new young people and challenge themselves to try something new, leads to achievement of the benefits described for most young people who engage.

3.46 Young people reported that coming together with other young people who have a shared interest or are experiencing similar challenges was a significant contributing factor to them benefiting from the project. This does not however mean that the nature of the activity is unimportant and young people reported that they also benefited from the specific project activity. It is important to note that merely bringing young people together is valuable in itself because participants have the opportunity to meet other young people and to build their confidence through the development of positive social relationships. Because the activities are so varied it is not possible to identify specific benefits from specific types of activities.

3.47 Benefits were not restricted to small numbers of young people. The evidence from across the UK shows that the majority of young people who engaged with a YPF project benefited in these ways (developing new skills, meeting new people, feeling more confident and having fun). In the year four evaluation, project staff reported that each benefit was achieved by over half of all young people engaged with a project. For the majority of benefits, over three quarters of young people who engaged with a YPF project achieved the benefit. The vast majority of the small sample of young people who were interviewed as part of the evaluation in years four and five confirmed this, by reporting having experienced the range of benefits described.

3.48 While these benefits described are softer and intangible, they often lead to changes in the young person's behaviour or have an impact on the decisions they make, which can lead to more tangible and measurable benefits.

3.49 The young people reported that YPF positively impacted on a number of areas of their lives. In particular YPF activity has had a positive impact on young people's experience of and attitude towards school. In the year four survey, two thirds of young people reported enjoying school more, over half said they behaved better at school, and 40 per cent got better grades at school as a result of YPF. In year five YPF is continuing to have these benefits, with 48 per cent of young people surveyed reporting at least one of these benefits as a result of YPF.

3.50 A study carried out for the former Department for Children Schools and Families in 2007 found that having a positive attitude to school is a strong predictor of attainment levels, while a negative attitude to school is a strong predictor of truancing⁸. By helping young people to develop a more positive attitude to school, YPF projects have the potential to improve attainment levels and reduce the likelihood of a young person truancing.

3.51 In Wales, case study one, EMPHASIS, provides an intensive outreach programme to the most excluded 14 to 19 year olds, who are most at risk of homelessness. The case study gives an example of a young girl who was being bullied at school, and so stopped attending. By providing counselling and support to attend school, the project helped her to build her confidence to the point where she can attend school on her own every day. The young girl said "I don't care now. I go to school and I like it. It's fun". She has now applied to go to college when she finishes school.

3.52 A number of young people in the survey reported having been supported to access further and higher education and to access employment. These benefits can make an important contribution to improving skill levels (a key UK government priority) and reducing the number of young people who become NEET.

3.53 Encouragingly the evaluation found that there will be a lasting legacy in terms of the benefits for young people. For many, their experiences in YPF projects have been life changing. Young people who are no longer going to their YPF project report that they are still benefiting as a result of their activities. For example, young people commonly report that the confidence and skills they gained through their YPF project has helped them get involved in other activities or helped them to select the career paths they have chosen.

"It has changed my life for the better. I have learnt life skills, I have social skills, confidence, leadership skills, creativity and I feel empowered." (England, year five survey)

"I feel that it has genuinely changed my perspective on life. I have had lots of work experience there, it has given me lots of confidence, and a sense of self worth, which is very important. I would be in a very different situation if I had not gone there. I would not have gone to college." (England, year five survey)

"I have started a local theatre groupI am using the skills that I learnt at the project." (Scotland, year five survey)

⁸ DCSF (2008), Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 16 Year Olds: England 2007

“It has totally ingrained necessary life skills in me. It helped me to grow up and mature and set me up in good stead for the future.” (Scotland, year five survey)

“I am hoping to become a youth worker or a social worker. My GCSE grades were quite low and since being on this project I have done some courses in IT and English to get my points up so I can go to college or university to study.” (Northern Ireland, year five survey)

“I will stay off drugs cos I want to work and that and I haven't been in trouble for two years now.” (Wales, year five survey)

Benefits of active involvement in projects

3.54 Active involvement sat alongside and added an additional dimension to the projects' activities. It provided participants with the opportunity to further develop some of the intangible skills and attributes, such as confidence, motivation, and improved communication, that they developed through the project activity. Project workers and young people agreed that many of the benefits that young people got from active involvement were similar to those that they got from participation; however the extent of the impact was greater for involved young people.

3.55 This is because their experience was richer and they are exposed to more and greater challenges. For example, often actively involved young people had the opportunity to develop a range of skills by completing structured training in areas such as facilitation, negotiation, financial management, and committee roles and responsibilities; many young people reported gaining transferable leadership skills through taking on additional responsibility within the project; and actively involved young people often reported that they feel that they have a voice, can make a difference in their community and can give something back to other young people in the project. A number of young people reported that they will use their experience from involvement in projects to pursue a related career. They felt valued, empowered and in many cases their aspirations were raised.

3.56 As an illustration, one young participant in the Youth Arts Programme, (case study example two, year five [Northern Ireland]) reported that he had been recruited to the project through an outreach programme. After taking part in a number of activities, he joined the youth sub-group and is now pursuing a career in youth work, while supporting the project with its outreach activities. In his own words:

“It's been a really good experience; it enables you to be involved in a range of activities that you would never have the chance to do. It has given me confidence, the skills and training. I have organised concerts and events and I have obtained a range of qualifications including health and safety, first aid and suicide assist. I am now a trainee youth leader and I am going to college, studying youth work. This would have never been an option before joining the

project. I now assist the project with its outreach activities and in particular engaging young people”.

3.57 Young people who are actively involved report increased confidence as they realise just how much they are capable of; developing new skills, such as leadership and team working skills; and feeling good about themselves because they have been able to give something back to others:

“Because it showed like that I could be a leader, I think it gave me more confidence to do this”. (England, year four survey)

“I have gained so much: transferable skills, leadership skills. Not many people have the opportunity to have their voice heard and see the progress of a project like this.” (England, year five survey)

“Bit by bit I gained confidence and gained an education really by mixing and dealing with a lot of young people and learning about managing and organising. I do quite a lot of travelling to meetings, I do public speaking and I meet new people all the time”. (Scotland, year four survey)

“Lends itself for leadership. It gave me a lot of confidence and showed that if you set your mind to doing something it can be achieved.” (Scotland, year five survey)

“I realised what young people can achieve. Young people are on the same level as adults.” (Northern Ireland, year five survey)

“Self-esteem, confidence and team building skills for the future. I am much more confident of finding work now. This was very important to me.” (Wales, year five survey)

3.58 The more intensive experience, the formal training, and the sense of empowerment that actively involved young people accessed clearly brought significant benefits over and above that of being a participant. This demonstrates the importance of ensuring that projects have the capacity to support active involvement among as many of its young people as possible, and ensuring that all steps are taken to overcome barriers to active involvement.

Benefits of active involvement through small grants programmes and Local Area Panels

3.59 Active involvement of young people was central to the small grants programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Across these three programmes, 3,919 individual or groups of young people benefited from being the recipient of a grant to plan, deliver, manage and evaluate their own project.

3.60 Interviews with staff and young people found that this involvement had a positive impact on the young people. The impacts were wide ranging, but commonly included:

- Increased confidence.
- The development of practical skills such as budgeting, project management, organisational skills, group work and events management.
- Greater awareness of local and social issues.
- Developing relationships with local organisations.
- Becoming more active within the local community and pursuing further opportunities for active involvement, including undertaking volunteering opportunities and pursuing related career paths.
- Setting an example to peers who in turn became involved in these strands.

3.61 There were a number of benefits for the approximately 500 young people who were recruited to one of Scotland's 32 LAPs to make a recommendation on whether applications under the local projects strand should be successful or not.

3.62 The organisation that managed and delivered the LAP element of the Scotland programme, Volunteer Development Scotland, carried out a survey of 187 Panel Members and found that:

- 70 per cent of young people felt that their work on the LAP had made them feel part of the community.
- 51 per cent had accessed further opportunities such as volunteering or employment as a direct result of LAP involvement.⁹

3.63 Interviews with Panel Members found that getting involved in local decision making and giving something back to the community were important benefits for the young people.

Benefits for different groups of young people

3.64 Each of the countries has a focus on addressing disadvantage although each has identified a different set of priorities in relation to this, in line with the policy priorities in that country. The different priorities are explained in each country specific chapter of the report.

3.65 The vast majority of projects worked with young people from one or more disadvantaged group. Across all four countries the groups that projects most commonly worked with were those at risk of exclusion and those living in a deprived area. Projects also worked with young people:

- who are offenders, ex-offenders or at risk of offending
- with mental health issues
- with a physical or sensory disability
- living in rural areas

⁹ VDS (2008), "Big Lottery Fund Young People's Panels Evaluation", p.43-44

- who are young carers
- who are homeless
- from BME groups.

3.66 Some projects worked only with a specific target group, while others were open to all young people, including those from target groups. Evidence from the projects indicated that they were successful at engaging hard to reach groups in project activity.

3.67 This was achieved through awareness raising activity and work to establish good working relationships with those in a position to refer young people to YPF projects. Location was also found to be important and projects based themselves in disadvantaged areas or in rural areas if they wanted to target young people facing economic or rural deprivation. Some projects provided outreach activities and in some, peer recruitment proved to be an effective method of engaging young people in activity. This can be because young people, particularly more vulnerable ones, will often trust friends and peers as a source of information and advice more than they trust what they might see as a figure or organisation in authority. It is therefore important for any project to consider the mix of routes it can use to reach its target populations and who the trusted sources and opinion leaders are within communities.

3.68 Case study projects in each year of the evaluation reported that staff had the appropriate skills to engage with harder to reach young people. This was fundamental in reaching out to and maintaining the engagement of young people from hard to reach groups. It was highlighted by a number of projects. For example:

- The Signpost project, (case study example two, year five [Wales]), aimed to minimise the harm caused by young people using and experimenting with drugs and alcohol. They reported that having a young support team from varying backgrounds is important because, as one young person on this team reported: "kids can relate to us and they trust us. I think they are more wary of someone older".
- COZ, (case study example two, year five [Scotland]), worked with young people leaving care and one of its clients reported that the skills and personal attributes of the staff were key to its success. In particular staff respected and understood the young people, involved them in the development of activities and responded to their issues in a personal way.
- Me Time, (case study example two, year five [England]), worked with young carers, and the project staff reported that young people should be involved in staff recruitment to ensure that new staff are deemed approachable by the young people.

3.69 While the recruitment methods used were considered effective in reaching many hard to reach young people, project workers acknowledged that they may not have reached those who are 'hardest to reach'. This is a common challenge

faced by agencies that work with disadvantaged young people and is an area where efforts should continue to be focussed.

Benefits for projects

3.70 Projects have benefitted from YPF funding. The most significant benefits for projects have been financial stability, being helped to actively involve young people in their project, and improved links with new and existing partners.

Financial stability

3.71 YPF was a vital source of funding for the projects that received it. Without it, many would not have operated (40 per cent reported this in year three of the evaluation and 62 per cent reported this in year four). Some projects would have operated but on a smaller scale (45 per cent reported this in year three of the evaluation and 22 per cent reported it in year four) . YPF has therefore successfully achieved a significant amount of additionality, by funding activities that would not otherwise have been provided.

3.72 The vast majority of projects in all countries received more than half of their funding from YPF. This demonstrates that projects were highly dependent on YPF funding.

3.73 Funding was available over three years in England, for up to four years in Scotland and up to five in Wales and Northern Ireland, which is significantly longer than the one year funding that is often awarded to projects of the type funded through YPF. Projects valued the additional stability that this longer term funding provided. It allowed them to develop a more strategic approach to project delivery which resulted in a better standard of service. They could more effectively plan for the future and so improve the potential sustainability of their activities.

Building capacity for active involvement

3.74 Projects reported that YPF funding helped them to actively involve young people, and so YPF was successful in achieving this aim.

3.75 For the vast majority of projects, YPF helped them to support greater numbers of young people to be actively involved, to expand the role of active involvement within the project, and to give young people the skills they need to be actively involved. A smaller, but still significant percentage used YPF funding to give staff the necessary skills to support active involvement.

3.76 The evaluation fieldwork showed that the most common way that YPF achieved these benefits was by providing the funding necessary to employ additional staff to support activities, including active involvement activities

Partnership working

3.77 Links with partners improved in almost all projects as a result of YPF funding. Projects often worked in partnership with schools, voluntary organisations, community learning and development departments, social work and the police. The most common benefits of partnership working included:

- Shared knowledge and information, including access to additional expertise, skills and resources which enabled them to provide a holistic package of support to young people
- Joined up approach to service delivery which avoided duplication of resources and effort and ensured better utilisation of existing resources
- Enabling the projects to reach a wider group of young people and provide a holistic seamless package of support through cross referral.

3.78 In Wales, the development of effective partnerships was supported in a more formal way. Projects in Wales were required to fill gaps in local provision, and so all projects were linked to their local Children's and Young People's partnership, ensuring a more strategic approach to partnership working.

Benefits for communities

3.79 YPF projects had a direct and indirect positive impact on communities. Some projects were directly involved in positive community activity, such as young people delivering food parcels to older members of the community. While others had an indirect impact on the community by helping young people to be responsible citizens. As a result of both approaches, it is evident that YPF has benefited communities by reducing the likelihood of young people engaging in anti-social behaviour, by building active citizenship, and through improving relationships between young people and adults in the community so contributing to community cohesion.

Anti-social behaviour

3.80 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is an issue that has risen up the political agenda and is a source of public concern. In 2003 the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit found that over 66,000 reports of anti-social behaviour were made to agencies on one day¹⁰. The 2003-04 British Crime Survey (BCS) showed that over a quarter of the public perceive particular behaviours such as vandalism, graffiti, litter and teenagers hanging around as a problem in their local area, while 16 per cent of the public perceive high levels of anti-social behaviour in their local area¹¹. ASB has a significant cost attached to it, for example in 2004 a Home Office report estimated the cost of anti-social behaviour in England and Wales to be £3.4 billion per annum¹².

3.81 In the year four evaluation, a survey of 174 young people found that 31 (18 per cent) reported keeping out of trouble with the police as a result of YPF. This finding was replicated in the year five survey, with 20 per cent of the 180 young people who answered this question reporting that YPF had helped them to keep out of trouble with the police. The year four evaluation estimated an average cost of £160 per young person to engage young people in a YPF project, which

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr26.pdf>

suggests good value for money when considering the impact it can have on reducing ASB in communities.

3.82 YPF projects achieve these benefits in two ways. Firstly they provide alternative activities that divert young people away from negative, anti-social activities and secondly they support young people in their personal social development, which helps them to change their outlook and decide to make positive choices. 'Social Identity Theory' may help explain how this happens. This theory asserts that by bringing young people who do not normally socially interact together into a new group (such as a YPF project) the young people start to develop new social rules and behaviours appropriate to their new group¹³ and so the new in-group starts to assume the role of peer group. In other words, by bringing young people together into a new peer group with a positive focus, the YPF projects can displace the negative behaviours supported by established groups, gangs and friends.

3.83 The young people themselves explained their change in behaviour below:

"With going to the project it enabled me to stop doing what I was doing on the street - stop causing trouble, have more confidence in myself and speak up for other young people to get what they wanted. Important, because it enabled me to fulfil my true potential and bring out the real me. I am back on track to go down the right path. If it wasn't for the project I don't think I'd be here today, I'd be in a young offenders or out on the street in a gang". (England, year four survey)

"SOLE kept me on the straight and narrow. Without SOLE I would be in prison....generally getting in trouble." (England, year five case study one, SOLE)

"It stopped me from getting into trouble maybe. Gave me an interest and something to believe in". (Scotland, year four survey)

"I am always up in the park so I don't have time to be on the streets getting up to mischief". (Scotland, year four survey)

"Basically, with the understanding of everything we learnt about prisons and the criminal justice system and the consequences of knife crime and once I'd seen what had happened to these people I thought to myself I don't want to do this. So it's helped me acknowledge the consequences of all that stuff". (Wales, year four survey)

"Hopefully I won't get in any more trouble as I'm not going out drinking as much." (Wales, year five survey)

¹³ Tajfel, Henri; Turner, John (1979). "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict". in Austin, William G.; Worchel, Stephen. The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations.

Active citizenship

3.84 Many YPF projects helped young people to become more active citizens. As a result, members of the community benefitted from the positive activities undertaken by young people and it is likely that they are continuing to benefit. For example, one young person involved in the Scotland telephone survey described how their project provided a “Wave of Kindness”, where young people took food parcels to elderly people in their homes. These types of activities can help challenge the negative perceptions that adults can have of young people.

3.85 The telephone surveys of young people found that a third of those involved in the survey in year four and 15 per cent of those surveyed in year five had been helped by their project to get involved in community activity, while 29 per cent in year four and 20 per cent in year five stated that it had helped them to participate in volunteering.

3.86 It is estimated that each hour of volunteering equates to a £1.18 contribution to the economy¹⁴. Therefore investment in active citizenship through programmes like YPF has the potential to generate economic benefits. This type of activity is well aligned with the UK Government's Big Society agenda.

3.87 Young people reported that YPF helped them to become more active citizens because the investment in them made them feel valued. As a result, they wanted to give something back, often by helping other young people involved in the projects, or by taking part in activities that benefited the wider community.

Legacy

3.88 The evaluation evidence shows that a number of positive benefits were generated for young people, communities and projects as a result of YPF, but a significant number of projects have not continued or will not continue following the end of their YPF funding. The year four survey of projects found that 11 per cent of projects would not continue and a further 43 per cent were unsure if they would continue after their YPF funding ended. This is in part due to the economic climate which is having a negative impact on the funding sources available. If a substantial number of projects cease it will have a negative impact on YPF's legacy of continuing service delivery.

3.89 However, more positively, by offering significant investment over a three to five year funding period, YPF offered projects the opportunity to take a long term view when they were designing their activities. As a result, projects invested in young people, staff and partnerships which led to a significant legacy arising through the programme. As described earlier in this chapter, there are a number of long term benefits for young people as a result of the programme, and projects were able to develop a range of skills and expertise, and partnerships, which will enhance the quality of the services provided by the youth sector in the coming years, even if the number of services declines.

¹⁴ Ellis Paine, A. and Malmersjo, G. (2006) Short term volunteering: a blessing or a curse? IVR: London Involving young people

3.90 Throughout the evaluation there has been very limited evidence of projects developing sustainability plans, which has compounded the issue posed by the current economic situation. Many projects did not plan effectively for the future, and the majority were dependent wholly or significantly on grant funding. These are areas where future programmes could support a step change in organisations' thinking, by requiring project management to demonstrate how they are proposing to ensure project sustainability from an early stage, and encouraging innovative approaches to diversifying income streams to reduce reliance on grant funding.

Conclusions

3.91 YPF offered each individual country in the UK the opportunity to design a programme that reflected national policy priorities within an overall programme framework. While the detail of the programme design varied in each country, there were common themes running through the design in each country, such as an emphasis on social inclusion, engaging young people in their communities, actively involving young people in projects, and addressing the fundamental issues of health, education, safety and economic participation. These themes were commensurate with an effective programme for young people.

3.92 The YPF funding successfully created a programme that had extensive reach across the UK. In some areas, the number of grants awarded was disproportionately lower than in other areas. This occurred despite the fact that applications were monitored and efforts made to boost the number of applications in areas where they were low.

3.93 Across the programme young people were involved at different levels and stages of the decision making process. Young people were involved in decision making committees in each country. They were also involved in decision making on small grants programmes in England and Northern Ireland and in Scotland young people were involved through the Local Area Panels. Each of these mechanisms provided meaningful involvement opportunities for young people at the programme level, and provided members with a range of skills including communication, negotiation, decision making and team working. They also provided opportunities for young people to develop an understanding of issues affecting their community and in Scotland, to gain a qualification.

3.94 The YPF application process was effective although future processes could be designed to be more inclusive of young people by making sure that all of the information is provided in formats and using language that is accessible and communicates effectively with young people. The actual process for developing the idea and completing the application should also be reviewed to make sure it is "youth proofed" and consideration be given to accepting applications in a range of formats and media for example, film or storyboards could form some component of the application.

3.95 In the vast majority of projects, active involvement of young people grew over the duration of the projects. Projects consulted with young people during the

application stage, however once the project was established, active involvement reduced due to lack of capacity in the staff, project or young people. While most projects overcome this issue over time, this early stage in project delivery was the key point when projects needed the most support to ensure active involvement.

3.96 Regardless of the specific aims of the country programme or the specific aims of the project, the evaluation has demonstrated that simply bringing young people together to engage in a positive activity brings a range of benefits for most young people. It builds their confidence and gives them the opportunity to develop positive social relationships which impact on many areas of their lives.

3.97 YPF generated significant soft benefits, such as improved confidence, meeting new people, having fun and developing new skills. Often these soft benefits can lead to changes in behaviour, which can in turn result in tangible outcomes. Positive changes in attitude and behaviour (as a result of confidence, skills and feeling listened to) help young people to establish better relationships with adults and peers. As a result, projects helped to bring about outcomes including:

- Improved engagement with school
- Improved behaviour in school
- Reduced anti-social behaviour
- Taking up employment, training, or further learning
- More active citizenship.

3.98 These types of outcomes emerged across all countries and specific examples are provided in the country chapters which follow.

3.99 Young people who were actively involved experienced the same type of benefits, but to a greater degree as a result of the more intensive experience, the formal training, and the sense of empowerment that was part of active involvement. This shows the importance of projects having the capacity to support active involvement for as many young people as possible and addressing any barriers to active involvement.

3.100 A good proportion of projects successfully reached harder to reach young people and staff reported that the projects had managed to work with young people from these groups. In some cases they had achieved this by specifically targeting hard to reach groups and in others by providing open access to activities. In the absence of specific monitoring data it is not possible to give a quantitative assessment of reach in to the hard to reach groups. More specific activities aimed at engaging hard to reach young people could have meant that the programme worked with more of the young people who, arguably, have the most to gain.

3.101 The most significant benefits for projects have been financial stability, being helped to actively involve young people, and improved links with partners.

In Wales, projects were required to link with their local Children's and Young People's partnership to fill gaps in local provision, which ensures a more strategic approach to partnership working. This approach is an example that could be replicated in other countries, using appropriate local infrastructures where they currently exist (for example Integrated Children's Services in Scotland) or structures that may be developed in the future.

3.102 During the funding period, YPF projects had a positive impact on communities by engaging young people directly in positive activities to benefit their community and by developing their sense of being an active and responsible citizen. This attitudinal change is likely to bring lasting benefits to the communities in which the young people live and to help build sustainable community cohesion.

3.103 By providing significant long term funding, YPF ensured a lasting legacy, as it enabled projects to invest in young people, staff and partnerships. This resulted in long term benefits for young people and has enhanced the quality of youth services in the medium to long term which in turn will benefit more young people outside of YPF

3.104 The main reason why some projects have not continued post-YPF is the lack of available funding, poor sustainability planning and over-dependence on grant funding which has compounded this issue. This should be addressed in future programmes by including sustainability plans with specific milestones in the original application and making an assessment of these integral to the funding decision making process. Progress against these plans would then form part of the project monitoring process. There is also the potential for learning and knowledge transfer activities at an early stage to provide projects with support and encouragement to secure their future beyond the funding period.

3.105 Investing in projects that deliver a variety of activities, to a high standard and that give young people a say in how those activities are delivered, YPF has helped thousands of young people across the UK to achieve a wide range of benefits. For many young people, these benefits have been life changing. YPF has been successful in delivering long term benefits for young people, projects and communities.

3.106 It is clear from the evidence that involvement in appraising applications and making awards can bring significant benefits to Young People. In future programmes, consideration should be given to the mechanisms that can be used to make sure that young people can be involved in the decisions. It is a model that could also be applied to other target groups or geographically focused communities.

3.107 The findings from young people and projects show that relatively small amounts of funding can have a significant impact on young people. Individuals or groups of young people benefited from being the recipients of a grant to plan, deliver, manage and evaluate their own project. As a result young people benefited from increased confidence the development of practical skills; involvement in their communities (active citizenship) and providing positive

examples to other young people. This is a key learning point for BIG and other funders. This approach should be considered in the design of future funding programmes, for example including a small grants strand in programmes.

3.108 Active involvement grew over time as organisations, staff and young people developed their capacity. YPF was pivotal in developing the necessary skills to enable staff to support young people to be actively involved which in turn led to skills development in the young people. In doing this, YPF has helped make a cultural change in the youth work sector and has given significant numbers of young people the opportunity to be actively engaged in projects that affect them and develop new skills that will bring sustained benefits.

3.109 Young people, particularly those who are vulnerable or hard to reach, often do not trust people or organisations that they perceive to be in authority or to have a particular agenda. Peer recruitment and word of mouth can be a very effective recruitment mechanism. By creating a range of recruitment methods and routes in through trusted intermediaries, projects can maximise their engagement with young people and more effectively reach those who might otherwise choose not to participate.

3.110 Projects that gather feedback from young people are giving them a voice and if the feedback is acted on, it can make young people feel listened to, empowered and satisfied. This is more likely to sustain their active involvement and impact on their confidence and sense of being an active citizen who can participate in their community

4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN ENGLAND

Introduction

Background

4.1 This chapter presents the cumulative findings of the evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) programme in England over a five year period from 2006 to 2011. It presents a synthesis of the findings set out in the previous four annual reports (2006 to 2010), along with findings from the fieldwork carried out in 2010 - 11. The 2010 -11 fieldwork involved in depth qualitative case study visits to four projects, including interviews with staff and young people, and a telephone survey of 25 young people. The chapter explores:

- The background to the programme, including its design and fit with national policy.
- The set up of YPF and its funded projects.
- The active involvement of young people.
- Outcomes from the programme for young people, projects and the wider community and the sustainability of these.
- The YPF legacy.

Programme design

4.2 The Young People's Fund (YPF) in England provided £77.6 million to support projects working with young people aged 11 to 25. The YPF programme in England aimed to engage young people in all stages of projects and programmes, achieve the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes (discussed subsequently) and make a difference to the community.

4.3 The programme comprised three strands:

- National Grants: £27.6 million to support projects of national significance. These provided a new product or service or provided an existing one in an innovative way. Grants of up to £5 million were available for a maximum of three years.
- Grants to Organisations: £40 million available to voluntary and community groups to run local projects that involved young people in their development and operation. Grants of between £5,000 and £150,000 were available for a maximum of three years.
- The Big Boost: £10 million awarded as small grants directly to young people for projects that would make a difference in their communities. Grants of between £250 and £5,000 were available for a period of one year.

4.4 In May 2005, BIG allocated an additional £68 million through YPF2. Local and national projects were supported with funds allocated between the two

strands to reflect quality and demand. The YPF2 programme was not part of this evaluation although important lessons from YPF1 were considered in the design of YPF2.

4.5 The specific aims and objectives of YPF in England were to:

- Engage and involve young people in all stages of projects, from design and development through implementation and evaluation.
- Achieve the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes of:
 - being healthy
 - staying safe
 - enjoying and achieving
 - making a positive contribution
 - economic wellbeing.

4.6 The programme prioritised working with disadvantaged young people or young people facing difficulties in life. Projects were expected to satisfy one or both of the following requirements:

- Help disadvantaged young people to come together to enjoy and benefit from activities.
- Create a better understanding of disadvantage among young people.

4.7 These themes ran across all strands of the programme in England.

Policy context

4.8 The YPF programme in England was closely aligned to the outcomes set out in Every Child Matters (ECM); the comprehensive programme for reform of children's services, launched in 2003. The aims and outcomes for YPF in England mirrored the ECM outcomes that formed the focus of national policy.

4.9 Across England policy priorities for children and young people centred on the provision of holistic and joined up services that would improve life chances in and outside of the school environment. The principles of Every Child Matters remained the foundations of policy for children and young people over the course of the funding period as reflected in the Children's Plan (2007) and Aiming High for Young People (2007).

4.10 YPF projects successfully demonstrated a contribution to ECM outcomes. The largest numbers of projects cited making a positive contribution and staying safe as their primary aims. The ECM outcomes are not however mutually exclusive. In the vast majority of cases projects demonstrated a contribution in more than one area and achievement of some outcomes often led to others. Table 4.1 summarises the primary outcomes identified for approved projects:

Table 4.1: Project alignment with Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes

Outcome	Grants to Organisations	National Grants
Making a Positive Contribution	154	8
Staying Safe	109	14
Enjoying and Achieving	59	3
Being Healthy	31	0
Economic Well Being	25	0
Not stated	7	2

Source: BIG 2009

4.11 For many YPF projects the funding period had concluded by the time the new coalition government took office in May 2010. Indications are that the principles of YPF and the changes it helped bring about will support the strategic objectives of the coalition government in key areas, particularly in encouraging active citizenship and addressing disadvantage. These are discussed in turn below.

4.12 **Encouraging active citizenship:** There is evidence that, for many young people, YPF activity was a catalyst to help facilitate community involvement and active citizenship required to deliver the Big Society agenda, and for enabling local young people to identify and address local issues.

4.13 Although the Every Child Matters terminology and specific reference to the five outcomes has been replaced in policy statements the government remains committed to 'helping children achieve more'.

4.14 In their programme for Government, the coalition speaks of training a new generation of community organisers and introducing a National Citizen Service to provide young people with an opportunity to develop the skills needed to be active citizens and encourage people from different groups to play an active role in their community.

4.15 The involvement of services users is also reflected in the proposed reforms to children's services and the health service. Specifically:

- Following the Positive for Youth summit in March 2011, the government has invited comments on discussion papers to ensure that young people and those working with young people have an opportunity to shape policy. Draft proposals include refocusing provision towards early intervention and targeted support for the unemployed.
- Proposed reforms to the NHS are intended to bring about greater public accountability and patient involvement.

4.16 **Addressing disadvantage:** Going forward there will be a continued focus on addressing disadvantage. Emerging policy looks set to include:

- Funding a premium for disadvantaged pupils, from outside the schools budget, to support a positive learning experience and increased attainment¹⁵.
- Improving access to preventative healthcare, particularly in deprived areas, to overcome health inequalities
- Recognition that alternative education approaches, including vocational studies, are important for sections of the population and that clear progression routes to both continued education and employment are required¹⁶.
- Introduction of a new Child Poverty Strategy to support the most vulnerable in society and make work pay to improve life chances. Indicators to assess progress include teenage pregnancy rates, youth offending and gaps in educational attainment¹⁷.
- The Spending Review placed priority on improving the life chances of children and the protection of vulnerable families, at a time of reduction of the nation's fiscal deficit¹⁸.

4.17 Although delivery of coalition government policy remains at an early stage, there are positive signs that the objectives of the YPF and the legacy it leaves behind will remain highly relevant.

Setting up YPF

Background

4.18 The YPF programme was open and projects invited to submit applications between November 2005 and November 2007. Across England 412 projects submitted a successful application and received funding for their proposed activities.

4.19 A total of 385 projects were funded under Grants to Organisations and 27 under the National Grants strands. Grants to Organisations totalled £38,804,908 and National Grants £27,080,575. Awards ranged from £7,350 to the upper limit of £150,000 under the Grants to Organisations strand and from £165,926 to £2,237,187 under the National Grants strand.

¹⁵ The Coalition; Our Programme for Government, May 2010 available at: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/coalition-documents>

¹⁶ The Wolfe Review of Vocational Education, Government Response, May 2011 available at: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/w/wolf%20review%20of%20vocational%20education%20%20government%20response.pdf>

¹⁷ Department for Education, A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives, April 2011 available at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208061>

¹⁸ HM Treasury, Spending Review, November 2010 available at: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spend_index.htm

Reach of the programme

4.20 Activity was delivered across England. The number and value of awards per region under the Grants to Organisations strand is summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Regional profile of Grants to Organisations

Region	Number of projects	Value of awards
North West	63	£7,153,482
London	55	£6,142,238
Yorkshire and Humber	47	£4,891,019
South East	41	£4,344,887
West Midlands	39	£4,467,722
South West	38	£2,628,341
East	37	£2,849,379
East Midlands	37	£3,262,535
North East	28	£3,065,305

4.21 The North West region had both the highest number of projects and largest financial award; accounting for 16 per cent of awards and 18 per cent of the funding allocation. London also had a significant programme of activities. Activity in the North East was more limited. This reflects concentrations of young people across England and high concentrations of deprivation in those areas receiving the highest awards.

4.22 Award values per head of population¹⁹ ranged from £2.98 in the East of England region to £6.46 in the North East. Across all regions the award per head of population (for young people aged 11 to 25) averaged £4.24 through the Grants to Organisations strand. Spend per beneficiary averaged approximately £150 across the Grants to Organisations and National Grants strands.

Meeting the programme aims

4.23 Across England a diverse range of activities were supported. This allowed a wide range of young people aged 11 to 25 to benefit. The broad and largely interrelated outcomes of YPF in England meant that many projects demonstrated a contribution in more than one area. In year two the evaluation reported that²⁰:

- Almost all projects helped young people to 'enjoy and achieve' and to 'make a positive contribution'.
- Three quarters supported young people to 'be healthy' and 'be safe'.
- Almost half supported young people to 'achieve economic wellbeing'.

4.24 Examples of project activity in each area included:

- **Enjoying and achieving:** Projects that reported a contribution in this area often used recreational and leisure activities, such as arts or sports based activities, to secure the engagement of young people. Many of these

¹⁹ 2001 Census data, young people aged 11 to 25 available online from NOMIS

²⁰ Based on survey of 283 projects in year two

projects also had underlying aims such as improving employment and education outcomes or reducing social exclusion. For example, Hub4 (case study example 3.1, year two [England]) worked with young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. The project engaged young people in arts based activities that equipped them with personal, social and life skills necessary to succeed in their future careers. Young people took part in accredited training to raise awareness of opportunities in the arts and media sector. The project culminated in a performance by young people at the BBC Big Blast event.

- **Making a positive contribution:** Projects helped young people to make a positive contribution by supporting and providing volunteer opportunities, by raising awareness of pertinent social issues and supporting community activities. For example, case study example nine in year one highlighted the activity of a project working with young people in an area of economic and social deprivation. The project used a voucher scheme as an incentive for young people to do voluntary work in the local community; litter picking, maintaining grounds, gardening and cleaning graffiti. Staff reported that young people developed great pride in their work and actively discouraged others from undoing it by recruiting them into the scheme (case study example nine, year one [England]).
- **Being healthy:** Among those projects which helped young people to be healthy, activities often focused on development of soft skills, confidence and self-esteem and participating in enjoyable activities in the presence of a positive peer group. In this way projects promoted positive mental health and well being. Projects also contributed to physical health and well-being through the provision of information, advice and education on health related issues. For example, No Limits provided information, advice and counselling for young people to explore the issues affecting their lives and make informed decisions (case study example 3.4, year two [England]). Similarly, the Bridge Project worked with young asylum seekers and refugees. Activity involved health workshops which provided health advice and information, and activities around healthy eating and cooking (see paragraph 3.30, year two [England]).
- **Staying safe:** Projects supported young people to stay safe in a variety of ways. For many this aim was achieved simply by engaging young people in positive activities in a safe environment. Other projects focused directly on safety concerns. For example, Peerlink equipped young people with the skills and confidence to tackle conflict in their own lives and their local communities by training young people to act as peer mediators. The training equipped young people to use mediation as a means of dealing with situations where they or others could be harmed, through for example bullying or anti social behaviour. Mediation techniques can be used to put an end to these situations at an early stage before they escalate into much more serious issues (case study 3.7, year two [England]).

- **Achieve economic well-being:** This outcome was not frequently cited as the primary aim of project activity. That is not to say that projects did not contribute. Indeed economic wellbeing was often an anticipated benefit for young people in the long term. Projects often worked with young people who were some distance away from economic wellbeing and focused on addressing the more immediate concerns and issues they faced. By providing accredited learning opportunities, developing the skills of young people, promoting community participation and raising aspirations, the majority of projects were contributing to the future economic wellbeing of their young participants.

4.25 BIG grants officers interviewed in year three felt that new, high profile and innovative projects had been supported by YPF. However, they also reported some challenges in effectively monitoring the impacts of activity. The lack of SMART objectives and the broad programme outcomes that were set at the outset were considered the main reasons for this.

Who benefits from YPF?

4.26 The year four evaluation reported that approximately 446,612 young people had been engaged by projects supported under the Grants to Organisations and National Grants strands.

4.27 Addressing disadvantage was a priority for the YPF in England. The majority of projects felt that they had actively and successfully targeted disadvantaged groups.

4.28 Almost two thirds of projects (61 per cent) reported that they had reached young people living in deprived areas and over half (56 per cent) were engaging young people at risk of exclusion. Other significant groups included offenders/ex-offenders/those at risk of offending (38 per cent) and BME groups (28 per cent)²¹.

4.29 Although there was evidence of some targeted activity, many YPF projects were open to all. This allowed a wide range of young people from across the country to benefit and contributed to programme aims by bringing together disadvantaged young people with other young people to enjoy activities and creating a better understanding of disadvantage among young people.

4.30 Project staff reported that peer recruitment and word of mouth recommendation are particularly effective when engaging with hard to reach groups. This can be because young people, particularly vulnerable and marginalised young people, will often trust friends and peers as a source of information and advice more than adults and those deemed to be in a position of authority.

Involvement of young people at programme level

4.31 The active involvement of young people was core to the vision of YPF. Through active involvement BIG hoped to increase the impact of YPF for young

²¹ Based on a survey of 207 projects in year four

people and achieve a legacy from the funding as a result of increased skills for young people, increased capacity in the youth sector and the promotion of activity citizenship and community involvement.

4.32 Young people's involvement was built into the structure and operation of the programme at the national level. Young people were involved in decision making as part of the national committee and awards were distributed directly to young people who had identified a project idea through the Big Boost; a partnership made up of a nation of youth organisations led by UnLtd.

4.33 Young people were involved in the operation of the Big Boost as the key decision makers at the application stage. Two youth panels met on a monthly basis to make decisions on project applications. In the first year of the evaluation, a time of significant delivery for the Big Boost, 24 young people sat on the panels and representatives from each also sat on the management steering committee of the Big Boost.

4.34 To become a panel member, young people were required to complete an application and an interview. This process was viewed as a positive experience and not one that was off putting or a barrier to participation.

4.35 BIG and the award partners were flexible in their approach to involving young people. This ensured that the roles could be developed to maximise the impact of young people's involvement. The panels focused initially on grant allocation decisions. As a result of feedback from young people their role was later expanded to include provision of advice and guidance for young people setting up and running a project and support for young people to link in with other YPF projects.

4.36 Panel participants were also involved in decision making for the Grants to Organisations strand through YouthBank UK.

4.37 The benefits of youth involvement through the national committee, the Big Boost and youthbank included:

- Young people brought their own perspectives to the decision making process. They highlighted what was important to them and their views on what was important to other young people. This allowed the assessment of grant applications from the perspective of the beneficiaries. Young people and award partners felt that this improved the process and resulted in funding being allocated to projects that best articulated and met the needs and wants of young people.
- Young people who had sat on the panels and committees spoke of positive and lasting benefits as a result of their involvement. Young people benefited from the training they received and developed skills for their future careers including team working, communication and decision making. One young person interviewed in year three commented that, in job interviews people had been impressed by her involvement in the panel.

- Young people who received an award were responsible for delivering and evaluating their project. This promoted the development of skills including communication, organisation, problem solving, decision making, financial and project management and responsibility. Many of these were similar to those reported by panel and committee members. Young people also benefited from networking and involvement with other projects (facilitated by the panels). They developed a greater awareness of local issues affecting young people and gained experience of working in the third sector. Across the years young people commented on how these skills and experiences have had a positive impact on their future employment and training prospects.

Working with BIG

4.38 Overall, funded projects in England (as in the rest of the UK) were satisfied with the processes in place for working with BIG. This included application processes and the processes for ongoing reporting and grant management.

4.39 The only real criticism that was levelled by projects was that the application process (at around six to eight weeks) was lengthy when trying to maintain the engagement of young people. This resulted in applications being largely completed by project workers rather than young people; in year two approximately 40 per cent of projects reported that they were led exclusively or predominantly by an adult at application and development stage.

4.40 In saying this projects understood that rigorous processes had to be in place for the allocation of substantial grants and the process employed by BIG was considered more efficient than many comparator programmes.

4.41 Project workers interviewed in case study research suggested that alternative formats could facilitate involvement of young people in the development and set up of projects. For example filmed applications which allowed young people to articulate their thoughts and feeling may be useful. Other suggestions included grants officers visiting the projects to discuss ideas with young people directly, rather than relying on a written submission. Where written elements are necessary BIG and projects themselves should consider the type of support needed for young people to take a greater role, for example support with writing skills.

Active Involvement

Ways in which young people were actively involved

4.42 As previously discussed, the active involvement of young people was embedded in the operation of YPF. Young people's involvement was also a requirement at project level and it was promoted from the outset. All applications for the National Grants and Grants to Organisations had to demonstrate that young people would be engaged and involved in all stages; from design and development through implementation and on to evaluation.

4.43 The active and meaningful involvement of young people was central to decisions on whether a project was funded. Where processes for involving young people were not evident applications would be rejected. This demonstrated the commitment of BIG to this central theme of YPF.

4.44 What was less clear at the outset was the level and nature of involvement that was expected from projects. The emphasis was on some form of involvement throughout but it was not a requirement for young people to be involved in every stage nor was it a requirement for projects to be young people led.

4.45 Project surveys showed that young people played an important role in developing project ideas in the early phases. At this stage involvement was generally through informal consultation (82 per cent) and through structured surveys to identify needs and delivery options (64 per cent). These methods allow projects to gather information from a wide range of young people, relatively easily and quickly²².

4.46 Some projects also used methods intended to gather more in depth information from a smaller number of young people. For example, 58 per cent of projects reported that young people had been consulted through a structured focus group and 46 per cent involved young people on a management or steering group when developing ideas.

4.47 Some higher level and innovative approaches to young people's involvement in project development were also evident. Examples are illustrated below:

Project example: Make it Happen

Make it Happen assisted young people, particularly those living in the more deprived or rural areas of north west Leeds, to access funding, stakeholders or potential partners to develop local projects that would benefit young people and their communities. Young people who were part of Make it Happen received training in consultation techniques to enable them to engage their peers and find out what they wanted and needed from the project. This information was used to inform the development of the funding application (case study example 3.9, year two [England]).

Project example: Hub4

Hub4 (discussed previously) involved young people in the recruitment of their national co-ordinator. In this way young people ensured that the values and ideas of the co-ordinator matched their expectations for the project right from the outset (see paragraph 3.54 'Development of application and project', year two [England]).

4.48 In England (as in other countries) the level and nature of active involvement increased and changed over time. Involvement typically increased as projects moved to delivery stages. In year two 16 per cent of projects reported

²² Based on a survey of 283 YPF projects in year two.

that they were delivered exclusively or predominantly by young people. Although data is not directly comparable, by year four this had increased to 27 per cent, indicating an upward trend in the role taken by young people.

4.49 Young people found it easier and more interesting to shape delivery rather than the project development and application. An interesting example of how young people were involved in project delivery came from Leading our Lives, run by the Fostering network (case study example 3, year three [England]).

4.50 In this case young people from the target group were employed by the project to deliver its activity. The project worked with young people who had experience of the care system; those who had been in care or the sons or daughters of foster carers. The project aimed to help them shape the delivery of fostering services in England. Sessional workers (aged 18 to 25) and assistant workers (aged 16-25) were recruited to organise and deliver activities. Activities included panel training to provide young people with the skills they needed to become an independent fostering panel member for a local authority or a fostering provider, campaigning to improve the lives of children in care, the launch of a newsletter (Revo) and a film about stigma surrounding children in care.

4.51 Case studies showed that young people continued to shape projects once they became operational. Young people often shared their ideas for the project through the completion of feedback forms and informal discussion. This allowed projects to involve the full spectrum of young people without being over onerous or interfering with their activities.

4.52 Although there were challenges, project staff recognised the importance of involving young people in planning and feeding back on activities. They said:

“Projects that just open the doors don’t survive... they close. You need to listen to young people”

“We didn’t set anything up until young people requested it.”

4.53 Given the focus of the YPF on involvement, young people’s role in project management was relatively limited. This was particularly evident in the early stages but did persist throughout the evaluation.

4.54 In year one the evaluation reported that young people were not generally actively involved in project management and that a cultural shift was needed. In year three 12 per cent of projects reported that project management was led by young people. In a further 20 per cent of cases there was an even split between young people and staff. While involvement in project management certainly increased, it fell short of the aspirations of BIG at the outset.

4.55 Where young people were involved in project management activities, this tended to be through youth forums’ or steering groups. An example was provided by Youth Action North East (YANE) (case study example 4, year three [England])

were young people in campaign teams organised themselves and their activities throughout the year. Young people drew on support from the Regional Participation Team and obtained advice from an advisory group of professionals. Campaign activity of YANE was overseen by a young person's steering group.

4.56 Overall, approaches to active involvement were diverse and mixed. While some projects were specifically designed to ensure active involvement of young people in all elements of project design, delivery and management (for example SOLE, case study example one, year five [England]), others incorporated active involvement as part of wider programmes of activity. These included Me Time (case study example two, year five [England]) where young people determined programmes of activity.

4.57 The evaluation identified some barriers to active involvement. These included:

- The capacity of young people to be involved due to limited confidence, communication skills and motivation to drive projects.
- Access issues, including lack of transport, and concerns about safety when travelling to the project.
- Project staff did not feel they had the capacity or skills to provide the support required by young people (especially in the early days).
- Active involvement may not appropriate for all young people

4.58 Although these emerged as issues, in most cases they were not considered significant barriers. In overcoming the first two barriers issues projects reported that they allowed young people time to build their confidence and supported them to develop the necessary skills to move into a more involved role when they were ready. Where access was an issue some projects provided taxis to ensure that young people are not travelling alone in the dark or over long distances, or they ensured that the young people had access to a lift either from parents or staff.

4.59 A further challenge was around the capacity of staff to involve young people. Some staff felt they did not have the skills required to support young people. The YPF has been a significant driver in increasing the capacity of organisations to involve young people in an effective and meaningful way; 94 per cent of projects reported this in year four.

4.60 In England the active involvement of young people was supported by Participation Works. In March 2007 BIG provided funding for six leading children's and young people's organisations to support YPF projects in this area. The consortium provided expert advice to any project looking to give young people a voice. In year two the evaluation reported limited uptake of this support; 13 per cent of surveyed projects had used the support with a further 24 per cent stating an intention to access it in the future. In year three just over a third of surveyed projects had accessed the service. This included nine per cent that said

they intended to use it again. The most commonly used services were Hear by Right Workshops, guides to participation and best practice mini guides.

4.61 In spite of projects reporting that barriers to involvement were not significant, this does not mean that greater levels of involvement were not possible. With more stringent requirements around involvement at the assessment stage and more guidance and support, YPF could have challenged projects further, generating more innovative methods of involvement, higher levels of involvement and greater impacts at programme level.

4.62 BIG recognised and accepted this and attempted to embed youth involvement further in the successor to the YPF. All YPF2 projects had the opportunity to access Participation Works support from the outset.

4.63 For some projects, the active involvement of young people was not an immediate priority. In cases where projects were working with young people facing multiple and complex issues, for example drug or alcohol abuse and family issues, active involvement at a project level was viewed as secondary to addressing these.

4.64 Project staff emphasised the need to ensure young people were ready to be actively involved. An active role is not suitable or welcomed by all young people and many will need ongoing support if their involvement is to be meaningful. Active involvement and the role of the YPF was a specific focus of the evaluation in year three. Further detail on this topic can be found in the year three report. This is available online from the Big Lottery Fund at http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/ypf_final_year3_involvement_chapter-2.pdf

Numbers of young people actively involved

4.65 Where the previous section considered methods of involvement, it is also important to consider the numbers of young people who played an active role.

4.66 An estimated 446,612 young people took part in YPF funded activity. In year four a survey of project workers reported that around 7 per cent of these young people were actively involved. While this is a significant number of young people, the proportion is perhaps lower than would be expected given YPF's focus.

4.67 There is evidence that different projects have different views of what constitutes active involvement. Survey findings presented as part of the year four evaluation²³ considered the different ways in which young people were involved and the scale of this involvement. The responses were scaled up to give an indication of involvement across the YPF. It showed that young people were most commonly involved in consultation activities rather than direct project delivery and management. Estimates suggested that around 15 per cent of young people provided structured feedback on project activities, for example through feedback sessions, surveys and evaluation forms. Around nine per cent

²³ Figures stated here are higher than the overall total. This suggests that projects exclude those providing feedback from figures for active involvement.

of young people also provided informal feedback, for example informal discussions with staff. This is higher than the number of young people reported as being actively involved. This suggests that these processes were starting to be embedded in the working practice of YPF projects and were not considered as specific forms of involvement.

4.68 This was reinforced by findings from young people who generally reported being happy with their level of involvement. In year four 70 per cent of young people surveyed said that they did not consider themselves to be actively involved in their project and were happy with this; these young people did recognise provision of feedback as involvement per se and it was not viewed as a task or chore.

4.69 Involvement in other activities (where it was highlighted) included relatively small numbers of young people. Projects reported that:

- Between two and three per cent of young people were involved in designing elements of project activity, delivering elements of project activity, active involvement in the recruitment of young people into the project and managing elements of project activity.
- Just under two percent of young people took part in youth forums or youth steering groups to influence project activity.
- A small percentage of young people represented their peers on a management committee (0.3 per cent) and were involved in the recruitment of staff (0.2 per cent).

Achieving programme outcomes

Introduction

4.70 The YPF was intended to address disadvantage and engage a cross section of young people in activities that met their individual needs. Funded activities were diverse and brought about a range of benefits that have been detailed over the five years of the evaluation

4.71 The absence of strict criteria and monitoring requirements means that the assessment is based on surveys of young people and project workers, case study interviews and practical examples and anecdotal evidence.

4.72 Benefits accrued to young people, to the projects that supported them and the communities in which they were based. Key findings are reported below.

Benefits for participants

4.73 From the outset project workers identified a range of benefits to young people as a result of participation in YPF activity. These included increased confidence, improved relationships, increased engagement, improved communication skills and increased achievement and learning. Eighty per cent or more of projects reported these benefits in year two.

4.74 The views of project workers were in tune with those of young people themselves. Young people reported that prior to participating in project activity they had expectations of the types of benefits they might get. These included developing new skills, learning new things and meeting new people²⁴.

4.75 Young people found that in reality these expectations were exceeded. Over 90 per cent of young people reported that as a result of YPF activity they:

- met new people
- became more confident
- developed new skills
- learnt new things
- had fun
- felt better about themselves.

4.76 These findings were reflected in quotes from young participants:

“It made a big difference. I made new friends, I got confident and it got me out of the house.”

“I’ve made new friends of different ages, learnt leadership skills, got more confidence, communicating better with people and helping other people in the community.”

“I find it easier to express myself. I’m more confident and I’ve made some good friends.”

“I feel so much more confident and don’t self loathe anymore. I realise now that I’m not the only one with issues.”

4.77 These benefits were reported by different groups of young people who were involved in very different types of activity. They are not mutually exclusive and one often appears to lead to another.

4.78 This highlights that there is a common set of skills and attributes that are highly valued by young people; even those who are living very different lives. It also demonstrates the success of projects in identifying and meeting the individual needs of young people in a way that contributes to these overarching needs.

4.79 Project workers and young people anticipated that many of the benefits they achieved would be long lasting and would impact on their lives beyond project. This was investigated in later years of the evaluation and there is evidence that participation in YPF activity has had a positive impact on the way in which young people approach other elements of their lives. Key findings include

²⁴ Based on a survey of 90 young people in year four and 25 young people in year five

a positive impact on school experience and engagement with education, achievement of positive post school destinations, reduced anti-social behaviour and risk of offending, increased community participation and active citizenship. The following section discusses each of these impacts in turn. Findings relating to community participation and active citizenship are discussed subsequently under 'Benefits for communities'.

- **Positive impact on school experience and engagement with education:** Young people reported that, as a result of their participation, they enjoyed school more (58 per cent), improved their behaviour (46 per cent), got better grades at school (31 per cent) and were encouraged to stay on longer at school (12 per cent).

Young people reported these benefits as a result of improved confidence and an ability to form and maintain positive relationships with their peers and with adults. Examples of project activity which helped to re-engage young people with school are illustrated below:

Project example: The Talent Studio

This example was provided by the Talent Studio, run by the Media Trust in partnership with Fairbridge and Catch22 (case study example three, year five [England]). The project gave young people the skills, support and resources to produce their own short films about issues that affected them. The aim of the project was to develop self-esteem, personal and social skills and move them back into positive destinations (including returning to school). Young people worked towards an NVQ qualification. In some instances this was the first formal accreditation that the young people had achieved. Staff felt that this broadened their horizons and made them believe that they could achieve more. This was considered a significant motivating factor for setting personal goals, committing to education and improving their behaviour. The Talent Studio model is believed to work well in a variety of settings. The key feature is in linking disadvantaged young people into high quality training as a path back to school, into college or (in some cases) towards employment.

Project example: Local Community Radio

A further example was provided in year one by a youth project linked to a local community radio (case study example six, year one [England]). The project developed an alternative curriculum for young people whose behaviour meant they had been or were at risk of exclusion. The course involved radio broadcast training and allowed young people to produce their own programmes to broadcast on the community station. Young people developed IT skills, communication, confidence and team working abilities. They worked towards accreditation through the ASDAN Personal and Social Development programme (Bronze or Silver). This facilitated entry to GCSE courses. Inclusion on the project provided an incentive for increased engagement with school. For example, workers presented anecdotal evidence of a participant whose inclusion was conditional upon

improved behaviour at school. At the time of the case study visit staff reported that, spurred on by the alternative programme, the participant had successfully modified and controlled his behaviour in school and that he was progressing well in the project.

Comments from young people involved in other projects also highlighted the role of YPF activity in improving their experience of school. Young people said:

“It's helped me get along with the teachers so I enjoy school more because I get treated better”

“I find it easier to express myself. I'm more confident and I've made some good friends”

“Because I've learnt to keep my temper under control, not to cry all the time, and control my mood swings I get on better now with the teachers”

“Learning new skateboarding skills gave me more confidence. When you learn to do something well it goes into other areas, like school. I'm more confident there now too.”

- **Achievement of positive post school destinations:** Evidence from project workers and young people consistently highlighted the role of YPF activity in developing the practical, personal and social skills that are highly valued by employers. These included confidence, communication, team working and motivation. Indeed confidence and generic transferable skills were felt by project workers to be among the most significant and long lasting benefits to young people. Young people recognised the development of these skills and felt that they will benefit them in their future careers

Small numbers of young people in years four and five reported that they had moved into a positive destination and that this had been facilitated by their participation in the YPF project. In year four this included five young people who had accessed higher education and four who had moved into employment. These outcomes were clearly illustrated in a number of projects including by young people involved in the Centrepont Youth Parliament (case study example four, year five [England]).

Project example: Centrepont Youth Parliament

Centrepont represented young people who found themselves homeless. The Centrepont Youth Parliament provided a voice to young people who had experienced homelessness to lobby for increased recognition of these issues and for better support to meet the needs of young people in this situation. One young person, who had been a member of the youth parliament for a number of years spoke about her experience. During her time with the project she had been involved as an assistant to the elected CMPs, attending meetings, working on press releases, taking photographs and organising much of the PR and media activity. She was heavily

involved in the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) campaign and created a blog and Facebook site to inform people more widely. As a result of her activities she now wants to train as a journalist. She is currently volunteering in the participation team and will help to make a film which investigates the financial situations of young people, especially those that become homeless.

Quotes from young people involved in other projects that demonstrate the role of YPF activity in helping young people achieve positive post school destinations included:

“It has changed my life for the better, I have learnt life skills, I have social skills, confidence, leadership skills, creativity and I feel empowered.”

“The project has made me realise things can be better, I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for the project.”

“I feel that it has genuinely changed my perspective on life. I have had lots of work experience there, it has given me lots of confidence and a sense of self worth which is very important. I would be in a very different situation if I had not gone there, I would not have gone to college.”

“It [the project] kept me out of trouble. I dropped everything else in life, for example, college. This kept me on the straight and narrow.”

- **Reduced anti social behaviour and risk of offending:** The evaluation found evidence that YPF activity had, for some young people, reduced involvement in anti-social and offending behaviour. In year four 16 per cent of young people reported that their involvement had helped them to keep out of trouble with the police. Given that not all young participants would have been engaging in anti-social and offending behaviour this is a significant finding. It also highlights the success of funded projects in meeting the aims of the programme by supporting young people to make a positive contribution in society.

Projects achieved this in a number of ways and approaches varied depending on the types of young people involved and the nature of the project activity. In some cases projects were simply able to engage young people in enjoyable diversionary activities to relieve boredom divert them away from negative behaviours and peer groups (an indirect approach). Young people said:

“In the summer it brings you down to the park instead of messing about vandalising things and getting in trouble”.

“Met loads of new people and it was just exciting as it made everyone happy and kept young people out of trouble”

Other projects worked directly with young people engaged in offending behaviour to address specific issues and support behaviour change (direct

approaches). Some projects negotiated with young people, offering rewards and treats for good behaviour and removing privileges or denying participation if their behaviour deteriorated. This encouraged young people to make positive choices. Young people said:

“With the week of activities going on I made an agreement with them that said if I got into any trouble with the police I wouldn't be allowed to go. And so I behaved more in school too and as I was volunteering from nine in the morning till nine at night it was all day of fun activities”.

“Going to the project enabled me to stop doing what I was doing on the street - stop causing trouble, have more confidence in myself and speak up for other young people to get what they wanted. [It was] important because it enabled me to fulfil my true potential and bring out the real me. I am back on track to go down the right path. If it wasn't for the project I don't think I'd be here today, I'd be in a young offenders or out on the street in a gang”.

Examples of indirect and direct approaches to addressing anti-social and offending behaviour are provided below.

Project example: Newbald Church Rooms

The project provided a space for young people aged between 13 and 18 to come together and socialise. The YPF funding was used to employ playworkers to supervise and support the activities that young people chose to engage in. The activities were young person led and included: hanging out and listening to music, playing pool, playing table tennis, getting help with school work, holding jumble sales, and going on trips. The young people felt that the project gave them something to do and kept them out of trouble. They spoke of how being bored meant that they were more likely to get into trouble, and that the project had addressed this. When the project introduced a Friday night session the young people reported that they got out of the routine of drinking in the streets. The young people also noticed a change in the attitudes of the wider community towards them as they were no longer involved in negative behaviour. Young people now feel like they are treated with respect and are listened to more (case study example three, year four [England]).

Project example: Dance Project for Young Offenders

An example of project working explicitly tackle offending behaviour was provided in year one. The project used dance as a mechanism for positive behaviour change and to increase the aspirations of young people who were at risk of offending or who had already offended. The project worked in partnership with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) to offer an accredited dance led rehabilitation and resettlement programme for juvenile offenders, most of whom were serving ISSPs (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes). Dance was viewed as a powerful tool to channel young offenders away from re-offending and into further

education, training and employment as the programme encouraged self-expression, discipline and the adoption of healthy lifestyles (case study example seven, year one [England]).

4.80 This high level overview presents the commonly reported benefits to young people. There is also evidence that participation in YPF activity helped bringing about an increase in active citizenship among young people. This is discussed further in the subsequent section on benefits to communities.

4.81 Where projects delivered targeted support to a defined group of young people, there is evidence that they were successful in designing activities that responded to their specific needs and delivered appropriate benefits. For example:

- Young carers reported reduced isolation as a result of taking part in projects (case study example two, year five [England]). This was identified as a key issue for this group.
- The Hartcliffe and Withywood Teenage Parents Project (case study example two, year four [England]) was designed to support young parents to develop their self-esteem and confidence in their role as parents.
- The Learning and Independence for Future Experience project (case study example 3.2, year two [England]) let young people with communication, interaction and/or learning difficulties enjoy activities that they would not normally have access to.

4.82 Many of the benefits reported by young people were largely intangible. Participation in activity helped them to look at themselves differently, raise their aspirations and change their outlook on life.

“...its shown me that you can do anything in life and gave me a grown up approach even at a younger age... I had the ability to ground myself.”

“Before I wouldn't go out of the house at all, the project has given me the confidence to do these things. There is no judging on the project, the course is not read out of a book, it was designed by the people who were on the project before us.”

“I have a break and go home more chilled and relaxed. I can deal with things more easily and they [staff] help me find ways to calm myself down.”

4.83 The evidence shows that, for some, participation in YPF activity brings about significant and long lasting benefits. In the absence of comprehensive and consistent monitoring data it is not possible to accurately assess the scale of these benefits at YPF level. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that where YPF activity results in the type of changes outlined above, the benefits go far beyond those accruing directly to young people.

4.84 Reducing negative outcomes for young people, such as becoming NEET, truancing, being excluded from school, and being involved in anti-social

behaviour, brings about significant benefits for society as a whole as these issues carry significant social costs. For example, the average lifetime cost of one young person becoming NEET is £56,301²⁵, and the average cost of managing the school exclusion of one young person is £720²⁶.

4.85 In year four the study team calculated the average cost of supporting one young person through a YPF project in England to be £151. Although it is not possible to quantify social return on investment at the YPF level, this suggests YPF represents good value. Additional cost analysis can be found in the year four evaluation report.

Benefits of active involvement

4.86 The benefits accruing to actively involved young people were similar to those for young people involved primarily as participants. Once again these included:

- increased confidence
- achievement and learning
- improved relationships
- increased engagement
- improved communication skills.

4.87 Active involvement did however increase the scale and intensity of these benefits. Young people gained greater ownership of projects and developed their employability and independent living skills. In case study interviews actively involved young people regularly discussed the social aspects of their involvement and the enjoyment they got from it. Young people said:

“I was happy just being a participant but when the mentor scheme started I wanted to be a mentor ... and got so much out of it and it gave me the confidence to audition for main roles which I got and I was able to speak about the role of Viola during my interview for Cambridge.”

“During my first year I was just a member but in my second year I got really involved. I got more respect and I was seen as a role model. I became more aware of my surroundings and set standards for myself and for others.”

“As a participant you are passive and just do what the company tells you to do and I was happy doing this for the first couple of years, being more involved I've learnt so much more and learnt more about the company.”

²⁵ University of York research undertaken for the Audit Commission: Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, July 2010.

²⁶ New Philanthropy Capital. Misspent Youth: The costs of truancy and exclusion. Martin Brookes, Emile Goodall and Lucy Healy. June 2007

“I have gained so much: transferable skills, leadership skills. Not many people have the opportunity to have their voice heard and see the progress of a project like this.”

4.88 Areas in which involved young people benefited significantly more than those who were solely participants was in feeling like they had a voice, could make a difference in their community and could give something back to other young people in their project. This was illustrated by the fact that many involved young people started as project participants and increased their role to encompass project planning, delivery and management over time as they developed a sense of ownership. This empowered young people and raised their aspirations. An example of this was provided by young people involved in the Get Ready for Geneva/Get Ready for Change (case study example six, year three [England]):

Project example: The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)

CRAE developed a project to engage young people in the international process of safeguarding their human rights. Activity focused on research and campaigning. Young people were involved at the heart of the project; on the steering group, leading separate campaign teams, developing the project's interactive website and as Children's Rights Investigators and Children's Rights Champions. Two members of the steering group also sat on the CRAE Trustee Board”.

“Young people presented their research and campaign messages at the highest levels, including at a UN Committee meeting in Geneva. Some also addressed the UN General Assembly in New York. When asked about the impact of their involvement, young people said”:

“We've spoken at conferences and we've met Ministers... when you talk to other people they find it hard to believe that you've done all of this and some people are kind of 'gobsmacked'...”

“We've really been listened to. It really took me aback a bit...and like the other 2,000 young people that have had a say in the project, we've helped give them a voice...”

“It alters your mindset, you're a better person really.”

4.89 Project staff also saw benefits for young people as a result of active involvement. Comments included:

“One of the key impacts of participation in the project to date has been the empowerment of young people as they have realised that their views matter and that they have the power to make changes.”

“The benefit of having a steering group of young people is that they know what young people want and know how to recruit them. Volunteers are like magnets. They organise events and draw in other young people.”

Benefits for projects

4.90 YPF activity created benefits for projects and delivery organisations. Projects said that YPF support had enhanced the scale, quality and impact of their activities.

4.91 The three year YPF awards provided stability for organisations allowing them to commit to extended programmes of activity. Many organisations were highly dependent on the YPF award to support their sustainability. In year one the evaluation found that 86 per cent of grants were awarded to projects within existing organisations and the project survey in year four found that 60 per cent would not have delivered any activity without YPF support.

4.92 YPF funding also allowed projects to expand their provision and deliver new activities. For example, the Coventry Carer's Centre (case study example two, year five [England]) was able to go from providing six to thirty two activities a year after appointing an Activities Coordinator. The Rainer project (case study example 3.3, year two [England]) was expanded to allow people who had undertaken learning programmes to become mentors.

4.93 Project staff reported that they developed new skills and approaches to delivering activities. In particular staff developed skills to facilitate the active involvement of young people. This finding emerged more strongly as the evaluation progressed; as projects became more experienced in involving young people and more open to the potential mechanisms for involvement that were possible. In year four 94 per cent of projects reported improved abilities to involve young people and 70 per cent said they had been able to give staff the skills to support involvement.

4.94 For example, staff working on the SOLE project in Manchester (case study example one, year five [England]) learnt to be flexible in their approach to involvement, about the continued support required by young people to lead a youth forum and the importance of listening to the needs of young people to continually refine the approach. This may simply involve small, practical changes. In the case of SOLE when irregular attendance at meetings was noted the group moved to a fortnightly meeting of core members and monthly meetings of all members. Meetings were run with minimal numbers to maintain momentum and agendas kept short.

4.95 As a result of YPF support, projects benefited from newly established and strengthened partnerships, both formal and informal. In year four over 80 per cent of projects reported having improved their links to partners and raising their profile with funders and stakeholders. This brought about benefits including:

- Increasing the reach of the project to include more young people and a wider spectrum of young people. Increased reach was possible through formal referral processes with partners, provision of joint activities or

access arrangements (for example access to school premises to promote and/ or deliver project activity).

- Sharing of knowledge, good practice and resources between partners to bring about more efficient and effective working.
- A joined up approach to service delivery that avoided duplication and offered young people a more holistic package of support that better met their needs.
- Greater potential for projects or elements of project activity to continue beyond YPF funding. It has not however been possible to investigate to the extent to which this has happened through the present evaluation.

4.96 A further benefit to projects was improved capacity for project management, monitoring and evaluation. This may be a result of the greater stability and strategic planning that was possible due to the extended (three year) funding period. This improved the ability of projects to successfully secure funding and deliver activities both now and going forward. In a time of increasing competitiveness for funding, effective project management and robust process for monitoring impacts and tracking progress will likely strengthen the position of YPF projects (and the organisations which developed them) to secure their future sustainability.

Benefits for communities

4.97 Many YPF projects across England created benefits for local communities. Some projects directly improved facilities and services for communities. For example:

- Fusion Radio (case study example one, year three [England]) developed new radio stations that brought young people together to create and broadcast programmes about issues which affected them.
- Hartcliffe and Withywood Teenage Parents Project (case study example, two, year four [England]), trained young parents to become peer educators to help reduce teenage pregnancy by providing other young people with the information they needed to make informed choices about becoming a parent.
- Open 2 Access (case study example 3.5, year two [England]) provided opportunities for young people to access sporting activities that they would not otherwise have been able to participate in. The project was developed within the context of the 2012 Olympic Games The purpose of the project was to improve the physical and mental well-being of young people through sports participation while also empowering them and equipping them with skills for their future. The project provided enjoyable and structured activities and the opportunity to gain accredited qualifications. Activities brought young people together helping to break down barriers

based on territorial boundaries, ethnic and cultural differences. Specific activities included: football, table tennis, cricket, dance and trampolining.

4.98 Communities also benefitted from an increase in volunteering and active citizenship among young people.

4.99 This is a significant finding as existing research and government policy heavily promotes active citizenship and its role in building strong and vibrant communities. Voluntary activity generates significant social return for communities and the wider society. Evidence of increased volunteering and participation in civil society demonstrates the success of the YPF in meeting programme outcomes around making a positive contribution.

4.100 In year four the survey of 90 young people showed that over 10 per cent had taken up a voluntary role, or expected to do this as a result of their participation in YPF activities. This included volunteering with the project and volunteering in other areas. In year five the survey of 25 young people found that: one young person had taken up a voluntary position, three young people had got involved with other projects and three had got involved with community activities.

4.101 Activities that promote active citizenship can be issue based or community based. Examples are provided below:

Project example: Issue based activities

The Centrepont Youth Parliament (case study example four, year five [England]) promoted active citizenship by involving young people in campaign and lobbying activities. Young people worked to raise awareness of homelessness issues and of their campaign at all levels of society from schools to Westminster. Similarly, the Anti-Tobacco Youth Campaign (ATYC) (case study example five, year three [England]) gave young people a voice, the knowledge skills and capacity to campaign about smoking and tobacco related issues.

Project example: Community based activities

Open 2 Access (case study example 3.5, year two [England]) operated an inter-generational programme to break down barriers between young and older residents in the local area. Young people volunteered on the programme. They worked with the housing association to contribute to the management of the estate. Activities included taking older residents shopping, doing gardening, litter picking and maintenance works. In return for 300 hours of voluntary activity young people received £150.

Young people involved in SOLE (case study example one, year five [England]) painted railings as part of the project to improve the look of the area. Where young people played a visible and positive role in their communities this is considered to have helped to change perceptions.

4.102 Projects support and promote different types of voluntary activity and different forms of active citizenship. However, a common factor is that YPF activity has made young people feel a part of a community (whether this be a project community, a local community or national community). Those young

people who are most active share a sense of belonging and a motivation to give something back. This is a significant achievement of the YPF and one that will contribute to its ongoing legacy as young people make the transition to confident adults and active citizens.

Legacy

4.103 From the outset of the evaluation it was clear that projects hoped to continue their activities beyond the YPF funding period. Long term objectives were set although it was recognised future funding would be needed.

4.104 The year four survey of projects found that YPF funding had finished for two thirds of those interviewed. Of these a quarter had not continued their project activity. This did however include projects that were always intended to be time limited.

4.105 For 93 per cent of those projects that had continued or expected to continue (as of year four), additional grant funding was being sought. It was however encouraging that some projects had taken steps to reduce reliance on grant funding. For 17 per cent²⁷ of those hoping to continue their activity this was to be achieved by establishing Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Ten per cent also hoped to continue by forming a social enterprise to sustain some or all of their activities.

4.106 The funding climate will be challenging for many former YPF projects. Even in year four, projects were reporting that it was difficult to identify continuing sources of funding. This resulted in uncertainty in future service provision for young people. For some of the projects that had continued (as at year four), activity was only funded for a limited period or was being delivered at a reduced scale than under YPF.

4.107 Where resources were secured these included the Reaching Communities programme (for example, Me Time – case study example two, year five [England]), Children in Need, local authority grants and sector specific support (for example diocese support for church related projects such as SOLE – see case study example one, year five [England]). Projects reported that there was no direct replacement for YPF support.

4.108 As previously discussed, the skills gained by young people are now being applied in other areas of their lives. The skills and confidence they have developed are helping them to plan for their future and gain employment.

4.109 Projects helped to shape career plans and many young people interviewed through case study visits now have a clearer career direction and better understanding of how to achieve it. Both young people and project staff expected that these benefits would be sustained. In the case of staff, the increased skills and knowledge and the new ways of working developed through YPF activity will continue to benefit other young people in future projects.

²⁷ Figures as of the year four evaluation report.

4.110 In many cases, projects plan to continue partnerships built through YPF. For example:

- SOLE (case study example one, year five [England]) reported their intention to continue work with local schools.
- Me Time, based within the Coventry Carers Centre (case study example two, year five [England]) will continue to work with projects in Warwickshire and Solihull.
- The Media Trust (case study example four year five [England]) will continue working with Catch 22 and Fairbridge.

4.111 These partnerships provide a strong basis for future delivery.

Conclusions

4.112 The YPF programme in England allowed over 445,000 young people to take part in activities that may otherwise not have been available to them. Activity was diverse and included recreational and leisure activities (such as sports and arts), education and awareness raising activity (including campaigning and lobbying) and opportunities to learn new things and develop new skills (including the achievement of accredited qualifications). Many projects targeted and successfully engaged with young people who could be considered vulnerable and harder to reach. Peer recruitment and word of mouth recommendation emerged as an effective means of engaging with these young people as they are often more likely to trust and act on a recommendation made by someone they can identify with.

4.113 Alignment of YPF activity with policy priorities remained strong across the five years of the evaluation and this has continued with the coalition government's Big Society agenda.

4.114 At programme level young people were successfully involved in decision making at different levels and in a number of different ways. Their involvement enhanced the decision making process by bringing a young persons perspective. Young people involved in decision making and young people who received small grants developed technical, personal and social skills which have enhanced their aspirations and prospects and facilitated their involvement in other activities.

4.115 YPF was successful in delivering against core programme outcomes. There is evidence of impact at both project and programme level, particularly around the achievement of the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. The breadth of programme outcomes was both a benefit and a challenge. As a result of the broad outcomes, projects (and the programme as a whole) were able to be responsive to young people's needs. However, this breadth and flexibility made an assessment of achievements problematic. Without the mechanisms in place to measure this on a consistent basis it is not possible to quantify benefits at programme level. Processes and procedures for ongoing monitoring and evaluation should therefore be built into future programmes from the outset.

4.116 In saying this there is considerable evidence from projects and young people involved in the evaluation that significant and long lasting benefits have resulted for young people, organisations and local communities. These are described in turn below.

4.117 Benefits to young people extend beyond project activity and impact on their experiences, perceptions and attitudes in other areas of their lives. Specifically, there is evidence that confidence, self-esteem, increased engagement and the development of a range of employability and life skills are supporting young people in the transition to adulthood. Significant outcomes for young people include increased engagement with education, improved prospects for moving into and sustaining positive destinations, reduced anti-social behaviour, increased contribution in the local community, active citizenship, and greater aspirations for the future.

4.118 These benefits accrued to young people involved in different activities and those from very different backgrounds. This is evidence of a common set of skills and attributes that are valued by young people regardless of their individual situations. These included meeting new people, increased confidence, developing new skills and learning new things, feeling better about themselves and having fun. Projects successfully identified these as core for young people and designed activities that were tailored to their needs and which brought about these benefits.

4.119 The evidence shows that very often, regardless of the specific activity, simply bringing young people together to engage in a positive activity where they can meet new young people and challenge themselves to try something new, leads to the benefits described for most young people who engage.

4.120 Young people played a leading role in YPF activity. There are examples from across England of young people shaping programmes of activity both formally and informally. Benefits of active involvement were clearly demonstrated through the evaluation. The benefits of active involvement were similar to those accruing to project participants (stated above) but tended to be even greater for involved young people as a result of the more intense experience. Young people gained greater ownership of projects and developed their employability and independent living skills.

4.121 However, the extent and nature of involvement varied both between and within projects. Young people were most heavily involved once projects were operational. Involvement mechanisms primarily involved structured and informal feedback on project activity and future development. A number of projects also established youth forums and steering groups to act as a link between project workers and young participants. Where these were in place, there was evidence of considerable success in bringing about active and meaningful involvement. To put these mechanisms in place did however require additional resources and a commitment from project workers and young people.

4.122 Although there were strong examples of young people taking an active role in project management, they were not as widespread as anticipated for a programme of this nature; where active involvement was a founding principle.

4.123 There are a number of reasons for this. In some cases projects reported that young people did not want to be involved in this way. In others staff did not have the knowledge, skills and capacity to develop this type of involvement. The evaluation also identified barriers related to project resources and the logistics of involvement, for example transport. It was generally possible to overcome barriers by giving young people time and support to develop their skills and capacity and by allowing additional resources to facilitate involvement, for example scheduling meetings at times to suit young people and providing transport.

4.124 Across the period of the evaluation involvement of young people developed and increased. This happened as the capacity of projects to involve young people, and their recognition of the benefits and possibilities for active involvement also increased.

4.125 In some cases young people will not want to be actively involved, in others involvement may not be appropriate due to the range of other issues that young people are facing. However, young people may face barriers to involvement due to lack of confidence or lack of understanding of what it may entail.

4.126 The responsibility rests with projects to facilitate and promote opportunities for young people's involvement, to recognise and overcome barriers and ensure that appropriate opportunities are in place to allow young people to be involved in the way and at the time that is appropriate for them.

4.127 The YPF could possibly have achieved higher levels of active involvement if the requirements and expectations on projects had been more clearly stated at the application and development stage and if support had been embedded from the start.

4.128 This was taken on board in the development of YPF2. From the outset, YPF2 highlighted the active involvement of young people as a key criterion for projects in securing funding. As a result of lessons learned from YPF, the successor fund communicated a clearer idea of what constitutes active involvement and how it should be supported.

4.129 While there are examples of good practice in active involvement in YPF projects across England, few projects could claim to meet the expectations set for YPF2. BIG funded Participation Works to provide support to organisations seeking to involve young people. This was available to YPF projects for part of the funding period. YPF 2 has embedded this from the start to ensure a real and lasting commitment to active involvement.

4.130 Organisations also benefited from the YPF programme. Partnerships were established and strengthened. This led to a more efficient and joined up approach to meeting the needs of young people. Project workers developed new skills and developed approaches to promote the active and meaningful

involvement of young people in their activity. This increased capacity in the youth sector will result in benefits for young participants in future and ensure a sustained impact from the YPF. This, coupled with the fact that key learning around active involvement has been embedded in YPF2, demonstrates the contribution of the YPF in helping to bring about a change in the culture of involving young people in services and recognition of the benefits of active involvement.

4.131 Additionality of YPF funding was high and in many cases opportunities to take part in these activities would not have been available in the absence of YPF funding.

4.132 The three year funding period provided stability to projects, allowing a greater degree of strategic planning than had been possible in previous years. A high degree of dependence on YPF support was however a challenge for many projects when funding came to an end. This was made even more significant as YPF support came to an end at a time of limited alternative funding availability. Subsequent programmes should consider the exit strategy of projects or their plans for ensuring sustainability as part of the assessment criteria.

4.133 YPF projects in England created benefits for local communities. Some projects directly improved facilities and services for communities, some benefited the community by providing a positive outlet for young people and addressing anti-social behaviour, while others brought about community benefits as a result of increased volunteering and active citizenship among young people. As active citizenship is a government policy priority, this further demonstrates the contribution of the YPF activity to national outcomes.

4.134 The YPF legacy can be seen at beneficiary, project and community level. Projects helped young people develop the skills needed to succeed in life. At a project level, the increased skills of staff and establishment of partnerships will continue to benefit young people in the future. In addition, communities have benefited from additional services, increased participation and improved cohesion. In this way YPF activity had made a contribution to national policy priorities and has been a catalyst for positive economic and social change, particularly in areas of disadvantage.

5 YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

Background

5.1 This chapter presents the cumulative findings of the evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) programme in Scotland over a five year period from 2005 to 2011. It provides a synthesis of the findings set out in the previous four annual reports (2006 to 2010), along with findings from the fieldwork carried out in 2010-11. The 2010-11 fieldwork involved qualitative case study visits to four projects, involving interviews with staff and young people, and a telephone survey of 25 young people. The chapter explores:

- The background to the programme, including its design and fit with national policy.
- The set up of YPF and its funded projects.
- The active involvement of young people.
- Outcomes from the programme for young people, projects and the wider community and the sustainability of these.
- The YPF legacy.

Programme design

5.2 A total of £25 million²⁸ was available through Young People's Fund (YPF) in Scotland to support projects that target young people aged between 11 and 25. The main aim of the programme was to enable young people to learn new things and take part in healthy and positive activities that make them feel good about themselves. In line with the UK programme, successful projects were expected to actively involve young people in project design, delivery, management and evaluation.

5.3 YPF in Scotland had three specific outcomes, namely to give young people:

- 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.

²⁸ There was an original grant allocation of £20 million, with a further £5 million awarded in the summer of 2006

5.4 At the application stage, submissions were given priority if they were targeting one of four priority groups of young people, or if their activities fell into one of seven categories. These are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Priority groups and priority project activities

Priority Groups	Priority Project Activities
No opportunities to volunteer, or facing barriers to volunteering	Encourage teenage girls to access activities Remove barriers to volunteering or increase volunteering opportunities
Dealing with many and complicated problems	Help young people adopt active, healthy and positive lifestyles
Do not have positive relationships with family, friends or community	Encourage young people to make positive changes in their behaviour
Teenage girls	Bring young people together from different backgrounds and experiences Support young people through periods of transition Help young people gain confidence and skills to become active citizens

5.5 £1 million of the funding was used to establish a National Committee whose members were predominantly young people, and a Local Area Panel (LAP) in each of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities whose members were solely young people. These groups were established to enable young people to be involved in deciding which projects the funding should be awarded to. The process is explained later in the chapter.

5.6 The remaining funding was allocated through three separate strands to support different types of projects:

- Local Projects: Funding to support projects that operated in one local authority area. This is the strand where LAPs were involved in the decision making process.
- Wider Inclusion Projects: Funding for projects that operated in more than one local authority area and that targeted non-geographic communities.
- New Ideas: Funding for projects that wanted to try out new approaches to engaging young people, that carried out groundbreaking work, and that adapted approaches that have been used successfully implemented elsewhere.

Policy context

5.7 The programme was designed in this way to ensure that it supports and is supported by a number of Scottish policy priorities. The policy landscape in Scotland has evolved considerably since YPF was established in 2005. A new

SNP minority government was elected in 2007, replacing the previous Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition. However, while the Government and some of the policies have changed, the YPF aims and objectives continued to align well with the revised policy priorities.

5.8 The Scottish Government's overarching strategy is the Government's Economic Strategy, which is underpinned by a National Performance Framework containing 15 National Outcomes. One of these is to ensure that "our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens."²⁹

5.9 Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy (2007) recognises the importance of youth work and volunteering opportunities for building young people's confidence, motivation and skills. This is the focus of Scotland's Youthwork Strategy, Moving Forward: A Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances through Youth Work (2007). This strategy identifies the key role of youth work in not only enhancing the lives of young people from all backgrounds, but also in acting as an early intervention and preventative measure, by engaging in positive activities young people who might otherwise become involved in anti-social behaviour, alcohol or drug misuse, or who would leave school with few qualifications and skills and perhaps not progress into education, employment or training.

5.10 The More Choices, More Chances (MCMC) Strategy published by the Scottish Government in 2006 articulates the issue of young people who are not in education, employment or training and proposes ways of tackling this issue. During the evaluation of YPF, stakeholders reported that YPF played a significant role in funding third sector projects whose activity contributes to the aims of MCMC and that YPF is a good fit with their priorities for young people, particularly around the goal of active involvement.

5.11 More recently, as part of its MCMC strategy, 16+ Learning Choices is being introduced. This places a responsibility on local authorities to devise a learning agreement for every young person aged over 16 who wants it, to ensure that all young people of this age are engaged in some form of positive activity, and so cannot be not in employment, education or training. The term NEET is not used in Scotland. This provides an opportunity for third sector projects to play a formal role in the mainstream learning choices that young people make. In the future, funds such as YPF could help to bring third sector projects and local authorities together by making engagement with local authorities a condition of project funding. The contribution that projects make to a young person's education, and therefore their economic potential, could be a criterion that projects work to meet.

5.12 A further development since YPF began has been the change in relationship between local authorities and the Scottish Government through the signing of a Concordat between the Government and all 32 local authorities.

²⁹ Scottish Government (2007), "National Outcomes"

Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) were agreed as part of this Concordat, giving local authorities more control over their spending decisions and removing most of the ring-fencing that previously protected funding for certain types of activities. This, combined with the considerable budget cuts facing Scotland's local authorities, and the Government's freeze on Council Tax could put many young people's projects at risk. The recently elected Scottish Government intends to continue this tax freeze for the five year duration of this parliament.

Setting up YPF

Background

5.13 Having determined the aims, outcomes, priority groups and priority activities for the programme in Scotland, YPF was promoted widely and projects invited to submit applications between August 2005 and August 2007. Across Scotland, 201 projects submitted a successful application and received funding for their proposed activity. The vast majority of the projects were local projects, with 158 local projects receiving a total of over £15 million. The 38 successful wider inclusion projects received almost £7 million, and the five new ideas projects received almost £2 million.

Reach of the programme

5.14 The geographical distribution of awards varied across Scotland, with some local authorities receiving more funding than others. One of the smallest local authorities, Clackmannanshire, received funding for one project, while the largest local authority, Glasgow City, received 20 awards. This is appropriate given that Glasgow has the largest population of young people of all the local authorities, and the greatest amount of deprivation and so greater resources are needed to address inequalities.

5.15 When we consider award value per head of population³⁰, the data shows some under-representation of some local authorities. The award values per head of population range from £3.98 per head in North Lanarkshire, to £63.43 in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The three island authorities received the highest award amounts per head. This could be due to economies of scale in the larger areas or the additional costs of delivering interventions in remote, rural island communities. Excluding the island authorities, the majority of areas received between £10 and £30 per head of population. Seven local authority areas received less than £10 per head of population. This is despite the fact that during the application process the bids were monitored and where certain areas were under-represented, there was a comprehensive outreach programme aimed at increasing the number of the bids.

Who benefits from YPF?

5.16 YPF has been successful at encouraging projects to reach out to all young people, including those who are harder to reach. The majority (70%) of young

³⁰ 2001 Census data, young people aged 11 to 25.

people who engaged with YPF were aged 11-16. More than three quarters of projects targeted young people in all four of the priority groups that the programme was designed to reach.

5.17 The majority of projects worked with young people from hard to reach groups, most commonly young people living in deprived areas, living in rural areas, with mental health issues, with physical, sensory or learning disabilities, and offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending. A smaller number worked with young people who are young carers, homeless or from a BME group.

5.18 During the programme, around half of projects targeted specific groups of young people, while the other half were open to all young people which meant that they also worked with young people in harder to reach groups. These harder to reach young people are often the young people who benefit most from engagement with projects, as their circumstances can pose considerable barriers to achieving positive outcomes at key transition stages. The benefits of YPF can be life changing for these young people. For example case study two shows how the Chill Out Zone project helped one young care leaver to find his own home and develop the practical cooking and budgeting skills that he needs to maintain his tenancy and take care of himself. At the time of the evaluation interview in April 2011 the project was supporting the young man to find employment. He reported that he is successfully building a positive life for himself beyond the care system, and does not believe he would have achieved this without Chill Out Zone.

5.19 The engagement of young people with Additional Support Needs and from BME groups was not specified as a programme requirement for projects, however it is an issue that BIG is interested in. The evidence shows that very few projects specifically targeted these groups. The year two evaluation found that eight per cent of projects targeted disabled young people and no project participating in the survey specifically targeted young people from BME groups. However much higher numbers of projects which worked with young people from a range of backgrounds are working with young people with Additional Support Needs and young people from BME groups. Between one third and one half of surveyed projects worked with young people with Additional Support Needs, while less than a fifth of projects worked with young people from a BME group.

Involvement of young people at programme level

5.20 In Scotland, the LAPs, which are made up entirely of young people, reviewed and made recommendations on all local applications including the 158 funded applications. These young people considered the need for each project in their local area and made a recommendation to the National Committee. The National Committee was comprised predominantly of young people and this group made the final decision on which applications would be funded, based on the local knowledge contained in the recommendations from the LAPs, combined with financial information provided by the applicant and the assessment of the BIG Grants Officer.

5.21 The LAPs were an innovative and in many ways, successful approach to involving young people in the decision making process. BIG contracted Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) to manage the process, who in turn sub-contracted local Volunteer Centres in each area to facilitate the panels and provide panel workers. Youthlink Scotland provided the necessary training for panel workers and panel members and Young Scot promoted the LAPs and helped with recruiting young people. Around 500 young people were recruited to the 32 LAPs.

5.22 The National Committee and the LAPs are considered by those involved to have been a broadly successful approach to involving young people, and a model through which around 500 young people have benefitted. At a cost of £1 million, this equates to £2,000 per young person. In the third and fourth years, we interviewed LAP members to assess the benefits to them of being involved and the extent to which these benefits were sustained. The benefits to young people of both LAP and National Committee membership are described later in the chapter.

5.23 The LAP model provides considerable learning for future approaches to involving young people.

- Utilising the local Volunteer Centres provided a truly local approach to engaging young people and involving them in making decisions that affect their local community.
- Local panel workers were required to recruit at least five young people to the group, which most did through their existing networks, helping provide around one third of the LAP recruits.
- Young people were motivated to join the LAPs because they wanted to gain new skills, have a new experience, and get involved in their local community. Having the opportunity to make a difference to others in the community was important to them, as was having fun.
- There was considerable investment in giving the young people the necessary skills to be involved in the LAPs. There was specific training on application assessment provided by Youthlink Scotland, support and guidance to enable the young people to carry out research in their local area to find out what other young people see as being the local priorities and regional training days which brought together young people from different areas to share ideas and learn from each other.
- A qualification was designed at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 5 in Participative Democracy to certify the work of the LAPs, providing 234 panel members with a qualification.
- The National Committee was youth led and the group consisted mainly of young people. This created a culture whereby young people could contribute their own ideas and challenge others.

- The National Committee valued the local knowledge provided by the LAPs and this was key in helping them to make the final decision on applications. They upheld the recommendations of the LAPs in the vast majority of cases. On 14 occasions the National Committee took a different decision from that recommended by the LAP.
- In the early stages LAPs did not receive sufficient information from the National Committee about whether their recommendations had been upheld or not. This became a particular issue when LAPs heard that their recommendation had not been upheld and they were not told why. Specific measures were taken to ensure that communication improved over time.
- While the local nature of the LAPs was a strength of the model, the number of applications to YPF in Scotland was not sufficient to occupy the time of 32 LAPs. A small number of LAPs assessed only one or two applications during their two year operation. Some of the young people and staff interviewed by VDS as part of its evaluation of LAPs felt that the programme could have been better promoted to encourage more applications, although with finite funding, this could have meant more projects being unsuccessful. It may have been beneficial if young people involved in the LAPs had a greater role in encouraging applications in their local areas.
- Combining LAPs over a number of local authority areas could be one solution to having insufficient applications in some LAP areas, however this would dilute the local focus and create additional barriers to access such as travel and wanting to do something for your local area. Another solution would be to expand the role of the LAPs beyond that of assessing YPF applications, perhaps involving the young people in a wider range of local decisions. This happened on an ad hoc basis with some local authorities using the LAPs as a consultation forum to gather the views of young people on a particular decision.
- The success of the LAP infrastructure largely ended when BIG funding for LAPs ended, as there was no plan in place to continue these beyond the funding period. In year one of the evaluation one of the panels that was interviewed reported that they may continue to meet after the funding had ended, however it is unclear whether this happened in this particular area or in any other. Before the end of the programme BIG explored how LAPs could be continued in local areas but there was very little interest in continuing them. Some of the young people who participated in the LAPs used the skills and experience they had developed through the LAP in other similar structures such as Youthbanks and advising the Scottish Government on some specific funding strands. This is an important and valuable legacy of YPF.

Working with BIG

5.24 Projects that successfully received funding from YPF were generally satisfied with the application process. While it was considered reasonably long and detailed, it was felt to be commensurate with the levels of funding being applied for. Project staff reported that the YPF application process was less onerous than many other application processes they had been involved in.

5.25 However the application process was considered too lengthy to meaningfully involve young people. Instead, young people were generally consulted while adults wrote the application. There is potential to increase young people's involvement in the application process, by designing it to make it accessible and engaging for young people. One way of doing this is to consult with young people during the development of the process.

5.26 Once projects received funding there was often at least two to three months of recruiting staff before the project could begin delivery. As a result, many projects did not meet their targets in relation to numbers of young people engaged with in the first year. In the majority of cases, this shortfall was made up in subsequent years.

5.27 A significant challenge for projects, and a recurring theme throughout the evaluation, is their dependence on short term funding, which has a negative impact on their ability to plan strategically and develop staff. During the funding period, YPF helped to alleviate this by providing up to four years of funding to projects which gave them a degree of stability.

Active Involvement

Ways in which young people are actively involved

5.28 The active involvement of young people was a key requirement of YPF across the UK, including in Scotland. The LAPs were an effective way of actively involving young people and through them the YPF programme in Scotland made a significant contribution to achieving this outcome.

5.29 However active involvement was also to be achieved through the projects that received YPF funding rather than just during the application phase. The evidence shows that active involvement was limited in the earlier years of the evaluation. Projects found that involving young people in the development of the project idea was less challenging than involving them in delivery and management. Three quarters of projects reported having involved young people in the development of the project idea, mainly through consultation. Around half of projects were adult led at this stage, around a third had equal input from young people and adults, and 16 per cent were led by young people. Projects supported this active involvement by helping young people in a range of ways, including networking skills to ensure they involved the correct stakeholders, support with communicating with organisations, technical skills, peer mentoring and project management.

5.30 Projects reported that new staff and new projects needed time to establish and develop mechanisms for active involvement. They held the view that it was important to take time to build young people's capacity.

5.31 Following the initial identification of need for the project, in the early stages of delivery, adult involvement grew and young people's involvement declined. This reflects the view that projects may need time to evolve before mechanisms for involvement in delivery and management can be developed. However, this is a view rather than an evidence based finding that shows that it is not possible to involve young people in delivery from the beginning. In the future, projects could build in to their planning and development phase, mechanisms for preparing staff and young people for active involvement from the start of delivery.

5.32 In YPF projects, there was firm evidence that active involvement grew over time:

- 83 per cent of projects reported that active involvement grew over the funding period.
- In the year three evaluation (2008-9) 45 per cent of projects reported that delivery is predominantly carried out by young people, compared to 22 per cent of projects in year two (2007-8).
- 24 per cent in year three reported that management of the project is predominantly led by young people, compared to 10 per cent in year two.
- In year four of the evaluation (2009-10) 82 per cent of projects reported that YPF helped them expand the role of actively involved young people, compared to 67 per cent in year three (2008-9).
- 80 per cent in year four reported being able to actively involve more young people, compared to 65 per cent in year three.

5.33 As a result, in later years of the evaluation projects no longer reported that staff skills and suitable mechanisms were the biggest barrier to active involvement, but instead the biggest challenge reported was gaining and maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of young people. Projects reported that low self esteem and lack of confidence can act as a barrier to young people becoming actively involved. By having formal structures and clarity on the support that active young people will be given, projects have found that they can address these barriers in some young people but others prefer their involvement to be less formal, certainly initially, until their confidence has grown sufficiently to commit to involvement in a more formal way. By testing various methods, projects can find what best suits the young people they are aiming to involve and can be flexible in how they involve the young people to meet their needs and readiness for involvement.

5.34 What is crucial is that projects recognise that addressing these sorts of barriers will take time and require staff and other resources to be committed to it. These points are illustrated by the project examples in the following box.

Project example: Fairways

The Fairways project (case study four, year three [Scotland]) supports young people with learning difficulties or disabilities make the transition to adulthood. It offers a wide range of activities to the young people that includes peer mentoring, one-to-one support with professional staff and Friendship Circles. The project involves the young people in the planning of activity through its Advisory Group. The Group is made up of project staff, peer mentors and young people themselves. The Group provides a steer on the types of activity that are delivered through the project and has in the past been involved in the recruitment of staff to the project.

Because of the Advisory Group, there is 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 lead to greater mutual respect between staff and young people. The young people develop negotiating and communication skills, learning how to put forward opinions in a constructive way.

Project example: St Josephs Partnership

An example of where involvement and commitment has grown was provided by a year three project (case study five, year three [Scotland]). In St Josephs Learning Partnership young people gradually became more involved in both planning and delivery, including high-level decision making on the best use of resources. This was supported by staff working closely with young people to identify ways in which they could be involved and by giving them the freedom to develop new ideas for volunteering, and new clubs in response to needs that the young people had identified. One of these was a games club to help the transition of the most vulnerable children from primary to secondary school. The young people also started a cheerleading club for young girls. Both of these clubs added to what the Partnership offered and further means to engage additional young people.

Project example: Street League

The Street League Project (case study 5.3, year two [Scotland]) has active involvement of young people embedded in its ethos and during the YPF funding period, there is evidence that this active involvement increased over time. To gauge their views on current and future activities, young participants are consulted formally and, for those who may lack confidence to be consulted with, a more informal approach is used. Young People have been involved in recruiting staff which was reported as benefiting the project and the young people.

The project operated a “Players Board” which is a peer group of young people who organise and manage football tournaments. This is a very practical activity that actively involves young people and develops a range of skills including organisational skills, team working and communication.

5.35 Young people were actively involved in projects in a range of ways. Most commonly young people were consulted, either informally through ongoing communication with project staff, or formally, for example through a survey or focus group.

5.36 The majority of projects involved young people in designing the activity, recruiting other young people to the project, and delivering activity. One example of how YPF projects involved young people in delivering activity is in case study three. It describes how the Granton Youth Centre Peer Leaders in the Community Project recruited young people with experience of gang related issues to deliver peer education programmes on gang violence to young people in schools. This type of approach is an effective way of delivering important messages to large numbers of young people. It also brings considerable benefits to the young people who are peer educators by building confidence and challenging their own attitudes and behaviours.

5.37 Young people were involved in projects through youth forums and steering groups, with over half of projects employing this mechanism. Slightly fewer than half have one or more young people on their Management Board.

Numbers of young people actively involved

5.38 While the majority of projects actively involved young people in a range of ways, the number of young people who were involved was lower than might be expected from a programme where involvement was a key aim. The majority of young people were involved through providing informal feedback and structured feedback (67 per cent and 60 per cent of young people respectively). However significantly fewer were involved in other ways. For example:

- 33 per cent of young people who engaged with a project were involved in peer recruitment.
- 24 per cent were involved in delivering activity.
- 23 per cent designed activity.
- 21 per cent managed certain activities or projects within the project.

5.39 In the evaluation in year four, a telephone survey of a sample of young people found that 59 per cent of those surveyed had not been actively involved in their project, although this is much lower in year five when the figure was 24 per cent. However the surveys in years four and five also found that young people are satisfied with the level of involvement that they have in projects, and so where young people are not actively involved, they do not have an appetite to be involved, supporting the assertion by project staff that gaining and maintaining the enthusiasm of young people for active involvement is a challenge.

5.40 As the next section shows, young people benefit from active involvement so exploring good practice in generating enthusiasm among young people for active involvement will help ensure that these benefits are realised more fully in future programmes.

Achieving programme outcomes

Introduction

5.41 The most significant beneficiaries of the YPF programme are the young people who were part of a project, a LAP or the National Committee.

5.42 The programme aims and outcomes were very broad, which in certain respects was a positive thing as it allowed BIG to fund a diverse range of projects and allowed projects to focus on meeting young people's needs, rather than designing projects to fit funding criteria. The drawback of this approach is that it makes it difficult for projects to assess what impact they have had and so makes evaluation of the programme difficult. In future, determining project specific aims that fit with the broad aims and outcomes will allow BIG to gather monitoring data from projects that will assist with the evaluation process.

Benefits for participants

5.43 From the very beginning of the evaluation, when projects were just newly established, staff reported that their activities would help young people to increase their confidence, improve relationships, increase achievement in learning, improve their communication skills and develop a range of transferable skills. The evaluation evidence demonstrates that this has been achieved.

5.44 In year three of the evaluation, project staff speculated that there would be long term benefits from engagement with their projects, mainly increased confidence, and feeling valued. To test this, a telephone survey of 51 young people was carried out in year four and was repeated in year five with 25 of the original survey sample. These two surveys found that young people experienced a range of benefits from engaging with YPF projects and that the benefits they got exceeded their expectations. In years four and five of the evaluation over 90 per cent of young people report that as a result of YPF they:

- communicate better with others
- feel more confident
- feel more motivated
- had fun
- met new people
- developed new skills
- get on better with others.

5.45 In years four and five, when asked to describe in their own words what they got from their YPF project, young people spoke of confidence, friends, meeting new people and skills.

“I have gained so much, transferable skills, leadership skills. Not many people have the opportunity to have their voice heard and see the progress of a project like this.”

"I've made new friends of different ages, learnt leadership skills, got more confidence, communicating better with people and helping other people in the community."

"The realisation that if you want to get something done you can if you get off your bum and put the work in, it actually can be done even if you're a young person. It's very important, it's shown me that you can do anything in life and gave me a grown up approach even at a younger age and that is something that had a long time line. I had the ability to ground myself and have my head in it for a long time."

5.46 This was consistent in both the year four and five evaluations. For the most isolated of young people, these benefits can be life changing. This was demonstrated in one of the year four case studies, details of which can be found in the year four report (Case Study example one, year four [Scotland]). It told of how a 17 year old girl who had become increasingly isolated to the point of being scared to go to the shops joined the Young Mums course run by The Chill Out Zone. At the project, she met people in a similar situation to herself. Learning that her situation was not unique helped her to gain confidence, become more assertive and the resolve to end a violent relationship. She is now studying at college and hopes to become a Child Psychologist. She reports that this would not have been possible without the project. This example demonstrates how bringing young people together in a positive environment can have significant impacts on their lives.

5.47 Another key component for achieving positive outcomes is the skills and expertise of staff. Young people reported building a relationship of trust with project staff and they received personalised support to meet their own individual needs. Where this happens, young people can be supported to make important life choices and make successful transitions into adulthood, as described in Scotland Case Study two at the end of this report which describes how the Chill Out Zone helped one young care leaver to secure and maintain his own tenancy.

5.48 These benefits (gaining more confidence, getting on better with others and so forth) are very personal benefits to the young people and are largely intangible and are immediate but long lasting. They can lead to changes in the young person's behaviour or help them make decisions that can lead to more tangible difference in their lives, and in some cases, the lives of others. This means that the benefits of YPF become long term benefits. This is clearly demonstrated in the year four case study, where by building the young person's confidence she became able to make decisions and take action to leave a violent partner and to apply to study at college.

- **Positive impact on school experience and engagement with education:** The surveys in years four and five have found that these more tangible outcomes are relatively common. In particular the projects are helping young people to have a more positive school experience by helping them behave better at school, enjoy school more and get better

grades. These types of benefits were found among 55 per cent to 76 per cent of young people interviewed in the year four evaluation, but for only 14 per cent to 21 per cent in the year five sample.

It is unclear why there was such a decline in numbers in year five but it may reflect that the longer the time lapse between the intervention and the interview, the less likely young people are to attribute benefits to the YPF project. This decline in attribution is a common phenomenon.

Case study example one, year five [Scotland] describes how one project, Friends of the Award Edinburgh, helped to improve behaviour at school among young people who were disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education.

Project example: Friends of the Award (FOTA)

FOTA aims to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged groups who take part in and achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award. It encourages the re-engagement of young people who have become disengaged from education by giving the young people the opportunity to work towards the DofE award as part of their curriculum. It targets young people who are disruptive in class, those with poor attendance, those with low self esteem and those with low academic achievement.

Young people reported that through DofE, they are learning valuable skills that will benefit them in the short, medium and long terms. They said that DofE had helped change their attitudes to school and learning.

A key determinant of achieving positive outcomes is ensuring a mix of young people in the group to allow, for example, those with low confidence to learn from more confident young people, and those with poor behaviour and attendance to mix with and be influenced by young people who are engaged and more keen to learn.

- **Achievement of positive destinations:** Through the research from project workers and young people in years four and five, the evidence shows that YPF consistently helped between six per cent and 16 per cent of young people to access employment, go to college, access an apprenticeship or training, or to go to university. The programme has also helped young people stay out of trouble with the police (22 per cent in year four and 11 per cent in year five) and to get involved in volunteering (43 per cent in year four and 26 per cent in year five).

An example of a project helping young people to achieve positive destinations was provided by The Prince's Trust Get Into Programme (Case study examples two, year four [Scotland]).

Project example: Get Into

This was a supported employment project run by the Princes Trust and delivery partners. Get Into runs short, sector specific courses for young unemployed people aged 16-25. It is UK wide but in each area the

courses developed reflected local employment opportunities. In Scotland Get Into courses include cooking, cars, retail, social work and youth work. Courses comprise classroom and practical teaching elements, experience in the work place and a graduation ceremony to recognise the achievement of young people. The Trust developed partnerships with employers to support participants into employment. It also provided follow up help and support following completion of the course.

One participant, referred by Job Centre Plus, had been out of work for nine months after the training provider he was working with went out of business. He was interested in working with cars but lacked accredited training. For some time, he had been approaching local garages to look for work without any success.

As part of the 'Get Into Cars' programme he completed health and safety training, learnt how to use new tools and developed skills such as welding. Following a work placement with Arnold Clark, he was offered a permanent job with the company.

He said that "(Get Into) gave him a chance that not a lot of people get. "If you are willing to work hard you can't go wrong". He feels that Get Into Cars opened new doors for him, raised his confidence and self-esteem, which was low as a result of not being able to find a job, increased his motivation and helped him to get back into a stable routine. Without Get Into Cars he reported that he might have got involved in criminal behaviour.

By achieving these types of benefits, YPF has potential to prevent some negative outcomes for young people, such as not being in education, employment or training (NEET), truanting, being excluded from school, and being involved in anti-social behaviour. These are all issues that are costly to society, for example the average lifetime cost of one young person becoming NEET is £56,301³¹, and the average cost of managing the exclusion of one young person from school is £720³². In year four of the evaluation the study team calculated the cost of supporting one young person through a YPF project, and estimated the average cost to be £115 per young person. In comparison to the cost of the negative outcomes, YPF represents good value for money, although because the evaluation team was unable to access data from projects on numbers of young people who engage with them, and because projects do not gather evidence on the number of young people achieving a common set of benefits, it is not possible to quantify the cost savings the programme may

³¹ University of York research undertaken for the Audit Commission: Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, July 2010.

³² New Philanthropy Capital. Misspent Youth: The costs of truancy and exclusion. Martin Brookes, Emile Goodall and Lucy Healy. June 2007

have generated. Additional detail on the cost analysis of YPF is provided in the year four evaluation report.

In year five of the evaluation, the study team has been able to explore the sustainability of the outcomes for young people through engaging with projects. Seven of the young people in the survey no longer attend the project, most commonly due to changes in circumstances, such as going to college or university. All of these young people left the project over a year ago, and for some, their engagement ended over three years ago. Despite this, they are still experiencing a range of benefits today. Projects helped two of these young people to go to university, helped one to get a job, helped two to volunteer and two to get involved in their community. The young people, who left the project for positive reasons, for example to move on to new activities, reported that they are still using the transferable skills they learned through their projects. For example:

“I'm more independent now and more organised which is needed as I moved away from home to go to university.”

“Improved my approach with respect to meeting and talking to new people.”

“I have started a local theatre group. I am using the skills that I learnt at the project.”

“It showed the college when I applied that even though I wasn't doing any work 'proper' I was still interested in doing something. It showed initiative.”

“It has totally ingrained necessary life skills in me, it helped me to grow up and mature and set me up in good stead for the future.”

“A lot of the interactive media work I'm now doing involves working with other people so it has helped me to step up my game.”

- **Reduced anti social behaviour and risk of offending:** By engaging young people in positive YPF activities, they were less likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour. Young people's risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system, either for the first time or as a repeat offender was also reduced according to project staff and young people. Young people reported that they had gained a sense of purpose and hope for the future that engendered a will to move away from being involved in anti-social behaviour and offending behaviours. Some projects specifically targeted young people at risk of being involved in anti social and offending behaviour.

Project example: Street League

The Street League project (case study 5.3, year two [Scotland]) provides a structured programme of sport and education with the aim of building confidence, improving health, extending social network and developing the necessary skills to move into education, training and employment.

The project has built strong links with partners including homeless hostels, drug rehabilitation projects and the Police. Street League, in partnership with anti social behaviour teams and the Police established a Night League which is intended to reduce anti social behaviour. Strathclyde Police's data system indicated a reduction of 79.5% in disorder and violence and that 10% of the Night League participants were young people known by the police to be involved in gang related crime and violence.

Project example: Beat Route

The Beat Route project (case study 5.4, year two [Scotland]) aims to assist personal and social development of young people, using music as a medium to bring about this change. Whilst the project is open to all young people living in the area, it worked with Polmont Young Offenders Institution to actively recruit and work with young people at risk of offending and young people who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The project helped young people to develop skills and improve the confidence, motivation, physical and mental well being and social awareness of young people. For young offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending, the project staff anticipate will have an impact on the likelihood of offending in the future.

Benefits of active involvement

5.49 There are clearly benefits for young people who engage with a YPF project, however where young people are actively involved in projects, they experience the same type of benefits but to a greater extent.

5.50 One reason for this is that the young people are often involved in activities that are more structured, so actively involved young people are more likely to engage in formal and structured training, which gives them a wide range of transferable skills. This can include accessing formal qualifications or engaging in award programmes such as the Millennium Volunteer Awards. For example, the young people involved in the LAPs were given the opportunity to work towards a SCQF Level 5 qualification in Participative Democracy, which 234 young people successfully achieved. Those involved in the LAPs reported that this qualification enhances their CV, which may have contributed to the fact that 51 per cent of the young people involved in LAPs reported that they accessed volunteering or employment as a direct result of being involved in a LAP. Young people who were actively involved in projects also reported accruing benefits from the formal training they had received:

“The training was really good for the peer leaders and we realised what we could do with it.”

“I got the opportunity to help create projects, to inspire change. I have had some brilliant training as a young person and I was able to train and inspire others.”

“I never would have done all this when I first started Youth Bank. It has given me the confidence. We get trained, then we train the younger ones. Everyone gets a qualification and they pass it on to the local Youth Banks, it is a huge chain.”

5.51 This is clearly illustrated in the project example below.

Project example: Roars Not Whispers

Roars Not Whispers was a partnership between Oxfam and the Scottish Youth Parliament. It aimed to increase young people's ability to make their voices heard and take action on justice issues. It operated a Peer Leader programme which trained two Peer Leaders from each of Scotland's 32 local authorities plus 32 additional young people as part of a thematic phase. Young people very much drove this project at all stages, on an equal footing with adults. The management structures were designed to maximise involvement. Its overarching aim was to train and empower the Peer Leaders who will go on and run their own local projects, thereby involving them in delivery.

5.52 Another reason why active involvement leads to greater benefits for young people is the greater sense of responsibility that the young people gain. They benefit from adopting leadership responsibilities, which gives them a new set of skills and a sense of empowerment. This often results in the young people feeling more positive about themselves, empowered and confident that they can make a difference. This was clearly articulated by the Respond project (case study 5.2 year two, [Scotland]).

Project example: Respond

This project provided a relationship education programme for young people. One strand of its activity was to develop young people into Peer Educators and to do this, project workers established support and information groups for the participating young people. These Peer Educators then worked with other participants and so were integral to the delivery of support.

Young people had the opportunity to be actively involved in the development of the project primarily through the evaluation process. Workshop participants were asked to complete a two stage evaluation including a form in which they provided their reasons for participating, what they enjoyed and activities they would like to take part in.

Some of the young people had the opportunity to be more actively involved in the management and delivery of the project. There was a Sub-Committee which comprised six people, which was shown to be an effective way of involving young people in the project launch and over time, demonstrating its impact. As the project became established, the Sub-Committee became a permanent feature of

the management structure with responsibilities for the day to day running of the project.

Another example is that one of the young participants was involved in the interview panel for a new project co-ordinator.

5.53 Young people involved in other projects also provided evidence in support of this finding. Young people said:

“Lends itself for leadership, it gave me a lot of confidence and showed that if you set your mind to doing something it can be achieved.”

“I feel more responsible for the skate park.”

“Leadership skills and we take responsibility for what we are doing.”

“Training, and the realisation of what we can actually do to get our voice heard.”

“Being given responsibility makes you feel good.”

“I think it's important to feel responsible for something.”

5.54 Actively involved young people often associate the skills and experience gained through formal training and taking on responsibilities within the project with their future career choices, and so the benefits from active involvement are often sustained beyond the project. Clearly, investment in active involvement is important for making a long term difference in young people's lives and improving their outcomes over time. This has the potential to impact on their social and economic well being in the future.

Benefits for projects

5.55 YPF funding was the main source of funding for the majority of projects, and so without it, the projects would not have existed or would have been on a smaller scale. YPF therefore had a high level of additionality as it enabled projects to deliver benefits for young people that they may not otherwise have achieved.

5.56 By funding projects for four years, YPF in Scotland provided a level of stability and the opportunity for strategic planning that is not always available to third sector organisations.

5.57 Projects reported that YPF helped raise their profile with stakeholders and funders, improved their links with partners, enhanced their ability to apply for funding, and improved the effectiveness of their monitoring and evaluation. All of this has the potential to improve the sustainability of project activities, by enabling projects to develop funding and partnership arrangements that will enable them to continue in the longer term. Although projects reported that YPF helped them improve in these areas, there is limited evidence that the potential of these benefits is being realised and that projects are being sustained as a result of these improvements. This may partially reflect the current funding environment.

5.58 YPF has also enabled projects to develop staff skills. In particular projects report investing in staff to develop their skills to actively involve young people, with 55 per cent reporting this. Through this, YPF has grown the capacity of the youth sector in Scotland to actively involve young people.

Benefits for communities

5.59 YPF engages young people in positive activities that can bring positive benefits to the wider community. It has helped to reduce the extent to which young people might engage in negative behaviours, and it has increased the extent to which young people are active in their community.

5.60 As reported earlier, by engaging young people in positive YPF activities, they were less likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour. Young people reported that they had gained a sense of purpose and hope for the future that engendered a will to move away from being involved in anti-social behaviour.

5.61 In terms of active citizenship, young people reported that as a result of YPF they became more involved in volunteering and in their local community. For example one young person responding to the year five survey explained that they had been involved in the projects 'Wave of Kindness' activity in which young people deliver food parcels to elderly people's houses. This type of activity helps to build community cohesion and clearly demonstrates the contribution of YPF activity in encouraging young people to be active citizens. They can help to challenge some of the negative perceptions that some adults may have of young people which is reported by project staff and young people as a key benefit of YPF projects. An example of involvement in communities is the Bankie Talking Newspaper (case study four, year three [Scotland]) and NICHE (case study one, year two [Scotland]).

Project example: Bankie Talking Newspaper

This was a community project based in Clydebank. It produced audio versions of local newspapers for visually impaired people in the area. In 2006, the project manager identified a gap in the market - there was no audio version of a paper that would cater for the interests of young people. There was a need for a talking youth magazine that would have articles on fashion, music, films, and celebrity gossip. With YPF funding, the project established successful links with several organisations including two local secondary schools and with West Dunbartonshire Youth Trust (which provided £3,000 funding for two years to cover mobile phones costs for the committee members). The project also worked closely with West Dunbartonshire Volunteer Service and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

A new audio magazine was established which was a very positive addition to the community and is an example of how YPF, working with young people can have an impact in the community

Project example: NICHE (Nurturing Individual Creativity to Harness Employment)

NICHE was developed as part of local project specifically to help older young people (aged 14 to 25) make the transition from school to employment, education or training. NICHE had two phases. Young people took part in relationship and skill building workshops. The second phase built on this initial skills development by providing the young people with volunteering opportunities and peer support. These were in industries such as retail, construction, community work, and travel and tourism.

Young people were also required to complete a community team project, during which they worked with their peers on a community based project which had a specific goal for an activity to be delivered in the community and for the young person themselves.

Legacy

5.62 In the first year of the evaluation, when projects had only just begun or were in the process of being establishing, 96 per cent of projects at that stage expected to continue their activities beyond the YPF funding period. They expected to do this through attracting funding from other funders.

5.63 Since then, the economic climate has changed considerably and the reality is that not all projects have been able to continue and those still in the YPF funding period are uncertain about their sustainability.

5.64 In the most recent survey of projects, undertaken in 2010, just over a third (35 per cent) reported that their project would be sustained after YPF funding has ended. Eleven per cent reported that the project would definitely not be sustained and 24 per cent were uncertain about their projects' future. A further 24 per cent of projects reported that some elements of the project will continue but not all.

5.65 Where projects reported they would be sustained after YPF, 88 per cent said they would access other funding sources. Almost half of those expecting to be sustained (46 per cent) indicated they would move towards some form of income generation. This would be in the form of a service level agreement and for a minority, by becoming a social enterprise. This reflects the Scottish Government's agenda of encouraging a more enterprising third sector and to its key aim of promoting social entrepreneurship.³³ Case study one at the end of this chapter shows how effective partnership working and the ability to demonstrate the project's contribution to local priorities are fundamental to ensuring a legacy beyond YPF funding.

5.66 While it is disappointing that in some cases the YPF investment has not led to continued project activity beyond the life of the YPF funding, many of the projects, organisations and staff that have benefitted from YPF funding will continue to operate within the youth sector in Scotland. The lasting benefits are

³³ Scottish Government (2008), "Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan 2008-11", p.15

the skills and experience that staff have gained, the partnerships and relationships that have been developed, and the greater understanding of young people's issues that organisations and staff now have. In their own words, project staff report:

“The learning that has been experienced, it was really amazing how the staff thought out of the box and that they gave so much to make sure that these dreams were met”.

“The foundation it has laid has increased our ability to deliver services to young people”

“Because of the young people's funding the years we've had it we have built up the profile of the organisation in the area and it is well known now”

“We have all learned new skills and we all feel much more confident working with children and young people heightened recognition of difficulties faced”

Conclusions

5.67 In the five years since the launch of YPF the political landscape in Scotland has changed considerably. However, by setting broad aims and objectives focussed on supporting young people to overcome barriers and build the confidence and skills they need to be positive and active citizens, the programme aims remain as relevant today as they were five years ago. Moreover, with local authorities having greater control over finances and local objectives set out clearly in Single Outcome Agreements, young people's projects in Scotland can be partners in achieving the objectives of Single Outcome Agreements and national outcomes. This provides an opportunity to access local funding although the current economic climate means that there are considerable budget constraints impacting on the availability of funding.

5.68 The application process is rigorous but not over onerous. Uptake of the fund in Scotland was monitored across local authority areas, and where particular areas demonstrated a low level of applications, efforts were made, through an outreach programme, to boost the number.

5.69 Active involvement of young people is a key aim of the programme and so BIG should explore opportunities for involving young people more in developing the project applications. This will include reviewing the application process and format to make it more accessible to young people, considering the language that is used, the formats for how information is provided both by BIG and in the submitted application and provide support to young people to encourage them to participate in preparing the application.

5.70 The Local Area Panels were a unique and innovative approach to involving young people in decisions that affect their local community, and were a key strength in the Scotland programme. The skills that young people learnt and networks they developed resulted in sustainable benefits for them and their local

areas. There is evidence that some young people used their experience in other similar structures for example in Youthbanks and working with the Scottish Government.

5.71 YPF has been successful in building the capacity of projects to support active involvement of young people in their projects. This is demonstrated by the fact that projects often struggled to actively involve young people at the beginning of the delivery of their project, but active involvement grew over time.

5.72 In the early years projects reported that staff skills and a lack of suitable mechanisms to involve young people were the biggest barriers. Latterly the most significant challenge was considered to be gaining and maintaining the enthusiasm and commitment of young people, These barriers can be overcome by putting in place structures and processes to involve young people, by allowing them time to develop their confidence to be involved and by making a range of options for involvement available to them in order to meet their needs.

5.73 It is therefore important to ensure projects have access to appropriate advice and support in the early stages of project set up to ensure that active involvement can be built in and achieved from the beginning.

5.74 There are many soft benefits for young people who engage in YPF projects, such as improved confidence, improved motivation and getting on better with others. These can lead to changes in the young person's behaviour and contribute to decision making that makes a tangible difference in their lives, and the lives of others. In this way the YPF has contributed to sustainable and long term benefits for young people. Outcomes identified through the evaluation include:

- A positive impact on young people's school experience and engagement with education
- Achievement of positive destinations, including transition to further, higher education, training or employment
- Reduced anti –social behaviour and risk of offending as a result of improved relationships, increased engagement and participation in activity that provides a positive outlet.
- Increase levels of active citizenship and community involvement, including take up of volunteering opportunities.

5.75 Young people who are actively involved in projects achieve greater and often longer term benefits than those who are not actively involved. The benefits for actively involved young people are maximised because the formal training and increased level of responsibility they are given gives them a unique set of skills and a sense of empowerment. Resources invested to maximise active involvement results in sustained benefits that have the potential to improve the outcomes for young people over time and so impact on their social and economic well being in the future.

5.76 With reducing inequalities a key political priority in Scotland it is important that programmes such as YPF continue to target the most disadvantaged groups of young people. The evaluation evidence shows how achieving positive outcomes with these groups can be life changing. Engaging the hardest to reach young people can however be problematic. Evidence from across the UK has demonstrated that peer recruitment can be an effective mechanism when aiming to work with this group of young people. In Scotland around a third of young people were actively involved in projects by using peer recruitment and word of mouth recommendation to encourage others to take part in activities. This helped projects in Scotland to reach those young people who are likely to benefit the most from project activity.

5.77 By providing long term funding over four years, YPF in Scotland has helped projects to develop strategically and invest in staff skills. This enhances the added value of the programme, by delivering long term change in organisational practice. This is particularly evident in relation to active involvement. The YPF is viewed as a catalyst that helped increase the skills and capacity of staff to involve young people. In this way the YPF has contributed to bringing about a change in the culture of involving young people in services and recognition of the benefits of active involvement.

5.78 Young people who engage in YPF projects feel like an investment has been made in them. This often compels them to give something back. Some move away from anti-social behaviour, while some become more active citizens. This brings benefits for communities and in particular helps to improve relationships between adults and young people in the community.

5.79 There is scope in future programmes to enhance the legacy of the programme by asking projects to develop sustainability plans for their activities. This is commensurate with the Scottish Government's policy to develop an enterprising third sector, by building a more strategic approach to financial sustainability.

6 YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Introduction

Background

6.1 This chapter presents the cumulative findings of the evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) programme in Northern Ireland over a five year period from 2006 to 2011. It synthesises the findings set out in the previous four evaluation reports (2006 to 2010), along with findings from the fieldwork carried out in the final year of the evaluation, 2010-11.

6.2 The 2010-11 fieldwork consisted of qualitative case study visits to four projects, involving interviews with staff and young people, and a telephone survey of 25 young people. The chapter explores:

- The background to the programme, including its design and fit with national policy.
- The set-up of YPF and its funded projects.
- The active involvement of young people.
- Outcomes from the programme for young people, projects and the wider community and the sustainability of these.
- The YPF legacy in Northern Ireland.

Programme design

6.3 The Young People's Fund in Northern Ireland had a total grant allocation of £15.6 million. This was available to help young people aged 0 to 25 and was intended to promote youth inclusion by targeting resources at young people at greatest risk of exclusion or offending.

6.4 The programme in Northern Ireland was split into two strands: Change UR Future, administered directly by BIG, and The Big Deal, administered by the Award Partners led by YouthNet.

6.5 The aims and outcomes of the YPF in Northern Ireland were:

- Increased participation of children and young people.
- Increased health and wellbeing for young people.
- Increased achievement and learning for young people.
- Wider family and community support for young people.

6.6 Projects were also asked to consider the following cross cutting programme themes:

- Additional needs of vulnerable, socially excluded and disaffected young people.

- Transitions from infancy to young adulthood.
- Impact of conflict and tackling sectarianism.

6.7 Change UR Future was the largest strand of the YPF in Northern Ireland with an allocation of £11.6 million. It was administered directly by BIG. It opened for applications in July 2005 and closed in September 2006 and offered grants of between £40,000 and £500,000 for a period of up to five years. The offer of funding over a five year period was unique to the Northern Ireland programme.

6.8 The Big Deal was a £4 million programme delivered through the BIG's award partner. The Big Deal brought together a number of different agencies with experience of working with children and young people in Northern Ireland, including:

- Youthnet, the Youth Network for Northern Ireland - lead partner with responsibility for the small grants programme.
- Playboard - 0-10 delivery partner Play Quest programme.
- The Northern Ireland Youth Forum - delivery partner supported by the Education and Library Boards (11-16 and 17-25 Strategic Programmes).
- The Youth Council for Northern Ireland - strategy and coordination partner.

6.9 The Big Deal strand was split into a series of strategic programmes. Three million pounds was available for targeted work with three age groups. There was also a small grants programme of £1 million distributed directly to young people. These grants were for sums between £500 and £2500. Small grants to individuals and organisations were awarded within the context of wider strategic programmes. Some research was undertaken in relation to the Big Deal in year three. The Big Deal has been evaluated in separate research studies that are available online from BIG.

6.10 The remainder of this chapter focuses on research findings from projects and young beneficiaries of Change UR Future funding.

Policy context

6.11 The aims and objectives of YPF in Northern Ireland complements "Making it R Wrld 2", in "Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge" the ten year strategy for children and young people.

6.12 The aims and objectives of YPF in Northern Ireland were well aligned with national policy priorities and with the work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCYP). NICCY's priorities for the period 2008-2011 (which were identified by young people) focused on play and leisure, giving young people a voice, mental health and well being, protection (including protection in the community) and equality.

6.13 The active participation of children and young people, a central aim of the YPF, is high on the political agenda in Northern Ireland. The centrally funded

'Participation Network', in conjunction with NICCY and other statutory and voluntary sector partners, are working to ensure the active participation of young people in all tiers of government, from school councils to the Northern Ireland Assembly and to achieve their goal of:

"Developing a culture where the views of our children and young people are routinely sought in matters which impact on their lives."³⁴

6.14 YPF activity had the potential to make a significant contribution to national policy priorities in this area and, as reported over the years, a number of projects have achieved significant profile for their activity amongst the highest layers of government in Northern Ireland.

6.15 Over the period in which YPF funded activity was delivered, the political, economic and social environment in Northern Ireland and across the UK has changed considerably. This will have implications for the ongoing delivery of activity established under YPF funding and for the development of future activity and support for young people in Northern Ireland.

6.16 A new Public Health Authority (PHA) was established in 2009 under major reform to health structures in Northern Ireland. The core function of the PHA, which brought together a wide range of health functions under one body, is the improvement of health and social well-being. Under the legislation that established it the PHA is required to create better inter-sectoral working, improved partnership working with local authorities to address the causes of poor health and reduce health inequalities. Reform of local government and education structures, brought about by the Review of Public Administration (RPA), are currently on hold. The full implementation of the RPA has been impacted by political debate and the progress of the work of the NI Assembly.

6.17 Following the 2011 election the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein remain the two largest parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Implementation of the policy agenda set during the last term is expected to continue.

6.18 Policy priorities affecting children and young people focus on early intervention and support for families to provide a safe, secure and nurturing environment, giving children the best start in life. There will be a focus on addressing disadvantage and reducing inequalities. This agenda is clearly articulated in a cross section of policy statements including Families Matter (the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety's (DHSSPS) regional family and parenting strategy launched in March 2009, the Early Years 0-6 strategy and the new Child Poverty Strategy; Improving Children's Lives, launched in March 2011.

6.19 The Government has reiterated its commitment to play and leisure as set out in the ten year strategy for children and young people and policy recognises that particular groups of children, such as those in poverty and those with disabilities, may need additional support to gain maximum benefit from play.

³⁴ Our Children and Young People—Our Pledge; OFMDFM, 2006

6.20 Within the context of this agenda, YPF activity has the potential to make a significant and valuable contribution. With public sector budgets in Northern Ireland (as elsewhere in the UK) set to be squeezed over the coming years it is increasingly important for third sector, voluntary and community organisations to align their activities with local and national policy priorities and to clearly demonstrate their contribution.

6.21 Going forward, learning, skills and employability will be key priorities for local and national level government. The revised literacy and numeracy strategy (launched in March 2011) aims to raise standards across the board in these key skills as well as closing the gaps between the lowest and highest achievers.

6.22 Prior to the recent election, the government committee for Employment and Learning published the results of its inquiry into Young People (16-24) Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The result of the inquiry is the acceptance of the need for a cross-Departmental strategy to support NEET young people. A public consultation to inform the development of the strategy was launched at the end of March 2011. Once completed (in June 2011) this consultation is expected to inform the development of policy and programmes for years to come.

6.23 As the evidence presented throughout this chapter shows, activity established under the YPF is well placed to contribute to this agenda by supporting the development of personal, social and employability skills for young people, providing opportunities to enjoy and achieve, facilitating volunteering opportunities and raising aspirations.

Setting up YPF

Background

6.24 Change UR Future opened for applications in 2005 and was oversubscribed. The programme closed to applications in September 2006. As project activity in Northern Ireland commenced at a slower rate than in other countries, primary research with beneficiaries did not begin until year two of the evaluation.

6.25 Change UR Future awarded £10,689,986 to 52 projects across the country. Awards ranged from £62,400 to £498,613 for up to five years.

6.26 Change UR Future was intended to fund innovative projects and new ideas in the youth sector. Applications were scored based on their alignment and contribution with the aims and outcomes of the programme and the level of young people's involvement. Ongoing performance was monitored based on project specific outcomes and targets.

6.27 The YPF received a large volume of applications. Around 17 per cent were successful in their application. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of awards across the programme aims and outcomes. All of the awards were intended to increase the participation of young people. The vast majority of projects also indicated that they contributed to one or more of the other programme outcomes. With regards

to the cross cutting themes, three quarters of awards supported young people in the transition from infancy to adulthood and almost half of funded projects addressed the impact of conflict and tackling sectarianism.

Table 6.1 – Contribution of projects to the aims and outcomes of the YPF

Aims and outcomes	Percentage of projects
Increased participation of young people	100%
Increased achievement and learning for young people	98%
Additional needs of vulnerable, socially excluded and disaffected young people	94%
Increased health and well-being for young people	90%
Transitions from infancy to adulthood	75%
The impact of conflict and tackling sectarianism	44%
Helping bring about wider family and community support ³⁵	4%

Source: BIG 2009

Who benefits from YPF activity

6.28 The distribution of awards varied across Northern Ireland. BIG data showed that funding was focused largely in and around Belfast. Around a third of all awards were for Belfast based project activity. This reflects the concentration of people and services in and around the city.

6.29 The majority of projects (74 per cent in year three) reported that they were targeting activity on those young people at risk of exclusion (social or economic) or at risk of offending (a specific aim of the YPF in Northern Ireland).

6.30 This broad definition of target groups was interpreted by projects in different ways. Projects worked with a wide range of young people who may be marginalised in society; including young people from deprived backgrounds, young people with physical and sensory impairments, young people with mental health issues and young parents.

6.31 In year three, 52 per cent of projects also reported that their activities were open to all young people in the area, indicating that while marginalised young people were involved, and actively recruited, they were often not the sole beneficiaries.

6.32 Projects were confident that they were engaging vulnerable and hard to reach young people in their activities. There was certainly case study and anecdotal evidence of the participation of young people who could be considered vulnerable or hard to reach. Overall however, there is no conclusive evidence that the YPF activity was successful at YPF level in engaging the very hardest to reach young people and those least likely to engage with services. There was

³⁵ This outcome was optional for projects and was not fully recorded on BIG's data management system, therefore the figure is not a true reflection of the proportion of projects contributing to this outcome.

also only limited evidence of innovative practice in specific, targeted recruitment of young people in these groups.

6.33 Among those projects working in a professional capacity to support young people with specific issues (often personal, family or health issues), engagement tended to be by referrals through formal channels. For example, in one project working with young people with a history of substance misuse, referral was primarily through healthcare professionals or the criminal justice system. Whereas, for those projects providing recreational or diversionary activities, including educational activities, peer recruitment and 'word of mouth' recommendation was seen as the most effective way of engaging young people. Project staff reported that young people, particularly marginalised and excluded young people, often trust friends and peers as a source of information and advice and are more likely to engage on their recommendation and if they are already attending.

Working with BIG

6.34 Projects felt that the processes for working with BIG were effective and did not report any significant difficulties with the application process for YPF funding. Although the application was detailed and lengthy, it was considered reasonable for the level of funding sought. Projects felt the application was less complex and demanding than other application processes that staff had experienced.

6.35 In Northern Ireland, as in other countries, the involvement of young people in the application process (from the project side) was relatively limited. Young people were often asked to contribute their ideas informally but project workers reported that the application was too long, and not well suited to the greater involvement of young people.

6.36 The on-going reporting requirements for BIG were not considered over onerous. Projects valued the flexibility that BIG permitted in the use of funding as it allowed projects to develop their initial plans in line with the changing needs of the project and young people. This was very useful in Northern Ireland as project funding was allocated for a five year period, during which time circumstances could and did change some projects.

6.37 For many projects, the YPF grant funded salaries for project workers to establish a new service or develop an existing service for young people. The ability to use funding for salaries was considered a strength of the YPF.

Active Involvement

Ways in which young people were actively involved

6.38 The active involvement of young people was a key requirement of YPF in Northern Ireland and across the UK. In Northern Ireland young people were involved in programme administration and grant decisions through the Big Deal.

6.39 Final decisions on small grants from the Big Deal were made by young people from the Big Deal Children and Young People's Forum. These young

people were recruited through the Big Deal strategic programmes and were provided with training to help them effectively assess grant applications.

6.40 Young people were also involved in assessing grant applications for Change UR Future (the focus of the evaluation in Northern Ireland) through the national committee.

6.41 The nature and extent of the involvement at project level varied both between and within projects. Initial project ideas were generally developed in response to a need identified by young people. In most cases however, the development, delivery and management of the projects was handled predominately by project staff with a lower level of involvement from young people than might have been expected or desired,

6.42 Involvement of young people tended to focus on informal feedback on activities. In saying this, involvement activities increased as projects moved from delivery to implementation. It was at this stage, when ideas had been translated into actions and project activity was up and running that young people were more motivated to be involved.

6.43 There is evidence that active involvement increased over the course of the evaluation. In year three, 56 per cent of projects surveyed said that their project was managed exclusively or predominantly by project workers. This was compared to 98 per cent in year two showing a notable change in the balance between staff and young people.

6.44 The extent to which young people were involved in higher level activities also increased throughout the evaluation. For example the percentage of projects reporting the existence of youth forums and steering groups increased from 50 per cent to 78 per cent between years two and three.

6.45 Some case study projects demonstrated significant levels of involvement among young people. In year three the evaluation team visited the Sean Dolan's Y.A.X project in Londonderry (case study example five, year three [Northern Ireland])

Project example: Y.A.X Project

The project was run by a Youth Committee. Committee members were nominated and elected by their peers. Their roles mirrored those of the organisations' Executive Committee. Roles included a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and development officer. Young people were provided with training at the start of their committee term to assist them in their allotted role. The Committee had a budget to provide activities and was involved in all stages of the planning, development and management of project activity. The Youth Committee reported to the Executive Committee and was supported by project staff to run the project.

6.46 Similarly, the Youth At Risk project, run by Lurgan YMCA (case study example three, year five [Northern Ireland]), was also guided by a youth committee.

Project example: Youth at Risk

The committee met weekly after drop in sessions. They consulted with other young participants to get their ideas and involve them in decision making. The youth committee was a link between young people and the YMCA Board of Directors. Members of the youth committee also sat on the Board and had voting rights within the organisation. The current secretary of the youth committee said:

“It made me feel special and empowered as I got to make decisions and the other young people felt I would be good in this role... it's not tokenism, I have a real input and I feel listened to by the adults”

6.47 The changing nature and increased levels of active involvement across the evaluation period were largely attributed to the YPF grant. In year four, 94 per cent of projects surveyed indicated that YPF funding had improved their ability to actively involve young people. This included:

- Equipping young people with the skills they needed to be actively involved.
- Developing the skills of staff to support young people to be actively involved.
- Raising the awareness of project staff about the variety of ways in which it was possible to involve young people.

6.48 Projects reported that it took time to put in place the structures to facilitate involvement and actively engage young people in a meaningful way. This is a potential explanation for the increase in active involvement that was observed over the course of the evaluation. In spite of progress in active involvement, projects continued to report barriers throughout the study. These often focused on lack of confidence among young people to be involved and the transient nature of young people which made it difficult to achieve meaningful and sustained involvement.

6.49 Case study research and evidence collated in the Good Practice Guides that accompany this report highlight examples of how these barriers can be overcome. Significantly, projects must recognise that additional resources are required to support active involvement. In overcoming barriers projects can:

- Provide training and ongoing support for young people to develop confidence and capacity: This may include practical support (such as assistance in taking minutes at meetings, developing activities and resources, organising and planning) and emotional support to develop confidence and self-esteem. Training and support may be formal or informal depending on the needs of young people. An example is provided by the RNIB Eye Matter Campaign for Equality (case study example six, year three [Northern Ireland]).

Project example: Eye Matter Campaign for Equality

Eye Matter was a campaign group for young people with a visual impairment. The group campaigned for positive change to promote accessibility and equality for those with a visual impairment. While some young people were very proactive in terms of campaigning, others lacked the confidence to become heavily involved straight away. Project workers recognised this and gave young people the opportunity to complete the OCN Level 2 Preparation for Participation qualification. This allowed young people to become involved gradually, in the manner and at the speed that suited them. Project workers noted a significant increase in participation over the course of the funding period. This happened in line with increasing confidence and skills of the young people as they realised that they had the power to make real and lasting change

- Recognise the practical barriers to involvement: Involvement which requires frequent attendance at the project may result in costs for young people, for example transport costs, meals and refreshments. Projects could consider providing transport to and from the venue, providing meals and snacks. For example Feile An Phobail (case study example two, year five [Northern Ireland]) and the Inside Out Programme run by Belfast Activity Centre (case study example two, year four [Northern Ireland]) provided transport to get young people safely to and from the project and thereby reduce barriers to involvement.

6.50 A further barrier to involvement was believed to be the nature of project activity itself. In some cases, particularly those projects delivering specialist and professional support (such as counselling or addiction services) it was not considered practical or desirable to involve young people in any way other than shaping the service provided to them personally. An example of a project of this nature was provided by the Altnagelvin Teenage Pregnancy Support Project (case study example seven, year three [Northern Ireland]).

Project example: Altnagelvin Teenage Pregnancy Support Project

The project provided specialist ante natal and post natal care for teenagers and vulnerable young people, to help ensure positive outcomes and futures for mothers and their babies. The specialist midwives gave young people ownership of their care by setting appointments at times and places suggested by the young person and by reconfirming the appointment with them immediately prior to the visit to ensure that they were still happy for it to go ahead. Expectant mothers had the opportunity to feedback on the services through structured questionnaires. Those receiving additional support through their pregnancy indicated that they were happy with the level of involvement they had and that they valued the peace of mind provided by the service. These are young people who are going through a time of enormous change as they prepare to be mothers. Involvement in the management and delivery of project activity is unlikely to be appropriate.

6.51 By year three, when the focus of the evaluation moved towards key learning and development within the projects, there was clear recognition among staff that their knowledge and capacity of how and why to involve young people had developed. Some projects now recognised that, while they thought they had involved young people in the past, there was more that they could have done. Staff developed a greater understanding and aspiration for involving young people.

6.52 This was illustrated by case study research in year four with the Tullymore Young Peoples Project based in the Upper Andersontown Community Forum (Case study example eight, year four [Northern Ireland]). During the case study visit a board member commented that his views on the involvement of young people had been transformed after having seen what young people can achieve when they are given the opportunity and the means to do so. Young people at this project guided the development of project activities and influenced the types of courses and programmes that were provided. They organised and facilitated many project activities and held/ managed the budgets to fund them. Project workers assisted young people to organise the activities that they chose to do.

Numbers of young people actively involved

6.53 While the majority of projects involved young people in some way, further analysis showed that the numbers of actively involved young people varied among projects. In general relatively small numbers of young people were heavily involved in the development, delivery, management and evaluation of activity.

6.54 In year three the project workers were asked to identify the numbers of young people actively involved in different activities. Table 6.2 shows that informal and structured feedback was the main way in which projects involved young people. In terms of higher level involvement, for example participation in a youth forum or steering group, just under 80 per cent of projects have these structures in place with an average of a fifth of participants involved.

Table 6.2 – Percentage of project beneficiaries actively involved

Means of involvement	Percentage of projects employing method	Mean percentage of young people in project who are involved (%)
Review through informal feedback	93%	85%
Review through structured feedback	85%	73%
Design activity	89%	37%
Engage other young people	81%	39%
Youth forum/ steering group	78%	20%
Manage certain projects	63%	14%
Delivery activity	56%	21%
YP rep. on management committee	37%	6%
Recruitment of staff	33%	4%

Source: Wavehill survey of YPF projects 2009 – 27 responses

Note: Percentage of involved young people based on projects which could provide figures

6.55 On the whole young people were happy with the level of their involvement. In the survey of young people carried out in year five 77 per cent reported that they were not involved in running the project and that they were happy with this. Only two young people reported that they would have liked the opportunity to be more involved in running the project.

6.56 As the next section shows, there was evidence of significant benefits for young people as a result of active involvement. Hence good practice in the active involvement of young people was a key evaluation theme in year five.

Achieving programme outcomes

Benefits for young people

6.57 Young people in YPF projects can be split into two broad groups; those involved primarily as participants in project activity and those who were actively involved in the development, delivery, management and review of activity. This section considers the two groups in turn.

Benefits for participants

6.58 In the early years of the evaluation, project workers reported benefits for participants including increased confidence, improved relationships with others, improved communication skills, increased engagement and greater social awareness. Over 80 per cent of projects reported these benefits for young people in year two. In year three, staff commented on the three most significant benefits to young people. Once again, confidence, engagement and improved relationships emerged strongly. Achievement and learning was also cited as a significant benefit for young participants.

6.59 These findings were reinforced by research with young people. In year five a telephone survey of 26 young people in Northern Ireland showed that, in line with the views of project workers, young people experienced a range of benefits as a result of participation. In most cases benefits met or exceeded their expectations.

6.60 Over 90 per cent of young people reported that as a result of YPF they had:

- developed new skills and learnt new things
- had fun
- met new people
- felt more confident
- felt valued and like their views mattered
- felt more motivated
- felt better about themselves

- got on better with others and communicated better with others.

6.61 When asked to describe the benefits that had accrued from their YPF project, young people frequently spoke about confidence, skills and friendships. Responses included:

“[I have gained] confidence and qualifications I wouldn't have had otherwise. It has changed my life. It's given me a better range of certificates that I can take to employers”

“I have a lot more confidence and developed a lot of skills, especially swimming. I've applied to Camp America and been accepted. I wouldn't have done that before as I didn't have the confidence to or the skills. It [the project] has been really important to me. Before I wasn't that confident, I couldn't communicate or talk to people properly and I can talk to anyone now”

“It was very important, we learnt new skills, how to go about relationships and who to go to if we have problems. We know what to do if something is wrong and how to respect others”

“This has given me freedom and confidence and a chance to meet other people. Here it doesn't matter who you are, everyone has time for you”.

6.62 The evaluation also found evidence of more tangible benefits to young people, including progression to positive post school destinations and including increased engagement with education. While numbers involved in survey work were small, this shows that for some young people there were significant, tangible and long term benefits as a result of YPF activity.

6.63 Evidence showed that activities have:

- **Helped young people achieve positive destinations:** Evidence from project workers and young people showed that the skills and experience developed through YPF activity have contributed towards young people achieving and maintaining positive destinations.

In year five, seven of nineteen young people surveyed reported that they had gained a college place and that their participation in YPF activity had assisted them with this. Similarly, six out of nineteen young people had moved into employment and four into a training programme.

The development of skills and positive outcomes for young people was illustrated by a number of projects across the five years of the evaluation. For example:

Project example: Tulleymore Young People's Project

At Tulleymore Young People's Project (case study example four, year four [Northern Ireland]) two young volunteers spoke about the wide range of skills they had developed. One of the volunteers said that she left school with no qualifications but now holds a range of certificates, including child protection, first aid and sexual health awareness, which have helped her

build a strong CV. Project workers were also looking into possibilities for her to complete GCSEs in English and mathematics – a requirement for most FE courses – with them. As a result of their involvement with the project both young people reported that they wanted to become youth workers

A further example was provided by NICHS Community Training Project (case study example four, year five [Northern Ireland]). One young man involved in NICHS spoke about the skills and qualifications he has gained through his involvement and the way it has motivated him to move into further training and employment. He said:

“it looks good on my CV...and it gave me the confidence to train as an electrician and I now work with an electrician - I'm loving it”

Similarly, a young person involved in the youth at risk programme (case study example three, year five [Northern Ireland]) commented that she took part in a study time programme in preparation for her GCSE's. The project provided additional support and gave her the motivation to study. Without the support and encouragement of the project she does not feel she would have passed the exams, she has now gone on to college, has a part time job, an interest in politics and is a representative on the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

Qualifications and skills were long lasting benefits that were highly valued by a participant of the Youth Arts Programme (case study example two, year five [Northern Ireland]).

Project example: Youth Arts Programme

The young man was a member of the youth sub group and was involved in organising and managing a number of events including the new Youth Fringe Festival. As a result of his involvement he developed a range of skills and achieved recognised qualifications. He said:

“Its been a really good experience; it enables you to be involved in a range of activities that you would never have the chance to do. It has given me confidence, the skills and training. I have organised concerts and events and I have obtained a range of qualifications.”

The young man is now a trainee youth leader and is attending college to study youth work. He feels that he would never have considered youth work as a career option and that the project gave him the skills, confidence and the opportunity to do so. To help gain experience of youth work he now volunteers at the project and assists with the outreach work.

Comments from young people involved in other projects also highlighted the impact of YPF activity in developing skills and supporting entry to positive destinations. For example:

“this is good work experience and experience for university. It will have long term benefits for university and employment”

- **Promoted engagement with education:** Almost a third of young people surveyed reported that as a result of YPF activity they began to enjoy school more. A small number (three of nineteen young people surveyed in year five) also reported that YPF activity contributed to their improved behaviour in school, achievement of better grades and staying on in school longer. Increased engagement with education at a young age can bring about considerable social value and cost savings to the economy as a whole. This is discussed further subsequently.

Case study evidence supports the assertion that these impacts are a result of increased motivation and engagement of young people. Young people interviewed for the evaluation consistently reported that YPF activity developed their confidence and their belief that they could achieve in life as well as raising their aspirations to succeed.

This is illustrated by the NICHS Community Training Project (case study example four, year five [Northern Ireland]) where one 15 year old participant who is going onto the Level two programme this year spoke about the way the Community Training Project has motivated her to succeed. She said:

“I'm going to be doing my GCSE's next year; I'm going to work harder because I learnt you have to work to get things and I want to have a good job and a good life”

The Armagh Travellers Support Group (case study example one, year five [Northern Ireland]) supports young travellers in afterschool clubs at their school. Project workers highlighted the story of a nine year old boy.

Project example: The Armagh Travellers Support Group

The boy was disruptive in the classroom and struggled to complete homework as his parents were unable to help him due to their own literacy difficulties. Through the afterschool club he was given the opportunity to play with his peers, to talk about his culture and to hear others talk about their lives. He was given the chance to enhance his learning in a safe and comfortable teaching environment. As a result of the additional support received the boy has shown himself to be academically gifted. Teachers report that he performs well in subjects across the board. He is highly motivated and shows great enthusiasm. This is demonstrated by his excellent attendance.

- **Reduced anti-social behaviour:** Core outcomes of the YPF in Northern Ireland included addressing the needs of socially excluded and disaffected young people. Many projects demonstrated a contribution to this by providing diversionary activity which engaged young people, steered them away from negative behaviours and peer groups and encouraged a positive contribution in the local community.

Projects and young people provided anecdotal evidence that, for small numbers, this resulted in reduced risk of anti-social and/ or offending

behaviour. Two of the young people surveyed in year five reported that involvement in YPF activity had helped them to stay out of trouble with the police. One of these young people commented:

“If this group wasn't here I would have been on the streets and drinking like most of my friends”.

Similar findings emerged through case studies. For example, the Sean Dolans Y.A.X project (case study example three, year three [Northern Ireland]).

Project example: Y.AX. Project

Y.A.X was a youth led project providing a positive outlet for young people from the Creggan area of Londonderry, particularly those who did not usually engage in community activity. The project provided a range of activities for young people aged 12 to 19 including, education and awareness raising workshops, art, drama, cooking, dance and sports, access to accredited courses and a range of social activities including alcohol free discos, pool competitions, band nights, away days and residential trips.

The project developed a successful intergenerational buddying programme. This was instigated by young people who wanted to reduce feelings of fear and intimidation that elderly residents had towards them and other young people. They started to visit older people in their streets, run errands and help them out where they could. At Christmas young people organised fundraising events to send Christmas hampers to the elderly people that they were buddying.

6.64 By achieving these types of benefits YPF has the potential to help reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes for young people such as becoming NEET, truancy, school exclusion and anti-social behaviour. It is not possible to accurately assess contribution of YPF activity to reducing these outcomes for young people as negative outcomes are influenced by a broad range of inter related issues but it is clear that YPF has a role to play.

6.65 Equally, from such a small sample of beneficiaries it is not possible to estimate the scale of these impacts for all beneficiaries of YPF activity.

6.66 However, it is widely recognised that these negative outcomes are very costly to society. For example, the average cost of managing the exclusion of one young person from school is £720³⁶. The average cost of one young person becoming NEET in Northern Ireland is around £5,555 per year in terms of lost of earnings and the cost of benefits³⁷. The average lifetime cost of a young person becoming NEET in the UK is estimated at £56,301³⁸.

³⁶New Philanthropy Capital. Misspent Youth: The costs of truancy and exclusion. Martin Brookes, Emile Goodall and Lucy Healy. June 2007

³⁷ Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service; Young People Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET), November 2009 available online at:

6.67 If (as reported in year four) the cost per head of YPF activity in Northern Ireland was around £438, the YPF potentially represented considerable value to society if these benefits were realised for a significant proportion of YPF participants. Additional detail on the cost analysis of YPF is provided in the year four evaluation report.

Benefits of active involvement

6.68 Active involvement delivers largely similar benefits as participation in project activities. However, the scale of the benefits were more significant for those young people who were actively involved.

6.69 Actively involved young people highlighted enjoyment of project activities, skills development, increased confidence, increased engagement and improved relationships as benefits. In addition, case study research showed the benefits of involvement in relation to the development of employability, personal and social skills, including presentation and communication skills, leadership, team working and assertiveness. Young people reported feeling empowered by their role in their project; they valued the trust that was placed in them and the opportunity to be heard and to have an influence.

6.70 In year three, the evaluation drew a distinction between operational involvement and strategic involvement (see year three report, chapter four). Examples of each in relation to Northern Ireland include:

- Operational involvement: the youth committee of the Y.A.X. project met on a regular basis to discuss current and future project activity, identify and cost future opportunities, plan and deliver the club newsletter and address any difficulties in relation to on-going activities, such as low attendance.
- Strategic involvement: young people involved in the Eye Matter – Campaign for Equality were involved in campaign activity by identifying the issues to be addressed, who they should approach and how they should frame the issues. Project workers took care of daily aspects of running the project such as event organisation, finance and funding.

6.71 These categories were not mutually exclusive. While some projects were characterised primarily by one type or the other, in some other projects, there was both operational and strategic involvement of young people.

6.72 In terms of the benefits accruing to young people, the findings showed more similarities than differences between the two groups of involved young people. There does not appear to be a particular type of involvement (strategic or operational) that brings about greater benefits than the other. We therefore conclude that it is the process of involvement that is more significant in achieving impacts than the specific activities undertaken or the aims and outcomes of the project itself. Young people said:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/researchandlibrary/2009/11009.pdf>

³⁸ University of York research undertaken for the Audit Commission: Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, July 2010.

“it means a lot when someone asks you to be involved...it gets your creative side going”

“I realised what young people can achieve, young people are on the same level as adults”

Benefits for projects

6.73 In the majority of cases the YPF provided all, or the vast majority of, project specific funding. In year four more than half of the projects surveyed indicated that in the absence of YPF the project would not have been delivered at all. For others, YPF funding allowed the projects to operate with greater capacity (in terms of the activities delivered and support provided) and at a greater scale than would otherwise have been possible. This would undoubtedly have impacted on the scale of benefits accruing to young people. One project worker said:

“We wouldn't have been able to run the number and variety of programmes that we have, we would have been operating with the basics and with volunteers”

6.74 YPF funding enhanced the sustainability of projects and, in some cases, their parent organisations as it allowed them to recruit and train experienced, qualified staff and invest in project resources and infrastructure.

6.75 The degree of stability brought about by the five year funding period has allowed forward planning and the development of strategic partnerships. These partnerships brought benefits for young people, staff and organisations.

6.76 Partnership working allowed projects to access resources, experience and expertise of other agencies. This enhanced the support provided to young people and the efficiency of YPF projects. A clear example of this came in year three from the RNIB Eye Matter Campaign for Equality.

Project example: Eye Matter Campaign for Equality

The group worked in partnership with Public Achievement; a youth focused civic education organisation to make effective campaigning a realistic goal. Public Achievement delivered training to the members of the group and took the lead in technical aspects of their activities such as filming. Without their knowledge, expertise and resources the group could not have achieved such a high profile for their work.

6.77 As a result of partnership working, some YPF projects helped bring about greater coordination in service delivery, improved efficiency and reduced duplication in provision. This was illustrated by the LILAC project (case study five in the year four report), which provided support to children, young people, their families and schools across Northern Ireland. The LILAC project has now received mainstream funding and in 2010 the team won “Outstanding Team of the Year” at the teaching awards in London. Award judges commented:

“The team was doing amazing work with its pupils and was now indispensable”.

“A huge gap has been filled by this team, who are enthusiastic and willing to make a difference.”³⁹

6.78 Across the UK, the extended funding period of the YPF was credited with enabling the establishment of strong partnerships and greater strategic and forward planning. What is not clear is if the longer funding period in Northern Ireland (five years as opposed to three or four years in other countries) enabled the establishment of stronger strategic partnerships or greater sustainability of activity when compared with the other three countries.

Benefits for communities

6.79 The evaluation found evidence that YPF activity made a positive difference to communities in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to volunteering and involvement in community activities.

6.80 In year four of the evaluation, five out of twelve young people interviewed in the telephone survey reported that participation had facilitated their involvement in other community activities and a quarter were taking part in voluntary activity. In year five, eight of nineteen young people who responded to this question reported taking part in voluntary activity as a result of their YPF project. Five of the nineteen young people stated that they had taken part in other community activities.

6.81 Volunteering and community involvement is considered to strengthen communities and increase social capital. This is currently high on the political agenda in Northern Ireland and across the UK. Historically, non-party political collective action is low in Northern Ireland. This may be explained, in part, by historical and cultural differences between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The YPF in Northern Ireland sought to address this through core and cross-cutting project outcomes which considered community issues. Projects embraced these outcomes from the outset. The survey of 40 projects (77 per cent of all beneficiaries) carried out in year two reported that⁴⁰:

- 91 per cent of projects were helping to increase the participation of young people.
- 85 per cent were helping to bring about wider family and community support for young people.
- 50 per cent were addressing the impact of conflict and tackling sectarianism.

6.82 Projects contributed to these aims in a number of ways. Common activities included:

³⁹Source: The LILAC Project available online at <http://www.lilacni.org.uk/index.php?action=view&id=25&module=newsmodule&src=%40random47b9fd763b212>

⁴⁰ Year two findings are quoted here as this was the largest survey of projects over the evaluation period.

- educational activities
- awareness raising and campaigning activities
- voluntary activity in the community
- bringing young people and communities together to take part in positive and enjoyable community activities.

6.83 Examples of each type of activity are provided below:

Project example: Educational activities

This was illustrated by Generation Health (case study example four, year three [Northern Ireland]). YPF funding was secured by the Ballybeen Women's Centre Peer Education Project to deliver 'Generation Health'; a new health initiative for young people. At the time of the case study interview the project had eight active peer educators delivering evening sessions in the centre and outreach activity in local schools. Peer educators volunteered to be involved in the project. They included young people who had themselves attended peer education as participants, who had benefited from the project and wanted to give something back and those who wished to work with young people in their future career and felt that involvement would provide valuable experience.

Project example: Awareness raising and campaigning activities

An example came from Politics for Life (case study example 5.1, year two [Northern Ireland]). The project aimed to engage young women in decision making in the local community, motivating them to take an interest in politics, developing their knowledge and giving them the confidence and skills to be proactive about issues that affected them.

Project example: Voluntary activity in the community

Young people from the Tullymore Young People's Project (case study example six, year four [Northern Ireland]), were involved in a range of community activities intended to break down barriers between young people and other sections of the community and ensure that young people were viewed in a positive light.

Examples of community activities included:

- An environmental project where young people spent the day clearing up litter from the streets. The event received a lot of publicity and the local MP joined the young people to help.
- Young people made flower baskets which they distributed to elderly people in the neighbourhood
- Young people assisted elderly members of the community by going to the shops for them, doing their garden

Project example: Bringing young people and communities together to take part in positive and enjoyable community and recreational activities

An example of this was provided by Féile an Phobail (case study example two, year three [Northern Ireland]). The organisation provided a year round programme of free and accessible activities and events which celebrated diversity and talent in the local area and addressed pertinent social issues. Arts activities had a strong community focus, bringing a sense of identity, belonging and pride to young people.

6.84 Although it is difficult to quantify the impacts, YPF activities were considered a significant catalyst for community involvement and there is considerable anecdotal evidence to support this finding.

Legacy

6.85 Evaluation fieldwork in Northern Ireland began in year two of the study when the majority of projects were in the first year of delivery. At this point only 38 per cent of projects were confident that their activity would be sustained following the YPF funding period. This decreased (to 22 per cent) in year three.

6.86 By year four there was greater optimism with just over two thirds of projects confident that activity would continue. For some projects this reflected the view that their activity had addressed a gap in provision for young people and that this was now recognised by funders and statutory organisations.

6.87 In year four of the evaluation, projects were considering a mix of options for sustaining their activities. The largest number (14 projects/70 per cent) reported that they would seek alternative sources of grant funding. A small number of projects reported that social enterprise activity would contribute to sustainability (three projects) or that they hoped to secure a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a mainstream delivery partner (three projects).

6.88 Due to the extended funding period in Northern Ireland a number of projects (six projects/ 30 per cent) had not fully considered their options at the time of the survey.

6.89 While it is disappointing that in some cases the YPF activity will not continue beyond the funding period, there will be an on-going legacy as a result of increased capacity, skills and experience in the youth sector workforce and through the strategic partnerships that have been established.

6.90 To increase the legacy of future funding streams BIG should require projects to consider their exit strategy or options of sustainability at the application stage or at an early point in the funding period.

Conclusions

6.91 The social, economic and political landscape in Northern Ireland has changed considerably since the start of the evaluation. As in the other countries, the broad based aims of the fund and the focus on increased participation of young people has ensured that the programme has continued to be relevant.

6.92 The broad aims of the YPF allowed considerable diversity in the activity that was funded. Project activity ranged from the provision of information, advice and support services for young people with specific personal, social and medical issues to address to the provision of recreational, leisure and diversionary activity; particularly arts and sports activities that brought young people together with others from different religious and social backgrounds. Many projects also provided opportunities for young people to develop their skills and gain accredited qualifications and to take part in lobbying, awareness raising and campaigning activities.

6.93 This meant the programme was heavily oversubscribed. BIG is well regarded by projects and is viewed as a funder of choice. Projects value the flexibility of BIG during the grant management process and while application and on-going reporting requirements are rigorous, they are not considered over onerous.

6.94 At programme level young people were successfully involved in decision making at different levels and in a number of different ways. Their involvement on the national committee and the small grants programme enhanced the decision making process by bringing a young persons perspective. Young people involved in decision making and young people who received small grants developed technical, personal and social skills which have enhanced their aspirations and prospects and facilitated their involvement in other activities.

6.95 At project level In Northern Ireland, as in other countries, the involvement of young people in the application process and ongoing monitoring and reporting to BIG was limited. To increase the participation of young people in this area, BIG could consider alternative application and reporting formats. Suggestions from projects include using picture and film evidence from young people and reporting visits by grants officers so that young people could verbally describe the value of the activity for them.

6.96 The active involvement of children and young people in other aspects of project activity, design, delivery, management and evaluation, has been achieved to varying degrees. It is problematic to assess the overall level of success as there were no clear guidelines around expectations for projects in this area.

6.97 Some projects in Northern Ireland would have benefited from resources similar to Participation Works in England. This would have helped to raise awareness of the benefits of involvement, the range of available opportunities and provided the necessary support to achieve meaningful involvement more widely.

6.98 There is evidence that the level of involvement increased over the course of the evaluation as projects developed and capacity increased. Some of the YPF projects in Northern Ireland clearly embraced active involvement and case study research has highlighted the benefits to young people, projects and staff as a result.

6.99 YPF was a catalyst for bringing about increased levels of involvement for young people. Funding helped projects to equip young people with the skills for involvement, develop skills of staff to support involvement and raise awareness of the possibilities and benefits of active involvement.

6.100 In spite of progress projects continued to report barriers throughout the study. Barriers often focused on the lack of confidence among young people to be involved and the transient nature of young people which made it difficult to achieve meaningful and sustained involvement.

6.101 However, it was often possible to overcome barriers to involvement by providing training and ongoing support for young people to develop confidence and capacity and by providing additional resources (including transport, meals and snacks) to overcome practical barriers.

6.102 Benefits of YPF activity for young people extend beyond project activity and impact on their experiences, perceptions and attitudes in other areas of their lives. Specifically, there is evidence that confidence, self-esteem, increased engagement and the development of a range of employability and life skills are supporting young people in the transition to adulthood. Significant outcomes for young people include increased engagement with education, improved prospects for moving into and sustaining positive destinations, reduced anti-social behaviour, increased contribution in the local community, active citizenship, and greater aspirations for the future. It is not however possible to quantify the scale of these benefits for young people or society as a whole.

6.103 These benefits accrued to young people involved in different activities and those from very different backgrounds. This is evidence of a common set of skills and attributes that are valued by young people regardless of their individual situations. These included meeting new people, increased confidence, developing new skills and learning new things, feeling better about themselves and having fun. Projects successfully identified these as core for young people and designed activities that were tailored to their needs and which brought about these benefits.

6.104 The evidence shows that very often, regardless of the specific activity, simply bringing young people together to engage in a positive activity where they can meet new young people and challenge themselves to try something new, leads to the benefits described for most young people who engage.

6.105 Active involvement increases the scale of benefits for young people, particularly in terms of employability skills. It can also bring about opportunities for future volunteering and community involvement. Young people who are actively involved report feeling empowered and having a high level of ownership in the activity. This can in turn affect participation in civil society (at a local or national level) more widely. Projects with considerable levels of active involvement are better able to meet and adapt to the needs of young people.

6.106 There are situations in which high levels of active involvement may not be appropriate for a young person at a particular time in their life. Similarly, young

people will not always want to be involved and this is their choice. However, the benefits of involvement are such that where possibilities for meaningful involvement exist these should be encouraged and developed by projects. These opportunities should remain open to young participants throughout their time with the project.

6.107 Addressing inequality is a priority in Northern Ireland. YPF and future funding streams have the potential to contribute by targeting vulnerable and hard to reach young people. Young people in these groups were certainly included in YPF activity and there is evidence of significant impacts for some. Overall however it is unclear the extent to which projects successfully engaged those young people who are the most vulnerable and marginalised. Evidence from Northern Ireland and across the UK demonstrated the effectiveness of peer recruitment and word of mouth recommendation when trying to engage vulnerable and hard to reach young people. Future funding streams should consider new ways to capture and monitor the effectiveness of these approaches.

6.108 There is high additionality associated with YPF funding and the majority of projects would not have happened or would not have operated with the same capacity or scale in the absence of this support. Long term funding, over a five year period, brought stability to projects. It allowed future planning and the development of strategic partnerships which have enhanced services and support for young people.

6.109 The YPF is a catalyst that helped increase the skills and capacity of staff to involve young people. In this way the YPF has contributed to bringing about a change in the culture of involving young people in services and recognition of the benefits of active involvement.

6.110 Projects in Northern Ireland are now coming to the end of their funding period and, prior to the economic downturn, there was optimism that much activity would continue. It is not possible to assess the impact of the changing climate for YPF funded activity at this time.

6.111 In some cases, such as the LILAC project, which supports young people with physical impairments to participate and achieve in mainstream education, YPF activity has clearly addressed a gap in service provision and there would be a significant negative impact if it was discontinued.

6.112 YPF funding has been the catalyst that allowed the development and testing of new models and ideas to address gaps in service provision and enhance the quality of support available to young people.

7 YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND IN WALES

Introduction

Background

7.1 This chapter presents the cumulative findings of the evaluation of the Young People's Fund (YPF) programme in Wales over a five year period from 2005 to 2011. It provides a synthesis of the findings set out in the previous four evaluation reports (2006 to 2010), along with findings from the fieldwork carried out in 2010-11.

7.2 The 2010-11 fieldwork in Wales involved qualitative case study visits to two projects, involving interviews with staff and young people. The year five survey in Wales consisted of 150 interviews with a sample of young people who had participated in YPF projects. These were undertaken by telephone and for a small number, face to face. We also received additional qualitative comments from 140 of the 150 young people interviewed. The chapter explores:

- The background to the programme, including its design and fit with national policy.
- The set up of YPF and its funded projects.
- The active involvement of young people.
- Outcomes from the programme for young people, projects and the wider community and the sustainability of these.
- The YPF legacy in Wales.

Programme design

7.3 A total of £13.2 million was made available through YPF in Wales to support projects that target young people aged between 11 and 25.

7.4 The Wales programme had three main themes;

- Helping young people to enjoy life and achieve their potential.
- Helping young people to develop skills and contribute to their communities.
- Helping young people to choose positive activities which discourage anti-social behaviour.

7.5 Successful projects were expected to actively involve young people in project design, delivery, management and evaluation. The funding in Wales was then broken down into three funding strands, each with a slightly different scale and focus;

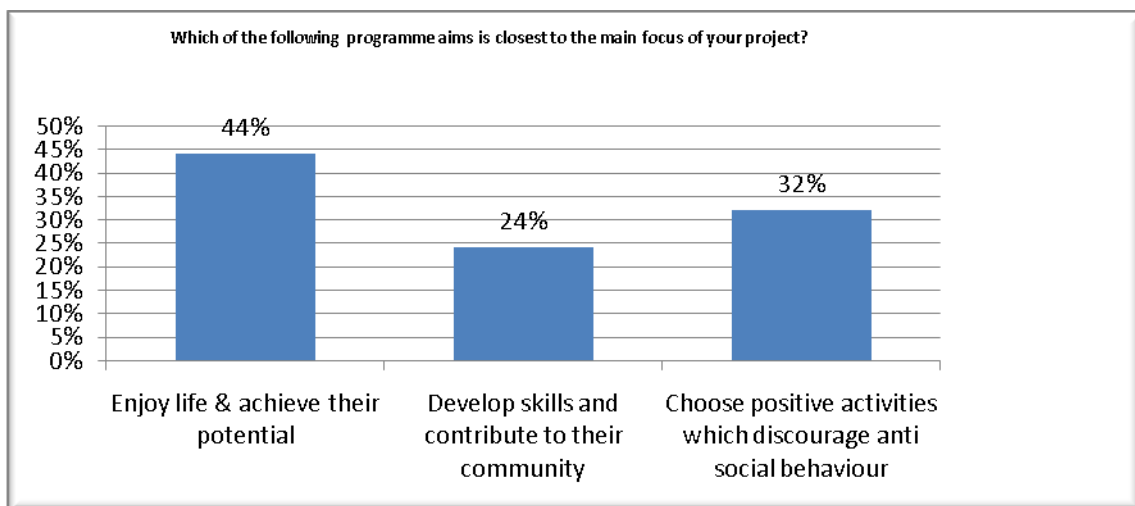
- **Make it Happen:** provided small grants for projects developed and undertaken by young people that helped other young people or their local

community. In total £1 million was allocated to this small grants fund, and applications ranged from £340 to the maximum value of £5,000. The spending was typically to buy equipment, attend training, attend events or undertake visits and activities during school holidays. Groups run by disabled young people or young people from BME backgrounds, small groups who had not received funding before and groups of young people facing particular issues of disadvantage were all encouraged.

- **Reaching Out:** funded projects focussed on prevention and/or outreach work and interventions to fill a gap in local service provision. Projects were larger in scale with an average funding quota of £212,000 and this strand received a further £1.5 million in 2006 to provide more services. The projects typically ran for two to three years and had to include two of the three main themes (see paragraph 7.4).
- **Bridging the Gap:** was the largest sub-fund in Wales and supported projects to engage with the most difficult to reach and challenging young people in Wales. Projects were funded to help participants access existing services and assist them in re-engaging with constructive and mainstream activities. Six awards were made up to a maximum of £1 million, with an average of £750,000. The projects ran from between three to five years, with the last due to finish in December 2011.

7.6 In terms of how closely the projects considered their delivery priorities to be aligned to the Welsh programme aims, a telephone survey (year two evaluation report) of 50 projects was used to identify where the projects felt their strategic alignment to be. Analysis in Figure 7.1 shows that the theme 'Enjoy life & achieve potential' was the most popular, possibly because it is a wider concept (a cross cutting theme) than developing community skills or discouraging anti-social behaviour.

Figure 7.1 - Wales Project Themes



Source; BIG evaluation of YPF (Wales section, year two).

Policy context

7.7 There have been changes in the policy environment in which YPF has operated, to reflect socio economic needs, political ideology and public opinion. In Wales, as with the UK programme overall, some of the original design of the YPF was to tackle anti social behaviour and engage young people with their community. The political and public discourse at the time (around 2005-06) highlighted problem behaviour amongst some young people, ASBOs were introduced, police policy in town centres adjusted to reflect 'binge drinking' and there was public debate about the 'hoodie culture'.

7.8 The policy focus in Wales has shifted from managing the behaviour of young people, towards assisting young people who are classified as being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or at risk of being classified as NEET, developing healthier more physically active young people, and encouraging communities to tackle anti social behaviour and community cohesion in general.

7.9 Delivering Skills That Work for Wales is the NEET strategy for Wales (2008). It makes the case that NEET young people should be identified as soon as possible by education and other statutory and voluntary services that work with young people.

7.10 The priorities of BIG in Wales are well aligned with the policy of the Welsh Government (WG) in this respect. The policy in Wales has moved on as the funding profiles in the country have changed. Perhaps the most important development since the creation of BIG YPF is the inclusion of some regions of Wales into EU convergence funding. This brings £1.7bn of European Regional Development Fund investment into the 15 local authority areas in West Wales and the Valleys and allows some ambitious funding of projects to assist young people to train, find employment, re-engage with education and generally to become economically active.

7.11 Charities and community organisations that may have struggled to find funding sources for their work in the convergence areas have found funding easier as a result. The consequence is that organisations, and projects, not in the convergence areas have perhaps found funding even more difficult.

7.12 It is also worth noting how BIG Wales chooses its funding priorities. These are aligned to WG priorities and a framework for what can be funded is created so that BIG Wales funds areas of importance and priority. In practise there are currently three broad themes or outcomes, and nine priorities in a hierarchy beneath these. The three broad themes are:

- The promotion of community learning so that people of all ages are equipped with the skills and learning to meet the challenges of a modern society.

- The promotion of community safety and cohesion with people working together for stronger communities, social justice, and better rural and urban environments.
- The promotion of physical and mental well being creating healthier and more physically active people and communities.

7.13 Within the context of the YPF in Wales today this may be most aligned to the priority two under the community learning theme; 'Enabling children & young people to achieve their full potential'.

Setting up YPF

Background

7.14 Having determined the aims, outcomes, priority groups and priority activities for the programme in Wales, YPF was promoted widely to community organisations by BIG Wales and through the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Across Wales, 196 projects submitted a successful application and received funding for their proposed activity. Most (159) were small local projects under £5,000 in value and delivered on a spend and finish basis, these were named Making It Happen awards. The larger projects were funded under the Bridging the Gap (six projects) and Reaching Out (36 projects) strands.

Reach of the programme

7.15 The geographical distribution of awards varied across Wales, with some local authorities receiving more funding than others. Analysis of larger projects by local authority area in the 2008 report showed that Conwy, Monmouthshire and the Isle of Anglesey authority areas had received no awards larger than £5,000. The reason is that no eligible applications for larger grants were received from these areas, despite outreach work to encourage applications.

7.16 Another BIG programme in Wales, People and Places, has used an analysis of the grants awarded per head of population as a method of reviewing, and potentially managing the allocation of grant awards. In areas where applications and awards are low, organisations such as the WCVA can work with local groups to raise awareness about grants and support the application process.

Involvement of young people at programme level

7.17 The application process in Wales specified that young people should be involved as widely as possible in the idea conception, project design, proposal and any research that was also required to support the application.

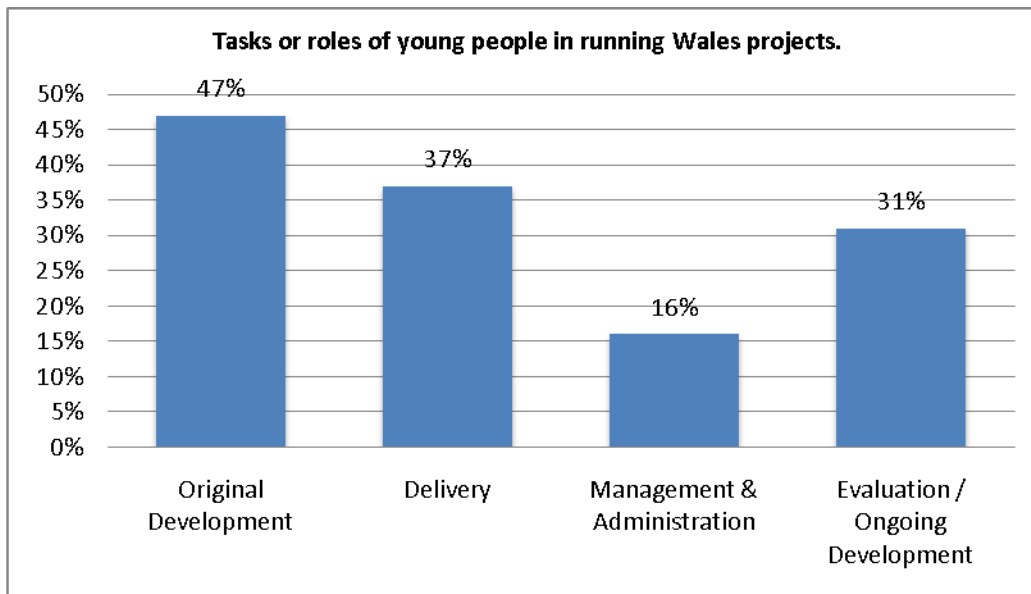
7.18 When successful projects were asked about how this input from young people was included in the year three report, the evidence shows that just under half of applications (48 per cent) were led primarily or exclusively by young people. Thirty two per cent of projects reported an even mix of adult and young person involvement in identifying initial need, and only six per cent used adults only, with no input from young people.

7.19 Project leaders also noted that they were careful in managing expectations with the young people involved in the application process, and in some cases took some control to manage possible disappointment from award rejection. Balancing the involvement of young people in creating a funding application with the possibility of receiving a funding rejection of their ideas is a situation that needs some management to make sure it does not discourage young people from future involvement in similar processes.

7.20 The actual process of completing the application forms was not something that young people got involved in. Their involvement stopped at designing the concept and thinking through activities and ideas and the design of the bid. The formal application was generally the domain of adult volunteers. Even where projects answered the year three survey stating that young people had 'exclusively' led the bid process, the final application form was not included in these roles. This may say something about the suitability of the application form design and supporting guidance being created with adults in mind rather than young people. In the future, application processes and formats should be reviewed to ensure that they are suitable and accessible for young people. Consideration should be given to the formats for submissions for example using films, stories or other mediums.

7.21 Figure 7.2 sets out the ways in which young people were involved during the application process and running of the projects.

Figure 7.2: Activity led by young people.



Source: Year three report - Wavehill Survey of YPF Projects – 73 responses

7.22 The involvement of young people varied from project to project, however, only six per cent of project managers (year three survey) stated that young people had no involvement at all in the application and development of the YPF projects. Clearly the creative development of projects was the most popular category, and helping with delivery the next.

Working with BIG

7.23 Projects that successfully received funding from YPF were generally satisfied with the application process, although their success may skew their perceptions slightly.

7.24 The length of time between receiving notification of an award and actually starting to deliver project activities was, in some cases, quite long. Projects receiving smaller awards were better able to spend the money quickly. Across the Making It Happen projects awards to purchase sports equipment, or fund a day out, for example, were usually completed within a three month period.

7.25 Spending money on sports equipment is substantially different from creating a support programme for young people with anti-social behaviour issues (Pulse, Glamorgan) or treating young people with drugs and alcohol misuse issues (Powys Drugs & Alcohol Centre), for example. The larger projects dealing with substantially more complex issues took much longer to get established due to their complexity. In a few cases service delivery was not established within six months, and in two cases the projects did not move into delivery and had their grants retracted.

7.26 The views of monitoring and reporting vary across projects. For the smaller, Making It Happen grants, the application process may have been the first formal grant application for any of the groups, with one criteria for funding eligibility being not having received funding before. In these cases the monitoring was not overbearing; a record of spending via invoice, a payment audit was necessary, and a short report with photographs or any other evidence to demonstrate how the grant had been used. In the case of the larger grants under Reaching Out and Bridging The Gap, some projects were local authority led (Changing Tracks (Bridgend), Youth Performing Arts & Multimedia Project (Cardiff)) and so a sophisticated level of monitoring was already in place. For projects involving community groups who were new to grant funding (Dolau Young Farmers Club, Ystrad Meurig Youth Club, for example) monitoring was a newer and possibly more difficult administrative process. Detailed monitoring is necessary for public funds, but organisations new to the detail required may benefit from a monitoring visit as soon as service delivery commences in order to ensure it is being done correctly.

Active Involvement

Ways in which young people are actively involved

7.27 The active involvement of young people is a key requirement of YPF across the UK and in Wales.

7.28 Active involvement with young people was evident in most projects across Wales (94 per cent) suggesting that projects are open, inclusive and responsive to young people's views and demand led.

7.29 Where there is involvement of young people in terms of management and delivery, the nature of this involvement has led to a sense of ownership, control

and buy in amongst participants. This ethos has increased projects' capacity for engaging young people, both through peer recruitment and through the greater likelihood of sustained engagement of young people who are involved and consulted on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore 64 per cent of projects stated that more young people were involved in running their project than before they had received BIG funding, and a further 62 per cent said that their project had given more say to those young people that were already involved.

7.30 When asked to categorise the type of involvement in year three, 66 per cent of projects were managed predominantly by adults, 36 per cent as an even mix of adults and young people, and eight per cent predominantly by young people, demonstrating that the management process was not as common an involvement activity.

7.31 However, when identifying the need for a YPF grant, 48 per cent were led by young people, 32 per cent as an even mix, and only 20 per cent predominantly by adults. This illustrates the point that the conceptual elements, and design elements were easier to generate active involvement than the management and administrative elements.

7.32 The same categories were repeated in the year four evaluation and recorded similar results; 47 per cent of young people were involved in development activities, 37 per cent in delivery of the projects, 32 per cent in evaluation of projects and outcomes, and only 16 per cent in the management activities.

7.33 The outcomes for active project involvement activities were also recorded in the year four report, 82 per cent of young people gained 'increased confidence' from their activities, 47 per cent found 'improved relationships' as a result, 30 per cent 'increased motivation' and 25 per cent 'communication skills'.

7.34 In the year four evaluation, the survey of young people found that because the projects were considered by participants to be 'not like school' was important to them. Less hierarchy between project youth workers and the participants, and not being 'talked down to', were clear beneficial themes. The inclusion of young people in the development of activities, design of events, and the management of projects may have produced this outcome.

7.35 Involving young people in the management and administration of the Welsh projects was not as successful as engaging them in the pre-delivery (design) phase suggesting that management and administration are less attractive than being creative. The most common way that projects reported that they involve young people was through informal feedback (85 per cent). At the other end of the scale only 25 per cent of projects involved young people in the recruitment of staff, which is becoming an increasingly common process, especially when recruiting youth workers.

This suggests that projects should use the more creative activities to initially engage young people and then introduce the management and administration tasks once the young people have committed to being involved.

Achieving programme outcomes

7.36 The emphasis placed on active involvement with the participants is used as a tool to build confidence and trust between the project workers and the participants. Once this is achieved, then the young people can benefit from the support the project delivers, and so active involvement leads to programme outcomes.

7.37 The Emphasis project is a case study from year five and this makes small steps in involving the participants at first, leading on to larger decisions once the trust and progression is established. The young people that this project works with are either homeless or at a high risk of becoming homeless, often as a result of an abusive, violent or chaotic home life. Small steps at first, such as allowing the young person to choose the meeting venue (for example McDonalds) and then selecting meeting times, builds trust and allow the young person to feel they have some control of the situation and relationship with key project staff. This empowerment includes choosing activities, such as going swimming or doing photography. This approach builds confidence and a feeling of control and so allows further (more important) life decisions to be made, such as returning home to live, re-engaging with mainstream education, studying or finding a job.

7.38 In direct contrast the Vali Project (case study example one, year four [Wales]) works with young people in Conway who have been involved with the criminal justice system (35 per cent were young offenders), disengaged from education, been temporarily or permanently excluded from school or classified as NEET (65 per cent were classified as NEET). This project is run by two youth workers who make many of the project and event decisions directly with the young people, forming group consensus and learning to negotiate as a group or team. The activities are based around basic skills training to raise numeracy, literacy and social skills. It raises self-confidence and social confidence and fits the NEETs agenda. Positive outcomes from this project include participants attending school or college and finding employment. The Powys project (below) also helps with the NEET agenda by reducing the risk of young people being NEET through alcohol and drug misuse.

Project example: Powys Drugs & Alcohol Centre

The project is open to all young people aged 11 to 19 in the area, but focuses on those who are at risk of becoming NEET and/or already engaging in substance misuse.

Research has shown that those 'young people who are at risk of being or are NEET have a higher tendency to substance abuse than other young people. They are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke and take illegal drugs, all of which can have an impact on their lives'. Godfrey C. et al (2002: 14)

7.39 The important outcome of active involvement, at whatever level each individual project finds appropriate, is that it gives the young people empowerment and trust and this helps build self-esteem which is often referred

to by the young people as 'confidence'. Once better self-esteem is established then hurdles such as returning to education or setting and achieving goals are lowered, which can produce positive outcomes for the young person.

Benefits for young people

7.40 Young people in YPF can be split in to two broad groups: those involved primarily as participants in project activity and those that are actively involved in the development, delivery, management and evaluation of activity. This section considers each in turn.

7.41 Project staff were asked in year two to identify which groups of young people they delivered services to and what categorised this need. Seventy three percent of projects reported that their client group was 'those at risk of being, or who are already disaffected and disengaged, particularly in disadvantaged communities.' Sixty two per cent indicated that their participants are 'the most difficult to reach young people'. Both categories were target groups under YPF. Those 'living in a deprived area' were targeted by 59 per cent of projects, those 'at risk of exclusion' were targeted by 53 per cent of projects and 47 per cent of projects reported that they were open to 'all young people' with no selection criteria.

7.42 A further way to uncover the benefits to young people is to ask them to identify why they were on their particular YPF project and then how they have changed as a result. The year five survey in Wales spoke with 150 young people, (140 provided information in response to this line of questioning). The study team synthesised their responses using a thematic analysis method.

7.43 The most frequent reasons given are summarised in the table below (Table 7.1). By far the most popular response was the social capital within the project, meeting friends, socialising, and having something to do. The following categories show the range of problems or issues in the lives of the young people, problems with home life, trouble at school, drinking and drugs, and trouble with the police. The status or stigma of being NEET was also recognised and the effects of not doing well at school or having personal or social issues such as low self esteem, mental health and emotional issues, and being unemployed or bullied were also evident.

Table 7.1: Reasons for becoming involved in YPF activities.

Theme	Numbers of young people
Sociable benefits / something to do / meet friends	30
At risk of NEET or NEET or unemployed	27
Difficulties at home / family problems	19
Trouble at school	19
Drinking / Drugs misuse	15
Trouble with the police	15
Mental Health / Emotional Problems	15
I am / was homeless or in care	14

Lack of confidence / self esteem	11
Enjoy the activities	10
I am a young carer	8
General Health Problems	6
Bullied at school and elsewhere	6
Issues with behaviour / anger	6

Source: Wavehill survey of 140 young people 2011

7.44 The box below contains some comments from the young people that contributed to the thematic analysis in the table above.

“I went to the project because I was misbehaving in school; I hated the school and couldn't be bothered.”

“Last year in January I had some problems; I started taking Miaow [Mephedrone] and got addicted. I was spending £40 a day for the drugs while I was in school and at weekends I was spending £100's. I started stealing to get the money. My parents found out after 4 months so I left home, was excluded from school and was homeless. I was in trouble with the police all the time for possession of drugs, theft and violating police orders. My Mum found out about the Emphasis project and I moved home and started going to the project in August/September last year. I have been clean from drugs for eight months now.”

“I'm 17, I done something and got in trouble with the police; Social Services put me onto the project.”

“I've been suicidal since I was 13 and had really low self esteem.”

“I'm on the project because I was a bit low in self confidence, my mum told me I needed to make new friends, and I've been going for two to three years”.

“I was put into care for drinking and not going to school and was put in touch with (name), the project's key worker.”

“When I was young I was bullied and left school at 13. I was then isolated in the house for three years and needed to talk to someone about the problems I had as my mum was at work all the time.”

“I am 12 years old and at school. I do have some anger issues.”

7.45 The table above and supporting comments in the box show the wide range of issues that young people have when coming to YPF projects, and the need for such support services to help young people as they drop away from mainstream education and become at risk of exclusion.

7.46 Developing the analysis of the year five survey results, the young people were then asked to describe why the project had made them change their attitude to school and society and what had changed in their behaviour as a result of attending. The main theme to emerge is that the staff in the YPF

projects make the difference. They have more time to listen, to understand the issues the young people have and to be kind and helpful. Just having someone to talk to was very important, but on a more equal and less hierarchical basis than the teacher pupil relationship, or perhaps parent and sibling too. Youth workers and project staff changed behaviour by building trust and confidence, not being judgemental, and rewarding positive behaviour. Table 7.2 shows the frequency of these categories from the thematic analysis. Overall the actual project activity seems to make little difference. The stability of the environment where young people can express themselves, where they make friends, gain self-esteem through participation and build social confidence appears to be the factor that explains change in participants' behaviour.

Table 7.2: Catalyst for change in young people's behaviour.

Theme	Numbers of young people
Staff were Caring / Supportive / Helpful / Kind / Encouraging	28
Having someone to talk to and / or listen	25
Staff were friendly / fun / easy to talk to	17
I gained Trust / Confidence	12
Staff were non-judgmental / treated me as an equal	8
Staff were always there for me	7
Rewarded behaviour	4
One to one support	4

Source: Wavehill survey of 140 young people 2011

7.47 Some comments to support the thematic analysis in Table 7.2 are included in the box below.

“Having someone to talk to, making me feel like I wasn't alone, and giving me confidence in myself.”

“He helped me get into college, told me there was no point in carrying on with drugs and getting into trouble. I could talk to him as he was dead easy to talk to and I trusted him.”

“I had rewards for being good; some rewards were brilliant, really good trips.”

7.48 The most important thing to a young person is having someone they trust to talk to and who will listen to them. Being able to do fun activities in a friendly environment is important to them but only when everything else is in place along with a trustworthy member of staff who is caring and helpful, always there and non judgemental. Once the relationship has been built and trust established then the young person is ready to engage in the project activities and have some fun!

7.49 In terms of learning lessons from this evaluation, the good practise is that staff and youth workers must concentrate on winning the hearts and minds of the young people first, and then develop their skills, and self esteem.

Benefits for participants

7.50 Young people reported in the year four evaluation that there are a number of positive outcomes as a result of their YPF projects, such as:

- developed new skills (100 per cent)
- learnt new things (98 per cent)
- communicate better with other people (95 per cent)
- met new people (95 per cent)
- get on better with other people (97 per cent).

7.51 These outcomes are all positive and reinforce BIG's aims to work with young people who are at risk, or are already excluded from education, and social opportunity. The outcomes above are also included in the Youth Service for Wales' 10 Entitlements (Extending Entitlement) which lists basic skills such as communicating effectively and active citizenship as central to the development of young people.

7.52 Outcomes gleaned from the analysis of interviews with young people in the year four report show that it is by extending basic skills such as communication and by meeting new people away from the normal influence of peer groups, that young people can understand that there are greater opportunities open to them and can raise their aspirations for the future.

7.53 Of the 150 young people interviewed in year five in Wales, 75 per cent (113 of the 150) were still attending their projects. Of the 25 per cent of young people no longer attending YPF projects 37 per cent (14 out of 37 young people) felt they had 'moved on' or did not need to attend the project anymore. Forty three per cent (16 out of 37 young people) only stopped attending because the project had closed or ended, and eight per cent (three young people) had moved into employment or to college.

7.54 The analysis (although only for a small population) shows that around half of the young people who no longer attend YPF projects, do not require further YPF support and can be considered to have achieved positive outcomes.

7.55 Other young people (43% of 37) do not attend YPF projects anymore as this option is not available to them. It is possible that these young people would continue to benefit from YPF type activities and support if it was available.

7.56 Young people in Wales who participated in the survey in the fifth year of the evaluation were also asked if the YPF projects helped to change their attitude towards school and their behaviour in their lives.

“Without the Emphasis Project I would have been dead or in a gutter somewhere. It has changed my life around and without it I would be dead. I had been excluded from school for drug use, I was a bum. Once I got off the drugs they helped me get on the Youth Gateway Course in Risca and now I am on the Learn About programme I have done Level 1 and I am doing Level 2 in August and if they can get Level 3 then I will do that. I also want to do Level 1-3 in Public Services so I can get to college or university.”

“It's made me realise that what I was doing and the way I was behaving wasn't getting me anywhere. It changed my attitude to life, I realised if I wanted something I had to work for it. Having someone to talk to really helped, and having a positive way of doing it next time.”

“My attitude totally changed. Before I was hanging around the streets and getting into trouble. After going to the centre my behaviour became better and I got on better with other people and adults.”

7.57 The evidence in year five shows that 25 per cent of the 140 young people who answered the question relating to school attitude reported that the projects gave them confidence, 15 per cent said that it resulted in them meeting new people and making new friends and 10 per cent said that it helped them to change their attitude.

7.58 From the Year five survey, 57 per cent of the young people who took part in the survey reported behaving better at school. We do not know how many of these young people would have engaged in truanting or become excluded from school had they not been engaged with YPF. However we can see that the costs of truanting and exclusion are more significant than the costs of YPF. The cost of £436 per YPF intervention compares favourably to a cost of £3,529⁴¹ for stopping a truant and £19,434 for educating a permanently excluded pupil elsewhere⁴².

7.59 It is evident that in order to help a young person to change their behaviour in school or in wider community settings it is important to develop their self-esteem, from which comes self and social confidence. When questioning the young people as to what confidence meant to them, examples include; confidence to stick up for myself, confidence to speak to people, confidence with adults, and confidence to go out, for example.

7.60 Self-confidence and self-esteem are key psychological concepts and subject to much study. Baumeister (2003) cites Hansford and Hattie's research (1982) which reviewed 128 educational studies and “concluded that overall there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and academic

⁴¹ New Philanthropy Capital. Misspent Youth: The costs of truancy and exclusion. Martin Brookes, Emile Goodall and Lucy Healy. June 2007

⁴² *ibid*

performance, with self-esteem accounting for between four and seven per cent of the variance in academic performance”.

7.61 In terms of tangible (measurable) outcomes, there is no central monitoring system that aggregates together all of these indicators from the Wales YPF projects. The benefits to the participants are found in the psychological concepts of (better) confidence, social skills, communication, and so on. Proxy indicators can be found in the survey results from years three, four and five. Survey respondents said they would get better grades at school (57 per cent in the year four survey), for example, but whether this in fact was an ambition or a real outcome was not measured within this evaluation method.

7.62 The year five survey shows that many participants have been attending the YPF projects for some time, 49 per cent of the 150 interviewed for more than two years, which raises a question of how far participants progress whilst attending projects. One measure of progress or benefit is their avoidance of becoming NEET.

7.63 Before attending the projects 83 per cent were involved with education either at secondary school, university or college (106 young people) or excluded from school (22 young people).

7.64 To follow this indicator the 2011 survey asked the YPF participants ‘what are you doing now’ and;

- 106 were involved with education, in school, college or university
- one person was currently excluded from school
- 13 were working or training for work, and
- 8 were unemployed.

7.65 From the year five survey of 150, 12.5 per cent could be classified as NEET from these responses. Within the qualitative responses 15 per cent (21 from 140) stated that they were attending the project as they were at risk of being NEET classified, or possibly were NEET classified.

7.66 Recent data from WG⁴³ (2011) shows NEET classification in the age group 16-18 years is 12.1 per cent which is exactly the same proportion as in the year five Wales survey (19/150 or 12.1 per cent). Five per cent of YPF survey respondents were undertaking volunteering activities and we have excluded them from the NEET calculation.

7.67 The YPF cohort is taking part in YPF projects because they often face barriers to mainstream school, further education, finding employment, and other challenges, and so due to these issues the YPF cohort would be expected to have higher NEET levels than Wales as a whole. However, this is not the case. Instead it is the same and so the data suggests that YPF has some impact on the

⁴³ Welsh Government (SB2/2011)

risk of and extent to which young people participating in projects are classified as NEET.

7.68 The cost to society of worklessness and NEET young people is complex to measure accurately. UK estimates suggest that the average lifetime cost of a young person becoming NEET is around £56,301⁴⁴.

7.69 If the YPF in Wales can reduce the risk of becoming NEET then using the year five survey results where 79 per cent (119 of 150) were still engaged in school or training, and diverted from being classified as NEET due to the range of YPF interventions, then the programme may be considered to have helped reduce the number of young people becoming NEET in Wales.

7.70 The YPF cost £13.1 million and assisted an estimated 30,000 young people at a cost of around £436 per intervention. If each young person who reengages with mainstream education, or does not become NEET reduces public costs by £56,301 then it will only take 233 young people diverted away from long term NEET classification to recover the £13.1 million costs of the YPF. Using this cost model it is probable that the YPF in Wales did offer value for money.

7.71 One of the more notable outcomes, apart from the tangible outcomes described above, were the softer outcomes not really planned for at the start of YPF but which have evolved as themes identified through the fieldwork with young people.

7.72 As young people joined YPF projects they were often suffering from the effects of deprivation, social exclusion, chaotic lifestyles and low self esteem. This manifests itself in the YPF participants as low social confidence and low self-confidence, and often they have been involved with the same closed circuit of friends and peers, who offer them limited opportunities to build social experiences and personal skills.

7.73 The soft outcomes from the YPF Wales projects have allowed the attendees to open their social circle, learn to communicate in social groups where patterns of behaviour and hierarchy have not already been established, and resulted in engaging opportunities to develop as a person. These impacts can be seen expressed in the selection of comments below.

“I felt that I could talk more openly to my friends after counselling and teachers valued my opinion more.”

“Meeting new people is really important to make me feel more confident.”

“They teach you to be respectful, I've got new friends, met new people...they come to our school and they help us.”

⁴⁴ University of York research undertaken for the Audit Commission: Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, July 2010.

“We go to football sessions, we socialise with others, meet new people, they help me with my school work and if I needed any help with revision for exams they help me. Quite important to me as if I need any help I can just go and ask them.”

7.74 Making new friends seems to be extremely important. A study of teenagers in 2002⁴⁵ suggests that friends may protect adolescents from risk activities and this has implications for understanding how peer influence may be used to target teen behaviour. In the context of YPF it is possible that making new friends at YPF projects helps to reinforce positive behaviour and potentially positive outcomes.

7.75 The year four report categorised these other outcomes using a thematic review of the comments made by young people in the telephone survey that year. The additional benefits included feeling better about themselves, feeling valued, feeling more confident, and feeling like their views matter are based around ‘the self’ and ‘the person’; having more self-worth and self-confidence. Comments to support this analysis included;

“Fun, I can communicate better with others and I like working in groups with other people.”

“I made more friends, learned how to do resuscitation and cook new dishes. I still go and I still enjoy going.”

“It helped with understanding things, helped me with my school work.”

7.76 This shows that different contexts give different outcomes. BIG and the WG have a framework of priorities and strategies that they want to achieve outcomes against, however these probably have very little or no relevance to the young people who participate in the projects. Evaluation needs to develop methods to measure both the formal strategic outcomes required by the funding bodies and also the participants. This means that programmes to help young people should be designed and evaluated using research and evidence from practitioners and experts in their field. However, this needs to be given a balanced measure of design and feedback from project participants to ensure it meets the policy needs and is designed to work for the target population.

7.77 The outcomes summarised above benefit both the individual and also have wider outcomes and benefits to local communities. The analysis of the participant data in the year four evaluation report identified a shift in positive behaviour, particularly within the school setting. In fact young people were quite explicit in linking their YPF experiences back into the school environment.

7.78 There are at least two beneficiary groups here, the young people who return into school life, behave better there and get better grades and the school

⁴⁵ Maxwell; The Role of Peer Influence Across Adolescent Risk Behaviours; Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Volume 31, 2002 p. 267-277

that benefits from a better behaved pupil. The findings from the year five survey of young people show that the young people were being better behaved, and this was allowing them to re-engage with mainstream school; the outcome being that better behaved pupils are far less likely to be excluded from school, and less likely to become NEET.

7.79 The wider community benefits too, as poor behaviour and truanting often extend into anti-social behaviour. These benefits that extended further than the reach of the project as project impacts and really demonstrate the need for the YPF. The impact on communities is discussed later in the chapter.

7.80 Almost all of the young people interviewed were at school and so school related outcomes dominate this analysis, however, 19 per cent of young people also extended their benefits into volunteering within the local community, and 10 per cent said they were in trouble with the police less.

7.81 We asked the 150 survey participants in the year five survey to sum up the impact their respective YPF projects had had on their lives, and to associate this to how this may change things for them in the future. All of the young people interviewed were invited to complete the following sentence, 'Attending the project has / will help me to positively change my life by...' The analysis of the responses shows that giving confidence was the main theme, followed by giving motivation to find a job, learn new skills, and change of life goals. The responses also note that improving social skills and building social capital, education, life skills and communication were also important.

7.82 A further theme to emerge from the interviews with young people is their view that the projects they attended gave them an alternative view on things through having someone with experience (i.e. the project staff) who does not judge them and is respectful of them advising on alternative strategies to deal with their problems. The summary of which may be that the young people interviewed require someone with empathy to their situation, possibly a role missing from their lives at home, within their immediate peer groups and at school.

7.83 The following quotes provide examples from the year five survey responses:

"It changed me because before I was cheeky and now I am respectful to adults there and on the street, I am now able to see situations in a better way"

"Project workers showed me what could be achieved without drugs"

"It made me see myself from a different angle, respecting myself and life."

"It gave me a better perspective on life".

"it [the project] made a difference to the way I deal with things, I don't bottle things up now, I don't get angry, I don't hit things, I've got more respect now".

7.84 Analysis of the police and community volunteering categories shows some strong benefits to the community. The year four evaluation report estimated that around 32,000 young people had benefitted from the YPF in Wales. If ten per cent of these were staying out of trouble with the police, then 3,200 incidents, or cases of anti-social behaviour would have been avoided. South Wales Police charges approximately £60 per hour for a PC, and so depending on the time required and the number of police officers, the saving to the community can be significant.

7.85 Furthermore, volunteering is often accounted for at the minimum wage rate. So for every young person carrying out two hours of volunteering a week, a value of £368 can be applied to the overall value of YPF.

Benefits of active involvement

7.86 There was evidence in the year three report that suggests that active involvement by young people beyond participation in the projects increases the benefits they receive suggesting that the more the participants get involved, the more they get out of the project.

7.87 Some of the projects in Wales (for example, Pulse, Barnardo's Sibling Care, and Safe Project in the Year two report), identified that the involvement of young people was one of their successes, and had led to further outcomes for those involved. Examples include:

“ we gained positive engagement and relationship building with young people.”

“ the project succeeded because it was empowering young people and seeing them achieve.”

“It got the young people involved with our organisation to start with and built up good links with the schools.”

7.88 From the context and perspective of the young people themselves, the view is slightly different; it was more about being in control, not needing adult solutions, and being trusted to work things out for themselves. It was summarised well by one interviewee as “a feeling of being in control of their involvement, which often led to better outcomes and more confidence”.

7.89 This may explain the benefit of having young people actively involved in the running of projects. They have often come from situations where they have little control, little power or esteem. By being given some responsibility and control over the YPF projects, they starts to build control, which leads to confidence in themselves as individuals and socially.

7.90 The Barnardo's Sibling Carers Project (case study example year two [Wales]), approach is a good illustration of where involvement is used as a means of helping them to find solutions to their own difficulties. Every service user is involved in their own review. These are done to set time scales, since an aim of the project is to facilitate the young person taking control of their lives relatively quickly so that they can move on with the benefit of new found peer networks and be replaced by more young people in acute need of the service.

7.91 The benefits recorded in this case study were a sense of control and influence over participants' support and their options going forward and the sense of ownership, control and buy-in amongst participants were identified as the benefits of active involvement.

Who benefits from YPF activity?

7.92 YPF has been successful at engaging with small projects which benefit young people through the Making It Happen grants, but also reaching more excluded and disadvantaged young people through the Reaching Out and Bridging the Gap strands. In terms of age, 75 per cent of participants are still at school, aged 11 to 16 years.

7.93 The reasons for YPF involvement include projects working with young people from hard to reach groups, most commonly young people living in deprived areas, living in rural areas, with mental health issues, with physical, sensory or learning disabilities, offenders, ex-offenders and those at risk of offending and also at risk or suffering from alcohol and substance misuse.

7.94 One of the key objectives of the year five survey was to measure how would what the young people had experienced through the projects benefit them in the future after they exit the YPF activities. When speaking with young people from age ranges between 11 and 20 years it is very difficult to identify a single pattern of change and development, as their lives are so different. However, growing in confidence, in motivation and in the ability to behave and respect others were key benefits emerging across the YPF cohort.

7.95 Asking young people to identify what was it about their YPF project that has helped them and will continue to help them, young people said; having someone friendly to talk to (30%), having someone (at the project) who they can trust and is kind and supportive (25%), being treated as an equal and encouraged (9%), and receiving encouragement for good behaviour 6%. In many respects these could be interpreted as the core values of a good parent and child relationship.

7.96 The focus of minority group projects from BME communities was very low in Wales as the proportion of BME groups is low across Wales⁴⁶; around 2.1 per cent in Wales compared to 8.7 per cent in England and Wales combined. All Wales Ethnic Minority Association is the organisation tasked (and funded) to engage ethnic minority groups and European migrant groups in Wales and will run activities for young people in Wales as part of its project portfolio.

Benefits for projects

7.97 YPF funding has been the main source of funding for the majority of projects, and so without it the projects would not have happened or would have taken place on a far smaller scale. YPF therefore has high additionality in Wales,

⁴⁶ Public Health Wales (March 2010)

enabling projects to achieve benefits for young people that may not have been achieved without YPF investment.

7.98 Analysis of the grants received from YPF and the overall cost of 33 projects showed that the YPF grant accounted for 84 per cent of total project funding. Furthermore, for 52 per cent of projects the funding was at least 90 per cent of the total spend, which demonstrates the importance of YPF and that without it far less activity would have taken place.

7.99 The main focus of the projects has either been through a youth club or through a peer education and mentoring method. The main themes of services provided were classified as employability (and education) (73 per cent), health education (70 per cent), peer mentoring and education (67 per cent) and learning via an alternative, not school, curriculum (64 per cent).

7.100 The YPF intervention is not the only influence in a participant's life and so we cannot attribute all of the benefit or outcome to the programme. The survey of young people in the fifth year of the evaluation explored what other factors outside of the YPF projects had influenced the participants and contributed towards the outcomes. Fifty five per cent of the 140 young people who answered said their 'immediate family had influenced change, and made references to partners (three from 140), social workers (four from 140), teachers (four from 140) and friends (four from 140). Importantly 26 per cent said that there was no other influence, just the YPF projects, which demonstrates the importance of the YPF project staff in developing and changing the attitude and behaviour of the participants.

7.101 We then asked the participants what aspects of the project would help them to improve their day to day life, attitude and behaviour:

- 18 per cent of the 140 respondents said "having someone to talk to and/or listen".
- 12 per cent said "having someone caring and supportive".
- 12 per cent reported "having someone easy to talk to".
- nine per cent said "having someone I could trust and have confidence in".

7.102 Interestingly, it seems the most important thing to a young person is having someone they trust to talk to and who will listen to them. So this places a large responsibility on the skills and experience of the project staff. So much so that potential future YPF type funding, where working with a similar cohort, should look to undertake skills development, professional development and possibly share ideas, good practise and methods across projects. Ninety six per cent of responses noted that the benefits were linked directly to the project staff. This is also confirmed by the Guidance from the National Foundation for Educational Research⁴⁷ in their good practice guide for non-formal learning;

⁴⁷ Source: Employing the right type of Project Staff

“All projects agreed that the skills and qualities of project staff are one of the most important aspects of keeping young people engaged. Staff need to be friendly, nonjudgmental, able to relate to young people and their concerns, patient and have a good sense of humour.”

7.103 The learning for BIG is that funding projects should also include a proportion of budget that can be used to train and develop staff to ensure they have the correct skills to communicate and work effectively with this cohort.

Benefits for communities

7.104 YPF engages young people in positive activities that can bring positive benefits to the wider communities by reducing negative behaviours and by increasing positively, engagement and behaviour with their community.

7.105 From the year five survey 57 per cent of participants claim better behaviour in their school community, engaging with community participation through volunteering, and getting into trouble with the police less.

7.106 Community partnership working has also been enhanced by YPF projects in Wales. Community partners brought into informal and formal networks around the projects include voluntary organisations, the police, schools and colleges, youth offending teams, social work teams, and even the fire service. These networks, referrals and exit pathways all lead to joined up service provision, shared intelligence and better services for not only the young people inside the projects, but all of those who may need assistance from service providers across local communities.

Legacy

7.107 As mentioned earlier in this section, parts of Wales have benefitted from the European Union's Convergence Programme, and this has provided a sustainability option for some Reaching Out projects, especially those that are close to the NEET agenda and can link young people back into formalised skills and learning structures, so that they can achieve certification.

7.108 When the issue of sustainability was reviewed in 2010 there were five projects that were exploring Convergence funding. The 2010 survey showed that 57 per cent (19 from 33) of the projects were able to maintain some or all of their project services post funding, and 42 per cent (14 from 33) do not have any plans to.

"It may be problematic to keep the staffing hours at their current levels, but we are confident of continuing. We anticipate more problems with the referral agency funding cuts – many local authority initiatives for young people are experiencing budget cuts which may, by default, affect our programmes.”

“Ideally we would like to grow the project but recognise that of all our options this is probably the least likely. In part with almost eighteen months still to go it is difficult to envisage the economic climate at that point. Over recent months virtually all new funding appears to be focussed very tightly on education and training with a very strong emphasis on employment. Many of the young people

we work with need far more support to even begin accessing any form of training.”

7.109 Ironically, when considering the second comment above, the new Work Programme may restrict young people from accessing ESF grant assistance, via convergence, and so only those who are furthest from the employment market, and not Work Programme eligible, may in future receive ESF funding, which may raise the demand for YPF type activities. This is a complex issue and not for this report, but it seems to be an emerging view as this is written in May 2011.

7.110 The legacy of YPF is varied and depends from where you view the projects. In terms of the young people who have attended and got something out of the projects, then the legacy is both deep and wide, and may last a lifetime. For the young man who was homeless and now has a job and a flat of his own, or the young lady who was “wild” but who now attends university, or the literally thousands of other personal histories that the young people could provide gives a deep and lasting impact.

7.111 From the projects' perspective the picture is not so clear. The survey shows that 28 per cent (9 from 33) of the Reaching Out projects would have delivered a similar but scaled down project without the YPF, which still leaves 72 per cent of projects that would have not taken place, but the attrition rate is high as many projects are not finding funding available to continue providing services and so there is not a strong legacy of continuing service delivery.

Conclusions

7.112 Over the past five years the political landscape in Wales has changed, with a shift in policy toward NEETs, a new Work Programme, changes to Job Seekers Allowance and other out of work benefits, and the adoption of the United Nations Rights of the Child. The YPF has operated across these changes, and has maintained its relevancy in the projects being funded and the young people receiving services.

7.113 There is often a balance that needs to be struck between funding a large number of small activities in a community or larger more strategic activities. YPF in Wales used both solutions, funding 102 smaller projects (£1million), 39 mid-sized strategic projects (£7.9million) and six large strategic projects (£4.6million). Five of the 10 largest awards to projects were awarded to local authorities. The voluntary sector may have been strengthened if more mid-sized grants had been awarded to community and charitable organisations rather than the statutory authorities.

7.114 The award of YPF resources to groups not experienced at monitoring and reporting the use of public funds has helped to strengthen the youth sector, building their capacity to bid for and manage future public funds. However, given their limited experience they do sometimes need early assistance to ensure monitoring is adequate and compliant.

7.115 Across the YPF projects an estimated 32,000 young people benefitted, which is around five per cent of the population of young people aged between 11 to 25 years in Wales. However, Save the Children (Severe Child Poverty in Wales 2011) recently published data that shows that child poverty is worse in Wales than any other country in the UK, estimated to be 14 per cent across Wales. This severely calls into question the WG target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. With this data in mind, the YPF has assisted many young people who, due to poverty, combined with other issues have needed assistance under the Reaching Out and Bridging the Gap projects.

7.116 YPF in Wales was well aligned with national policy priorities. This ensured targeted service delivery and avoided duplication in provision. Projects in Wales were required to fill gaps in local provision. All projects were linked to their local Children's and Young People's partnership, ensuring a more strategic approach to partnership working. This was a considerable strength of the programme in Wales.

7.117 The YPF has helped turn around many lives, via some extraordinarily well intentioned and well run projects and many young people will now be in a better situation because of it. The impact on the projects has been less demonstrable as many have closed due to lack of funding. Convergence has assisted in the convergence areas, and WG programmes such as Reach the Heights have benefitted many thousands of young people, some of whom would certainly have been previously helped by a YPF grant.

7.118 The year five (2011) survey finds that the level of NEET classification in the YPF cohort is the same as across all 16 to 24 year olds in Wales. This is important because it shows that even amongst the higher risk young people, suffering from complex issues and suffering from the affects of poverty and deprivation, YPF has managed outcomes similar, or equal to, wider Welsh society.

7.119 Many of the young people participating in the YPF projects were at school and schools are a major beneficiary of the YPF activities. The impact on young people was that they were returning to the school community better behaved, and the outcome being that better behaved pupils are far less likely to be excluded from school, and therefore less likely to become NEET. Furthermore, young people stated they were less likely to be involved with the police and less likely to be truant from school or excluded from school. As noted above, the impact on young people also reduces their likelihood of being classified as NEET to the national average in Wales, which considering the young people engaged by YPF is some achievement.

7.120 The impact of project staff on the lives of YPF participants is a strong theme coming from the year five survey. The dedication, caring and commitment of the project staff provides a mentor, advisor, friend and confidant to many of the YPF participants. Without this, the projects would not be as effective and the benefits to young people diminished.

7.121 This is further reflected in the benefits that the young people recognise the projects have given to them. They are simple values and highly achievable by any project working with young people; having someone friendly to talk to, building trust, working with trusting, kind and supportive people, being treated as an equal and receiving encouragement for good behaviour. These findings reflect the importance of strong youth worker skills and the need for positive role models.

7.122 Active involvement can assist in embedding these values. Allowing young people to help in running projects and to design activities makes them feel trusted, listened to, and treated as equals.

7.123 Overall the actual project activity seems to make little difference. Providing a stable environment where young people can express themselves, where they make friends, gain self-esteem through participation and build social confidence.

7.124 The YPF provided funding and effectively supported young people at risk, suffering from the effects of poverty and deprivation. The programme offered additional support that went above and beyond statutory service provision in a way that was responsive to young people's needs.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Summary of key findings

- YPF supported a wide range of activity for young people from different backgrounds, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- Flexibility and broad based outcomes allowed projects to tailor activity to meet the needs of young people and provide holistic support. However, this also made the assessment of reach and contribution to project aims difficult and may have resulted in duplication of existing provision. This was mitigated in Wales by the requirement for projects to link with local Children and Young People's Partnerships.
- YPF activity brought about significant and sustained benefits for young people. These included increased confidence, improved relationships, increased engagement, communication skills and increased achievement and learning.
- These benefits were reported relatively consistently across projects and countries. This highlights the existence of a common set of skills and attributes that are highly valued by young people. Specifically, meeting new people, increased confidence, developing new skills and learning new things, feeling better about themselves and having fun.
- YPF activity impacted on other areas of young people's lives and contributed to positive changes that will benefit young people, society and the economy as a whole. There is evidence that the activity has contributed to improved attitudes and engagement with education, increased likelihood of achieving and sustaining positive destinations, reduced anti social behaviour, more active citizenship and participation in the local community.
- Very often, regardless of the specific activity, simply bringing young people together to engage in a positive activity where they can meet new young people and challenge themselves to try something new, leads to the benefits described for most young people who engage.
- The skills of staff are very important in facilitating and sustaining engagement and bringing about positive impacts. Vulnerable young people often benefit from having positive adult role models they can trust and can talk to. This emerged across the UK (particularly in Wales) and is highlighted in the good practice guides that accompany this report.
- Active involvement increases the scale and intensity of impacts for young people as well as bringing benefits for projects and communities (as a result of increased participation).

- The level and nature of active involvement increased throughout the funding period as the capacity of projects and young people increased.
- Throughout the evaluation projects reported barriers to active involvement. These often included the confidence and capacity of young people, the skills of staff, logistical and resource difficulties. These barriers were not insurmountable and there is evidence from across the UK and in the good practice guide that accompanies this report about how barriers can be overcome.
- Although the level of active involvement that was achieved fell short of the original vision for YPF, learning in this respect is now informing successor funds and active involvement has been embedded from the outset of YPF2 in England.
- YPF has been a catalyst to bring about a change in the culture of involving young people in services across the UK and in bringing about greater recognition of the benefits and possibilities for active involvement of children and young people.
- YPF allowed establishment and expansion of services for young people and testing of delivery models. For example, existing youth services were able to extend their programmes of activity to reach a larger number of young people. Some services also tested new delivery models and considered options for mainstreaming of delivery.
- The legacy of the YPF will be secured as a result of the increased capacity and partnership working in the youth sector, the confidence and skills of young people and their increased participation in society.

Reach and strategic influence

8.1 The YPF programme provided support in the region of £200million to projects across the UK. The funding supported a vast range of activity for young people from varying economic, social and cultural backgrounds. An estimated 700,000⁴⁸ young people participated in YPF activity over the funding period. A significant proportion of activity specifically benefited vulnerable, disadvantaged and socially excluded young people.

8.2 Without the support of YPF much of this activity would not have happened, and definitely would not have been delivered with the capacity and scale that has been achieved.

8.3 YPF funded activities were delivered through a period of significant change in the political, economic and social environment. Political administrations across the UK have changed and the country has faced a period of economic recession. In spite of this changing climate, the broad based aims of YPF and the diversity

⁴⁸ This estimate is based on figures provided in the year four survey of YPF projects and report in the year four evaluation report.

of projects that were funded has ensured that activity remained relevant and well aligned with priorities across the UK.

8.4 Policy priorities across the UK reflect an increasing focus on support and the provision of services for children and young people. The early years and supporting the transition from childhood to adolescence through to young adulthood now permeate all aspects of economic, health and social policy. Looking ahead there will be a continued focus on employability and skills for work and on supporting disadvantaged groups, reducing inequalities and engaging the hardest to reach.

8.5 For these reasons the YPF, the activity it supported and the legacy it leaves behind, remain very relevant. The study has charted the implementation, operation and impact of the YPF across the UK. Learning from this long term evaluation should inform the development of future funding streams and the operation of project activity to ensure services meet the needs of young people, especially disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, in this complex and dynamic landscape.

8.6 This chapter draws out the conclusions from the findings across the five years of the evaluation answering the research questions posed at the outset (presented in chapter one) and highlighting the significant learning points for BIG and other organisations.

Meeting the aims of the Programme

8.7 Projects in each of the four countries made a substantial contribution towards the aims and outcomes of YPF. The YPF programme had a number of strengths that facilitated this. Strengths included broad based aims and outcomes, flexibility, autonomy for each country to decide their own funding priorities and the variety of mechanisms for involving young people at programme level. These are described in more detail below.

8.8 As a result of the broad based aims, activity across the programme was diverse and supported the holistic needs of young people (including learning and skills, personal and social development, physical and mental health and well being, enhanced support networks and strong resilient communities).

8.9 The breadth of aims and outcomes ensured that YPF activity remained relevant throughout the funding period, even as policy priorities and the political landscape shifted.

8.10 YPF was flexible and projects were able to develop and refine their activities within the scope of their funding. Whilst working towards a set of largely similar high level objectives, individual projects were led by the needs and aspirations of young people, and developed to reflect local economic, social and cultural circumstances.

8.11 The autonomy that each country had to distribute their funding allocation among different strands of activity also contributed to success in meeting the

aims and outcomes and ensuring that projects reflected local priorities and infrastructures.

8.12 At the programme level young people were involved in different ways and at different stages of the decision making process. Young people were involved in decision making committees in each country. They were also involved in decision making on small grants programmes in England and Northern Ireland and in Scotland young people were involved through the Local Area Panels. Each of these mechanisms provided meaningful involvement opportunities for young people at the programme level, and provided members with a range of skills including communication, negotiation, decision making and team working.

8.13 The involvement of young people at programme level enhanced the decision making process by bringing a young person's perspective. Young people involved in decision making and young people who received small grants developed technical, personal and social skills which have enhanced their aspirations and prospects and facilitated their involvement in other activities.

8.14 Although not the focus of this evaluation, small grants to individuals and organisations, the Local Area Panels in Scotland and the Strategic Programmes in Northern Ireland added value to the YPF in terms of its reach into the population, the involvement of young people and the diversity of activity. Small grants programmes demonstrated the significant impact that relatively small amounts of funding can bring about. Future funding streams should certainly consider the inclusion of a small grants programme.

8.15 The Local Area Panels (LAPs) in Scotland were an innovative approach to involving young people in the decision making process and were considered to have been largely successful; around 500 young people in Scotland benefited from involvement in LAPs and the National Committee. The LAP model provided considerable learning for future approaches to involving young people (see paragraph 5.23) and young people themselves reported considerable benefits.

8.16 For example, the young people involved in the LAPs were given the opportunity to work towards a SCQF Level 5 qualification in Participative Democracy, which 234 young people successfully achieved. Those involved in the LAPs reported that this qualification enhanced their CV. This may have been a factor in 51 per cent of the young people involved in LAPs reporting that they had accessed volunteering or employment as a direct result of being involved in a LAP.

8.17 While bringing about considerable benefits, the broad aims and objectives of the YPF were, in some ways, also a weakness. Funding applications were assessed on the basis of their potential contribution to the aims and outcomes of the fund and their processes for involving young people. However, throughout the funding period monitoring and performance management took place against project specific aims and outcomes. Following approval of the YPF grant the

performance of the projects was not formally assessed against the aims and outcomes of the programme either in that country or at UK level.

8.18 As a result, consistent performance and monitoring information was not available at programme level. This presented challenges in assessing reach and impact. It is not possible to make a comprehensive quantitative assessment of overall success in meeting aims and outcomes and it is unclear in which area's projects performed more strongly than others. For future funding streams it is recommended that BIG put in place consistent performance measures at country and programme level to address these issues. By doing this it would be possible to make a more comprehensive assessment in terms of numbers of beneficiaries, reach into target populations and contribution of projects towards specific aims and outcomes.

8.19 With such broad aims and outcomes it is also possible that YPF activity duplicated existing provision, although there is no conclusive evidence either way that this was a significant issue. More defined aims and outcomes that closely reflect national policy (as was seen in England with alignment to the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes) may reduce the risk of duplication and ensure that activity fills recognised gaps in provision. Where projects are aligned to national priorities this may also aid targeted service delivery and ensure a more joined up approach in the local area thereby increasing the impact of funding streams such as YPF. YPF activity in Wales provided a positive example in this respect. Projects in Wales were required to fill gaps in local provision. All projects were linked to their local Children's and Young People's partnership, ensuring a more strategic approach to partnership working. This was a strength of the programme in Wales. It ensured alignment with national priorities and avoided duplication of provision. This is an approach that could be implemented across the UK in future funding streams.

8.20 While there is evidence that projects worked with vulnerable and marginalised young people and, in some cases, reached those who are least likely to engage in services, at the programme level it is not possible to comment on the success of the programme at reaching these groups. Projects did not have consistent targets for engagement of harder to reach young people, and there was no clear definition set at the start.

8.21 As it is these young people who arguably stand to benefit the most from involvement in activities, the ability of projects to illustrate their participation and engagement should be a more stringent requirement in future. There is also scope for greater innovation in the recruitment methods used by projects to engage the hardest to reach, particularly in terms of targeted outreach work where workers actively target those who are not engaging in services. Where these methods were used, there was evidence of success.

8.22 Evidence from across the UK has demonstrated that peer recruitment can be an effective mechanism when working with harder to reach groups of young people as they are often more likely to trust and act on a recommendation made

by someone they can identify with. While these methods will have reached many vulnerable young people, more specific activities to recruit, engage and retain hard to reach young people could have impacted on the extent to which the programme as a whole was successful in working with these groups.

Key learning points:

- Future funding streams should incorporate the strengths of YPF, specifically, flexibility, autonomy for each country to decide their own funding priorities and the variety of mechanisms for involving young people at programme level.
- Future funding streams should consider the inclusion of a small grants programme as the evaluation has shown the significant impact that small amounts of funding can bring about.
- While broad based outcomes are a strength in some respects, future funding streams should develop specific and defined aims and outcomes and a common set of indicators against which to measure success. Data should then be gathered against this to monitor progress and assess impact.
- The aims and outcomes should reflect national policy priorities in order that activity fills a recognised gap in provision. As evidence from Wales shows, this can be facilitated by ensuring links between funded projects and statutory structures.
- As an additional check, evidence of gaps in provision and the contribution of the proposed project in filling this gap could be included in the application process.
- There should be a greater requirement on projects to demonstrate the ways in which they will target and engage vulnerable and hard to reach young people and in reporting success with this.
- Peer recruitment is an effective mechanism for engaging harder to reach young people.

Impact and outcomes for young participants

8.23 Participation in YPF activity brought about considerable benefits for young people and there is evidence that these are already improving their long term outcomes. Benefits included increased confidence, improved relationships, increased engagement, communication skills and increased achievement and learning. These benefits met, and in many cases exceeded the expectations of young people.

8.24 These benefits were reported relatively consistently across countries and activity types and by young people from a range of backgrounds. This highlights a common set of skills and attributes that are highly valued by young people;

even where they are living in very different circumstances. It also demonstrates the success of projects in identifying and meeting the individual needs of young people in a way that contributes to these overarching needs.

8.25 Regardless of the specific country aims, simply bringing young people together to take part in a positive activity where they can meet new people and challenge themselves to try something new leads to these benefits. Young people who are facing challenges benefit from the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from other young people. The specific project activities can also give young people the chance to develop new skills which adds to the benefits of coming together.

8.26 As a result of these benefits YPF funded activity brought about long lasting impacts for young people in terms of promoting engagement with education, achieving positive destinations, raising aspirations, promoting active and responsible citizenship and long term health and well being.

8.27 Positive interaction with adults and peers, feeling listened to and empowered within the project environment were key features which facilitated these benefits. In addition, the skills of staff were very important in facilitating and sustaining engagement and bringing about positive impacts. Vulnerable young people often benefited from having positive adult role models they could trust and could talk to. This emerged across the UK (particularly in Wales) and is highlighted in the good practice guides that accompany this report.

8.28 By contributing to positive outcomes and supporting the longer term development, involvement and aspirations of young people, it is concluded that that YPF activity has, and will continue to bring about savings to the public purse. These savings are a result of reduced likelihood of young people becoming NEET (through improved engagement with education and progression to positive destinations), reduced anti-social behaviour and increased community involvement and active citizenship.

8.29 While there is evidence from projects, young people and case study visits supporting these assertions, the lack of consistent and comprehensive monitoring data makes it difficult to comment on the scale of these benefits (e.g. the numbers of young people who have benefited in this way) and therefore the value of potential savings at a programme level. Where young people reported these benefits, they were confident that YPF activity had played a significant part in bringing about these changes.

8.30 Going forward, the increasingly competitive funding environment means that robust measurements of social value will become ever more important for projects in order to demonstrate their impact and secure their future sustainability. Data which accurately captures the numbers of young people achieving outcomes, as a result of project activity, should be a requirement of future funding streams. BIG is in a good position to support capacity building in

this respect if this type of monitoring was built into future funding streams as a core requirement.

Key learning points:

- Future funding streams should identify measurable indicators to demonstrate social value. These should be consistent at programme level to enable aggregated impact assessment.
- Data captured against these indicators should be a funding requirement in order for projects to evidence their impact and promote sustainability.

Active Involvement

8.31 The active and meaningful involvement of young people was core to the design of YPF and was a key element setting it apart from other funding streams.

8.32 The right of children and young people to be involved in decision making is enshrined in international conventions and in recent years there has been a considerable push to increase participation in all spheres of public life⁴⁹. There is evidence that the active involvement of young people can bring about positive changes for⁵⁰:

- Young people themselves, who are given a voice, receive better services and can gain new skills.
- For organisations, which benefit from better targeted services, cost savings, new ideas and satisfied young people.
- The community, which benefits from active citizenship, fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

8.33 There is anecdotal evidence from young people and project staff that YPF, by facilitating more active involvement of young people, has brought about these benefits in a significant number of cases.

8.34 There was involvement to some extent within all country programmes but the level and nature varied. The evaluation found two distinct types of involvement:

- Operational involvement: Young people were primarily involved in the day to day delivery and management of project activity. Projects tended to have an internal focus in that, while the wider community may benefit from project activity, the primary beneficiaries were young people. In these projects young people's activities included:
 - Developing and drafting training resources.

⁴⁹ Tisdall, K., (2008) "Children, Young People and Participation" presentation available online at <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/files/iriss-cccs-1-1-kay-tisdall-2008-09-24.ppt>

⁵⁰ Every Child Matters, Change for Children available online at <http://everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation/faq>

- Gauging the opinion of project participants.
 - Planning everyday project activities.
 - Delivering everyday project activities.
 - Other roles and responsibilities related to the day to day operation of the project.
- Strategic involvement: Young people tended to take a high level role in the future direction and activity of the project while project workers dealt with daily aspects of delivery and management. Young people's activities included:
 - Setting the strategic direction of the project.
 - Identifying issues.
 - Identifying activities.
 - Identifying who, how and why to approach strategic stakeholder to bring about change.

8.35 The benefits of active involvement do not differ substantially between these two types. The process of involvement is more significant in achieving impacts than the specific nature of the activities.

8.36 The benefits reported by actively involved young people were largely similar to those reported by project participants. The scale and intensity of impacts was however greater for those who were actively involved as a result of the richer experience they gain.

8.37 While projects aimed to actively involve young people, in reality relatively small numbers of young people were involved particularly in higher level activities such as youth steering groups, management committees and recruitment of staff.

8.38 Involvement tended to be focused around the development of project activities and feeding back on activities. There was limited involvement in the application stage and, although involvement in project management increased over the course of the evaluation, involvement in management activities was lower than might be anticipated for a programme which focused on active involvement.

8.39 Active involvement proved challenging for a number of reasons. Staff required the necessary skills and projects the necessary structures and processes to facilitate active involvement. In the early days project staff appeared unaware that these features could be lacking in their organisation. This is borne out by the fact that the levels and types of involvement increased and changed over the course of the funding period.

8.40 Throughout the evaluation projects reported barriers to active involvement. These often included the confidence and capacity of young people, the skills of staff, logistical and resource difficulties. However, it was often possible to

overcome barriers to involvement by providing training and ongoing support for young people to develop confidence and capacity and by providing additional resources (including transport, meals and snacks) to overcome practical barriers.

8.41 Future funding streams should consider alternative application and reporting formats to increase the involvement of young people in the application and management process. Suggestions from projects included using picture and film evidence from young people and visits by grants officers so that young people could verbally describe the value of the activity for them.

8.42 Overall, evidence shows that YPF has acted as a catalyst bringing about an increase in the knowledge and capacity of organisations to involve young people. Staff now better recognise the benefits of meaningful involvement and the mechanisms to achieve it.

8.43 Active involvement is not appropriate for all young people at all times during their participation and may not be realistic for everyone. YPF funded projects recognised and respected this right to choose.

8.44 Flexibility in the level and type of active involvement expected within projects was a strength of the YPF in some respects. This allowed projects to work with young people to involve them in the ways, and at the speed, that was right for them. While this flexibility should be retained in future funding streams it is also important that projects are fully aware of why and how to involve young people, that opportunities for meaningful involvement are present at all times and that young people are encouraged and supported to be involved. Further guidance around active involvement and what was expected of projects would have been beneficial.

8.45 BIG recognised this and have taken on this learning in the design and development of YPF2 by funding a package of support, provided by the Participation Works Consortium, to embed youth involvement and enable potential applicants to meet the level of young people's participation that is required.

Key learning points:

- Projects require clear guidance on expectations around active involvement.
- BIG should facilitate the sharing of information and good practice around active involvement. The Good Practice Guides produced as part of this evaluation and the social networking site that has been established may assist with this going forward.
- There are clear benefits resulting from active involvement of young people, future funding streams should include the continued involvement of young people and other beneficiaries in projects and at programme level where appropriate.

- Future funding streams should consider alternative application and reporting formats to increase the involvement of young people in the application and management process.

Legacy

8.46 The activity funded through YPF demonstrated a high degree of additionality. In the absence of this funding much of the activity would not have taken place, or would not have taken place with the scale and capacity that was evident. YPF support allowed the establishment and expansion of services and the development and testing of new delivery models. YPF has been a catalyst for further activity, including spin off projects and activity undertaken wholly by young people.

8.47 There were mixed findings in relation to sustainability of activity. While some YPF projects or project elements have continued, it is apparent that much YPF activity has now come to an end. The changing funding environment has, understandably, had a role to play in this.

8.48 While the extended period of YPF funding (three years in England, four years in Scotland and five years in Northern Ireland and Wales) allowed strategic planning within organisations, there was a continued reliance on grant funding amongst many of the projects. Future funding streams may wish to consider the sustainability of project activity at an early stage. This would involve requiring projects to demonstrate plans for future sustainability and encouraging innovative approaches to diversifying income streams. By encouraging this step change in approach to sustainability, BIG could increase the legacy and long term benefits to young people and their communities as a result of short term grants in future.

8.49 In saying this, it is clear that YPF has played a significant role in increasing the capacity of youth sector organisations, in developing the skills of staff to effectively support young people and in helping to build enduring partnerships. This will ensure the lasting legacy of the YPF for the youth work sector across the UK.

Key learning points:

- Future funding streams should consider the sustainability of project activity at an early stage to increase the legacy and long term benefits of the programmes.
- The requirement for future planning could be built into the application and ongoing monitoring and reporting processes.

Study challenges

8.50 This five year UK wide evaluation of YPF has brought with it a number of challenges. It is important to recognise these challenges so that the learning can inform future studies.

8.51 Although it was clear from the outset that a flexible approach would be required during the evaluation, one of the challenges was that the original evaluation plan broadly proposed replicating a similar method in each year. Over the course of the evaluation it became increasingly difficult to engage projects and to gain access to young people, particularly where projects had come to an end and young people had moved on.

8.52 As a result it has been difficult to evaluate the longer term impacts of YPF activity and the assessment is largely based on a sample of young people who are arguably the most engaged and willing to speak about their experience.

8.53 These challenges were compounded by the lack of consistent and comprehensive monitoring data upon which to make quantitative assessments of reach, contribution to the aims and outcomes and impact.

8.54 Quantitative telephone surveys in each year went some way to addressing this but these alone do not allow for a programme wide assessment. The study largely relied on qualitative evidence from a sample of funded projects and from young people. Although a wealth of rich qualitative data has been gathered this too has its limitations for a four country programme wide evaluation.

8.55 Although projects developed and refined their activities and approaches to working with young people, the activity remained relatively constant over the funding period. This has impacted on the research findings and had we continued with the original methods, would have resulted in little new evidence to report in the latter years.

8.56 In response to these challenges it was necessary to alter and rebalance the evaluation methods over the course of the study. By slightly altering the methods and the research tools the team were able to explore specific areas of interest in different years. This allowed a focus on active involvement in year three, a high level assessment of social value in year four and a focus on good and innovative practice developed through the Good Practice Guides in year five. The team feel this has increased the value of the study and the breadth and depth of the learning that can be drawn from it.