

Youth Social Action Journey Fund Evaluation

Report of Research Results

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youth**united**

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Background

Youth United is a network of voluntary youth organisations, working together to increase access to life-changing opportunities offered to young people. Youth United aims to give young people a sense of belonging, raise their self-esteem, help them to develop skills for employment and enable them to contribute to the community in which they live.

The Youth Social Action Journey Fund Programme¹ was funded by the Cabinet Office to create new social action opportunities in areas of high deprivation and low provision and improve the link between Youth United members and the National Citizen Service (NCS). The project was overseen by The Social Investment Business on behalf of the Cabinet Office which was responsible for disbursing the grant.

The overall objectives of the Cabinet Office's funding were to:

- Increase the number of young people aged 10-17 engaged in high quality social action and support 16-17 year olds to take part in NCS.
- Increase access for the growing number of NCS graduates aged 16-20 to engage in high quality social action and leadership opportunities.

More specifically, the Youth United project aimed to:

- Create 1,200 new places for young people.
- Promote NCS and encourage young people to join by ensuring 395 young people apply to take part in NCS.
- Recruit 430 NCS graduates to join Youth United organisations as Young Leaders and thereby continue their social action journey.

Eight Youth United organisations took part in the Youth United Project (Table 1). This report provides feedback on the project at mid-February 2015 at which point data collection for the project was closed². The Youth United Project continued until the end of May 2015.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/11-million-funding-to-boost-opportunities-for-young-people>

² The Journey Fund evaluation had to be completed at the end of March.

Table 1: Organisations included in the Youth United Project evaluation

Youth United Organisations
Girlguiding
Marine Society and Sea Cadets
St John Ambulance
The Boys' Brigade
The Fire Cadets
The Girls' Brigade
The Scout Association
Volunteer Police Cadets

Research Objectives

The evaluation of the Youth United Project had the following key objectives:

- To evaluate the impact of the project on young people;
- To identify the effectiveness of the project in meeting its objectives in terms of reach, engagement, delivery and impact;
- To identify key learning and good practice in the delivery of the project.

In order to meet these objectives, a number of research questions were identified:

Young people:

- What is the level of behaviour change that occurs through the participation of young people in the project?
- What are the main benefits for young people in being part of the project, and how do they perceive it has changed them, if at all?
- How does participating in the social projects make them feel, and in what ways does it affect their emotional resilience, their level of confidence, their self-esteem, their relationships with those closest to them such as their family and friends?
- What are the consequences of participation: in what ways, if any, has participation enhanced or improved their lives?
- What are their hopes and aspirations for the future before, during and after their participation in the project?

The consequences:

- What have been the tangible benefits of young people being involved in the project, e.g. improvements in attainment at school, better job prospects, enhanced self-esteem, engagement with and focus on education or job training?
- The way in which altruism has flourished through being part of a joint effort to improve and help the lives of others?
- How likely are they to want to assist other young people once they have graduated from the project?
- What have been the wider impacts of young people's involvement? E.g. at a community level?

Participating organisations:

- How have the participating organisations targeted, recruited and retained young people in the project?
- How easy or difficult was it for the participating organisations to be inclusive and ensure that young people would benefit from participation in the project?
- What, if any, were the barriers for participating organisations to run such a project, and what can be done to overcome these?
- What additional help and or support would participating organisations need to extend the project and create a flourishing programme of community service that enhances the lives of those young people who take part?
- How have the participating organisations recruited NCS graduates to the project?

Research Approach

The Evaluation Process: A Pretest-Posttest Control and Experimental Group Design

The evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative research methods in a programme of research designed to provide robust and detailed feedback:

- Pretest-posttest control and experimental group study using quantitative questionnaires³ (Table 2);
 - Those taking part in the Youth United Project: Three paper questionnaires completed by each young person;
 - An online control questionnaire: Developed to provide a baseline for comparison at both the Pre-participation and Post-participation stages.
- Case studies with each of the organisations involved in the evaluation, which included both group discussions with participants and in-depth interviews with unit leaders.
- A group discussion held with the Youth United Senior User Group which included senior project team members from each organisation and representatives from Youth United.

For a detailed explanation of the sample, methodology and analysis please see appendix 2.

Research Sample

The data included in this report was taken from completed Pre-participation, Monitoring and Post-participation Youth United questionnaires received up to 16th February 2015, the Control Pre and Post surveys, feedback from the case studies conducted with each organisation and the Senior User Group focus group (see Appendix 2 for questionnaires and discussion guides).

³ Questions used in questionnaires (but not in Case Study group discussions, in-depth interviews, or the Senior User Group, group discussion) were those provided by the Cabinet Office for the evaluation of The Youth Social Action Journey Fund Programme. For consistency the Cabinet Office asked that these remained the same over the eleven Youth Social Action Journey programmes it funded.

Table 2: Questionnaires used in the Control Study evaluation of the Youth United Project

Survey	Number of completed questionnaires	Details
Youth United Project Pre-participation Questionnaire (paper)	516	Given to those who join the organisation
Youth United Project Monitoring Questionnaire (paper)	372	Given to young people during their time with the organisation
Youth United Project Post-participation Questionnaire (paper)	340	Given to those who leave the organisation/to all young people still with the organisation in January 2015
Control Group – Run in tandem with the Youth United Project pre-participation & post-participation stages. Questionnaires sent online using an online panel provider with access to young people from deprived areas	66	Administered to the same sample of young people aged 11-18 from social grades D and E in Birmingham, London and Manchester between 11 th June and 14 th July 2014 (Pre-participation stage) and 26 th January and 9 th February 2015 (Post-participation stage). Because of the defined sample and the challenge of following up a group of young people the sample size was 201 at the pre stage and 66 at the post stage.
Youth United Project NCS Graduate Questionnaire (paper)	112	Given to those who are returning to the organisation as young leaders/graduates having completed the NCS programme (see Section 4)

Data from the Youth United questionnaires was reported from all organisations combined together.

Control Group Surveys

A Control Group was surveyed using a tailored version of the Youth United questionnaire to provide a point of comparison for the Evaluation Outcome Measures statements. Demographics such as religion, ethnicity and gender were recorded, as well as details of voluntary activities.

201 young people aged 11-18 from social grades D and E completed a Pre-participation online interview between 11th June and 14th July 2014.

Of those, 66 young people also completed a Post online interview between 26th January and 9th February 2015. To enable us to demonstrate with confidence whether there has been any change in the Control young people over time, this report focuses on those young people who completed both the Pre and Post Control surveys.

Interviews were conducted with young people from Birmingham, London and Manchester. The survey was short, taking around 4-5 minutes to complete on average.

Case studies

Three case studies were carried out in 2014, one each with Volunteer Police Cadets, St John Ambulance and Fire Cadets. Eight more case studies, one with each organisation, were carried out in January/February 2015.

Where possible, the case studies consisted of the research team observing a session run by the organisation and interviewing both Young Cadets and Unit Leaders. Information was provided on how the Unit was set up, the demographics of those involved and how a typical session would be held. The Young Cadets were asked how they had heard about the organisation, what they felt about being a part of it and the type of volunteering opportunities they have been involved in.

Evaluation Communication

To ensure optimum communication was maintained throughout the evaluation (April 2014 – March 2015), FK&Y provided weekly status updates to Youth United. In addition FK&Y met Youth United face to face on a fortnightly basis and distributed a fortnightly newsletter to all participating Youth United organisations.

Executive Summary

The Impact of Taking Part in a Youth United Organisation

“I wouldn’t be able to do some of the things I do now, I wouldn’t be able to speak to you as I was a really shy person.”

(Male aged 17, Fire Cadets)

“Meeting new people and learning new skills; I have been able to grow in confidence.”

(Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

Young people have clearly benefited from their experience of taking part in a Youth United organisation. Results from the Youth United evaluation indicate that overall young people taking part have had a positive and in some cases life-changing experience which has had a profound effect on their sense of well-being, confidence and self-esteem. Despite the relatively short time-scale of the evaluation there is clear evidence of a shift in self-perception amongst participants. Character-formation and an increase in self-esteem are notably present; both are clear objectives of the project. Involvement with a Youth United organisation has also had a significant impact on young people’s propensity to volunteer, both during their time with the organisation and their desire to do so in the future.

Expectations of joining a Youth United Organisation and the extent to which they were fulfilled

- Many young people had high expectations before joining their organisations and it would appear that these were largely fulfilled. Young people joined their organisation predominantly **to learn new skills** (95%), **to help others in the community** (84%) and **to make new friends** (82%). They also believed that joining their organisation would **increase their confidence** (81%).
- These goals were met. Measured on the results of the survey, including open-ended verbatim responses, and the focus groups which were held as part of the case studies, it was clear that the young people enjoyed their experiences and almost all agreed they had **learned new skills** (92%) and that their time there had **been interesting** (88%).

“I have been given opportunities to learn interesting things and go to places with people I otherwise wouldn’t have met.”

(Female aged 15, Volunteer Police Cadets)

- Significantly, most young people felt that their experience had helped them **to work with other people** (90%), **to listen and follow instructions** (90%) and **to be organised** (81%). More than four out of five (84%) said their time with the organisations had helped them **to persist and not give up**.

- Self-confidence was also high and involvement with the organisations had a positive impact on how young people felt about themselves, with more than 4 out of 5 (82%) agreeing their time with the organisation had **helped them to always or mostly feel more confident in new situations** and almost four out of five (78%) agreeing it **helped them to always or mostly feel good about themselves**.
- A **sense of belonging** and **making new friendships** were important aspects of participation. Young people frequently described this as **'being part of a family'**.
- Young people believed that their participation would have **benefits for their future employment prospects as well as their CV's** and often cited these as a reason for joining the organisations. Interest in the work of the organisation or in pursuing a career within the organisation were also mentioned by some as a driver for joining.
- Importantly, the vast majority of young people felt **motivated for their future with clear aspirations for what they might go on to do following their experience with a Youth United organisation**. 86% agreed that they had **established goals and plans**. It was encouraging to see that many of the young people interviewed had a clear notion of what they would be doing, with many intending to carry on studying at college or university.

"Advance my CV for later on in life, to try and aim for high qualifications and potential job opportunities." (Male aged 14, Volunteer Police Cadets)

- It is recognised that behaviour change is more likely to happen if young people feel a sense of enjoyment and involvement⁴. 'Fun' was described as an important element of being part of the Project, providing young people with the **opportunity to take part in experiences that they otherwise may not have had access to**. Experiences away from home and especially camping expeditions were described as particularly enjoyable.
- It is notable that the majority of young people struggled to provide any negative comments about their experiences or to identify any improvements that needed to be made, unusual in an evaluation such as this. Practical and hands-on learning experiences were enjoyed the most although it was recognised that more formal learning was also sometimes required. Not surprisingly therefore it was classroom-based learning such as watching presentations, attending lectures, learning theory work which were enjoyed the least, indicating that opportunities for active learning should be continued.

⁴ http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Behaviour-change_practical_guide_tcm6-9696.pdf

Figure 1: If you were describing the organisation to your friends, what would you say?



The link between joining a Youth United Organisation and behaviour change

- A driving principal of Youth United is to encourage behaviour change and a positive effect on character formation through volunteering and helping others in the community and despite the relatively short timescale the evaluation provides clear evidence of change amongst the young people involved across a number of aspects.
- The greatest change was seen in **communication** skills ('I feel confident talking in front of large groups of people', 13% increase). Young people and staff often described this as an **improvement in confidence**.
- However, 'communication' remained the area where young people felt the least confident overall (pre=33%, post=46%). Continued participation with an organisation may result in further improvements however this potentially indicates that there could be an even greater emphasis on this area.
- Significant changes were also seen in the proportion of Youth United young people who felt confident in their skills associated with **creativity** ('I like to think of new ways of doing things', 11% increase), **empathy** ('I can usually see the other person's point of view, even if I don't agree with it', 10% increase), **resilience** ('I can bounce back after disappointment or when something goes wrong', 9% increase) and **agency** ('I can do just about anything I set my mind to', 8% increase). Many of these characteristics are acknowledged to be indicators

of positive mental health outcomes⁵ and contribute to the development of good character in young people.⁶

- Improvements in behaviour were reported by staff in the case studies, and young people themselves recognised that their participation had **increased their involvement in positive activities** (86%). The importance of self-discipline was recognised by participants in the case studies, something they may not have acknowledged before, and the benefits of being in such an environment which inevitably called for rules, regulations and the recognition of boundaries were seen to translate into other aspects of a young person's life.

"I used to hang around with the wrong sort of people – being here has made me a better person."
(Male aged 17, Fire Cadets)

- **Being part of a Youth United organisation had a greater impact on girls than boys.** From the evaluation outset, girls were significantly less confident than boys in their sense of their own **creative** skills (girls=36%, boys=58%) and **planning** skills (girls=50%, boys=60%). However, these improved significantly across the evaluation, bringing them in line with boys at the post-stage (creativity; girls=58%, boys=62%, planning; girls=60%, boys=62%). A significant increase in feelings of **empathy** amongst girls was also seen (pre=60%, post=78%), whereas no change was seen amongst boys (pre=60%, post=63%).
- Positively, almost all the young people surveyed at the end of the evaluation agreed that **they want to stay involved with their organisation** (94%).
- Further reinforcing the impact of Youth United organisations on young people, **no significant changes were seen in the same period amongst young people in the Control Group** on any of the outcomes measures.
- Interestingly, the young people involved with a Youth United organisation appeared at the outset to be significantly more positive than the Control Group about their skills and feelings around planning (Youth United pre=55%, Control pre=38%), confidence (Youth United pre=60%, Control pre=39%) and resilience (Youth United pre=50%, Control pre=29%). This suggests that the young people who knew they were to participate in a Youth United Organisation, even though they had not yet begun the programme, had already experienced an increase in self-confidence by simply knowing they were part of their respective organisation.

⁵ The Nuffield Foundation: Changing Adolescence Programme <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/about-changing-adolescence-programme>

⁶ Building Character Through Social Action http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/Building_Character_Through_Youth_Social_Action.pdf

The way in which Youth United membership increased engagement with the community

- Carrying out activities that would benefit the community was clearly an important aspect of young people's involvement in a Youth United organisation. During their participation, the majority of young people (81%) reported a strong feeling of **wanting to make a difference in their community** and they clearly felt that their participation enabled them to do so. 7 out of 10 (70%) felt they were **more involved in their community** and a similar proportion (71%) felt that they had **given something back to their community**.
- It is encouraging to see that **volunteering in the previous 12 months increased significantly across the project** from 51% at the pre-participation stage to 66% at the post-participation stage and that young people felt **more likely to volunteer or become involved with similar organisations in the future** (81%). This is extremely positive given the short time frame of the evaluation and it is likely that an even greater increase may have been seen had the evaluation been extended further.
- There also appears to have been **an overall increase in the frequency of volunteering** amongst the young people involved with a Youth United organisation. At the post-participation stage, three quarters (75%) of Youth United young people volunteered at least once a month, a significant increase from just over half (56%) at the pre-participation stage.
- A sense of **pride and feeling respected by others and the community at large** was cited by young people as an important aspect of their involvement with their organisation and this was often associated with wearing a uniform which gave them an identity.
- Involvement with a Youth United organisation also appeared to have a positive impact on the propensity of young people to volunteer in the future; over 8 out of 10 young people agreed that they are **more likely to volunteer in the future** (85%) with around 2 out of 5 young people strongly agreeing (42%).

"I think everyone knows this; that when you go and do charity work, or voluntary work, like we do, in our own time, then you're making other people smile, and that's great."

(Male aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

The Experiences of Graduate Young Leaders

- The main reasons that NCS Graduate Young Leaders gave for joining a Youth United organisation were linked closely to their future prospects. There was high agreement that participation would enable them to continue **gaining experiences which would help them in adulthood and in their future career** (81%), gain **leadership skills** (71%) and **build their confidence** (67%).
- Altruism was also evident. A desire to continue to make a difference to others was an important driver for Young Leaders; almost two thirds (63%) wanted to **help their community** and almost half (48%) wanted to **make a difference to other young people**.

“To be able to help my community more and be able to raise awareness to others in the community.”
(Female Young Leader aged 16, Sea Cadets)

- Young Leaders were not disappointed by their experience of being part of a Youth United organisation and clearly felt positively about their experiences within the organisations; 92% agreed and 79% strongly agreed that they had **really enjoyed their time as a volunteer**.
- A sense of doing something worthwhile was also evident and most graduate Young Leaders felt that they were **respected by other staff and volunteers** (87%) and that they were **trusted to take on responsibility** (80%).

“It makes me feel like I’ve worked towards something and achieved something.”
(Male Young Leader aged 17, Fire Cadets)

- Equally, the majority of NCS Graduate Young Leaders (89%) agreed that they hoped that their role as a volunteer would **make a difference to their community**. Most also felt they were **making a difference to the young people in their organisation** (82%).

“I think it's extremely rewarding knowing that you're making an impact in someone else's life. A lot of the kids have made me small creative gifts which really makes me feel as if I am helping them.”
(Female Young Leader aged 17, Girlguiding)

- Importantly, very few NCS Graduate Young Leaders planned on staying in the role for less than 6 months (6%). The **majority believed they would stay with the organisation for at least 7-12 months** (53%, n=59).
- Some NCS Young Leaders however explained that whilst they wanted to stay involved with their organisation, **increased pressure on their time from school or college work** made it difficult for them to maintain the level of commitment that was required. Also, some young people planned to move away from home to attend college or university and expected that they would stop being involved as a result. It is therefore unsurprising **that almost two in five (38%) were unsure how long they would remain with the organisation**. Despite this, young people reported during the case studies that they could envisage becoming involved with the organisation again in the future.

Glossary

Youth United group

Young people who took part in the Youth United Project by joining a YU organisation in 2014/2015 and completed a paper questionnaire.

Control group

A sample of young people young people aged 11-18 from social grades D and E who completed an online questionnaire to provide a point of comparison for the Youth United group for the Evaluation Outcome Measures statements.

Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE)

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), is a youth awards programme founded in the United Kingdom in 1956 by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The awards recognise adolescents and young adults for completing a series of self-improvement exercises.

Monitoring stage/questionnaire

Questionnaire completed by young people in the Youth United Project during their time within the organisation.

Post-participation/post stage/questionnaire

Questionnaire completed by Youth United Project young people when they left the organisation/by all young people still with the organisation in January 2015. For the Control group, the post stage questionnaire was completed in January-February 2015.

Pre-participation/pre stage/questionnaire

Questionnaire completed by Youth United Project young people when they joined the organisation. For the Control group, the pre stage questionnaire was completed in June-July 2014.

Qualitatively

Findings based on individual and group interviews conducted during the case study visits to each organisation.

Quantitatively

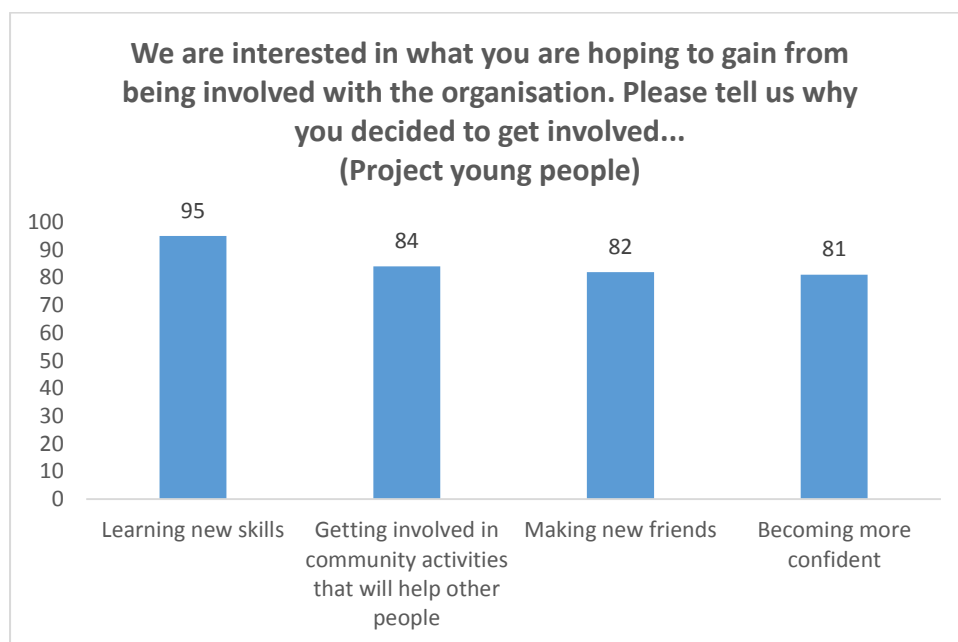
Findings bases on the data provided by surveys completed by Youth United and Control young people.

Section 1: Expectations of joining a Youth United Organisation and the extent to which they were fulfilled

1.1 Expectations of joining a Youth United Organisation

Young people were asked what expectations they had when they joined their organisation from a short prompted list (Figure 2), but were also asked to provide any other reasons for joining (Table 3).

Figure 2: We are interested in what you are hoping to gain from being involved with the organisation. Please tell us why you decided to get involved...



Base: Youth United pre (516)

It is clear that the young people had a range of expectations prior to joining their organisation. Learning new skills was an important aspect of their involvement; almost all young people agreed with this statement (95%, n=489).

“Have new experiences, and make my future more wide, as I will learn new life skills.”
(Female aged 12, Sea Cadets)

The ability to learn new skills was particularly important to those aged 16+ (98%, n=163).

“Because I wanted to learn new things.” (Female aged 16, Scouts)

Reflecting previous research that points out young people’s altruism⁷, over four-fifths (84%, n=433) of young people also hoped to get involved in community activities to help other people. This desire to help others increased with age and for older young people (16+), the ability to help other people through their involvement in the Youth United Project was a particularly prevalent reason for them becoming involved. More than 9 out of 10 young people aged 16+ (92%, n=153) indicated this as a

⁷ See Charity Aid Foundation (2013) https://www.cafonline.org/pdf/Growing_Up_Giving.pdf

reason for getting involved, significantly greater than those aged under 11 (68%, n=25 *NB low base), 11-13 year olds (81%, n=96) and 14-15 year olds (84%, n=171).

“Because I want to help people.” (Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

Over four-fifths (82%, n=424) of young people also hoped to have the opportunity to make new friends. This was more likely to be mentioned by over 16’s (87%, n=145) and 14-15 year olds (84%, n=171) than those under 14 (76%, n=101).

Most young people anticipated that their involvement with these organisations would help them to become more confident; 81% (n=420) indicated this as a reason for getting involved. Having the opportunity to build their confidence was particularly key for those aged 16+ (89%, n=147).

These expectations are important as they reflect some of the key aims of the Youth United Project, showing that they are in line with the initial expectations of young people.

There was evidence from the young people’s comments (Table 1) that some had joined an organisation because they were interested in pursuing a career in a similar area (7%, n=36) or they were interested in the work of the organisation (5%, n=24). This was also mentioned by young people and Unit Leaders during the case study interviews.

“To gain a better insight and eye-opening experience as to what the police do and responsibilities of the police.” (Male aged 16, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“To see what it’s like to be in the fire service.” (Female aged 16, Fire Cadets)

“I am trying to get an apprenticeship in St Johns.” (Female aged 17, St John Ambulance)

Some young people were clearly aware of the future benefits of organisation membership and volunteering on their employability. Quantitatively, 6% (n=32) mentioned the benefits for their future job opportunities/their CV as a reason for joining their organisation.

“Achievements to put on my CV.” (Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

“Advance my CV for later on in life, to try and aim for high qualifications and potential job opportunities.” (Male aged 14, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“Have something interesting on my CV and to have fun.” (Female aged 15, Fire Cadets)

Table 3: We are interested in what you are hoping to gain from being involved with the organisation. Please tell us why you decided to get involved (other mentions)...⁸

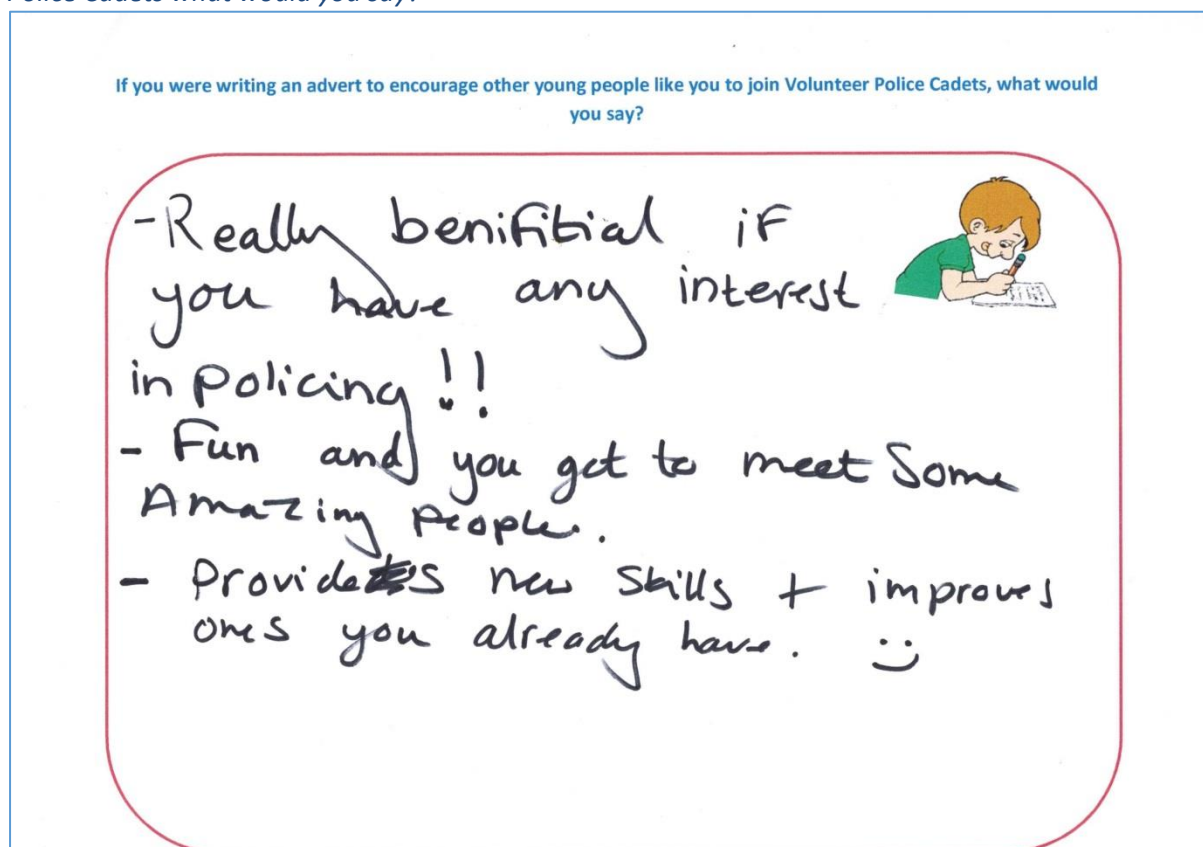
	% of Project young people (Pre - 516)
Interested in a career related to organisation	7%
Experience for CV/job prospects	6%
Interested in organisation	5%
Learn/improve skills	3%
Fun/enjoyment	2%
Qualifications	1%
Charity work/help others	<1%
Other family member already with organisation	<1%

NB: Less than 4 mentions not shown

There was a synergy found between the comments analysis from the quantitative surveys and the case study interviews. A clear example of this came from an interview with a Youth Leader volunteering at St John Ambulance. The young woman described how her experience of being part of the organisation had given her the motivation and opportunity to fulfil her ambition of a career working with young people. She found volunteering very rewarding and recognised that whatever qualifications she could acquire through the organisation would help her to obtain a job in the future.

⁸ Note: The question had a prompted list of 4 statements and then asked for other reasons, if there were any. All other reasons were coded into these categories. The prompted statements cover the main reasons for joining so we would expect the 'other' reasons to have much lower mentions.

Figure 3: If you were writing an advert to encourage other young people like you to join Volunteer Police Cadets what would you say?



1.2 Experiences during the Project

Young people were asked to complete a monitoring questionnaire after they had been involved with the organisation for a period of time, to provide some interim feedback on their experiences with the organisation and the impact of those experiences on how they felt. The exact timing of this questionnaire varied between organisations, however, all organisations were asked to ensure their young people had completed a monitoring survey in November 2014 if they had not already done so.

Overall the experiences of Youth United young people met their expectations.

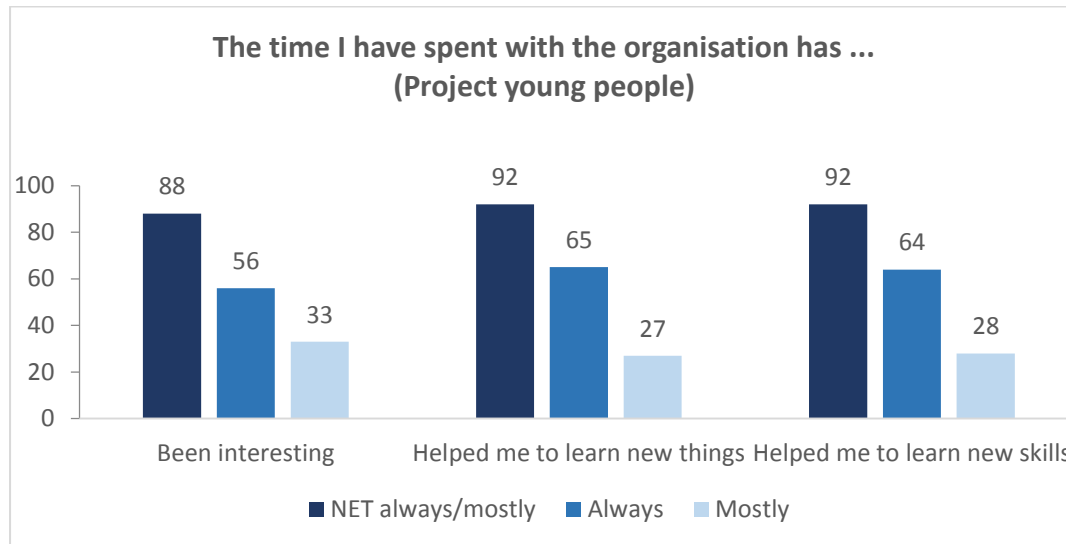
1.2.1 Content

The young people were asked their opinion of the content of their experiences: if their experiences were interesting and whether they had learned something new. Project young people viewed their experiences with the organisations very positively, with the vast majority saying that the time spent with them had always or mostly been interesting (88%, n=329). Over half of young people (56%, n=207) felt their experiences were always interesting and a third (33%, n=122) found them mostly interesting.

The opportunity to learn new things as part of the Youth United Project was also important. Almost all the young people surveyed felt that their time with the organisations had allowed them to learn new things (always/mostly 92%, n=343) and the same proportion had learned new skills

(always/mostly 92%, n=341). Males were significantly more likely to state that their involvement had helped them to learn new skills than females (males 95% vs. females 88%).

Figure 4: Please tell us how you feel about the following statements: I think that the time I have spent with the organisation has...



Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

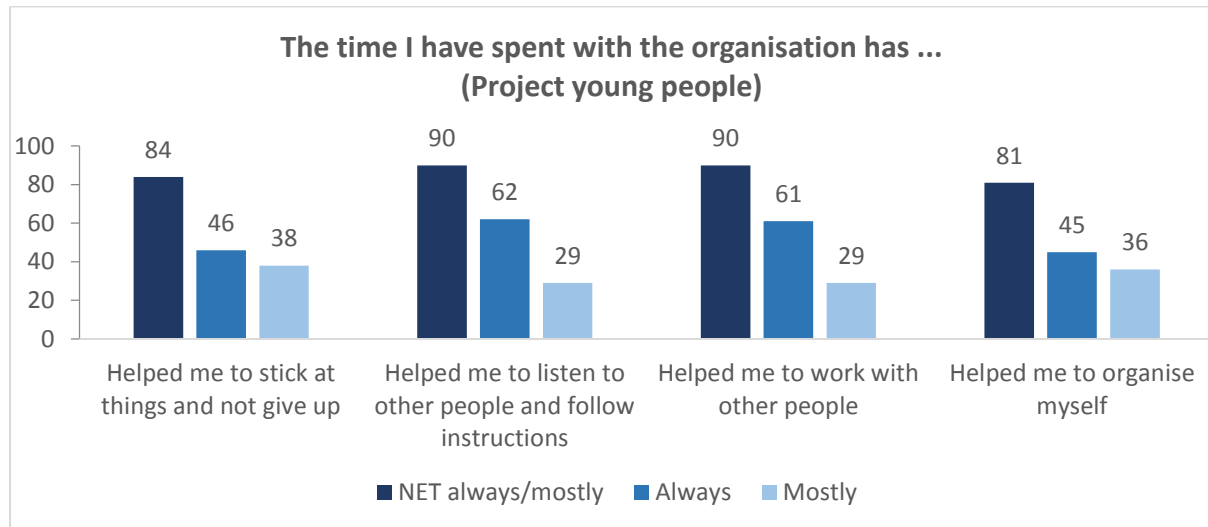
1.2.2 Collaboration and motivation

Experiences during the Youth United Project had a positive impact on the working style of the young people involved. The vast majority of the young people surveyed said their time with the organisations had always/mostly helped them to work with other people (90%, n=334) and to listen and follow instructions (90%, n=336).

Over four out of five young people said their time with the Youth United Project had helped them to 'stick at things' and not give up (always/mostly 84%, n=313) and to be organised (always/mostly 81%, n=300).

Males were significantly more likely than females to say that the Youth United Programme had an impact on their ability to listen and follow instructions (males 94%, n=186, females 87, n=146) and on their organisational skills (males 85%, n=169, females 76%, n=128).

Figure 5: Please tell us how you feel about the following statements: I think that the time I have spent with the organisation has...

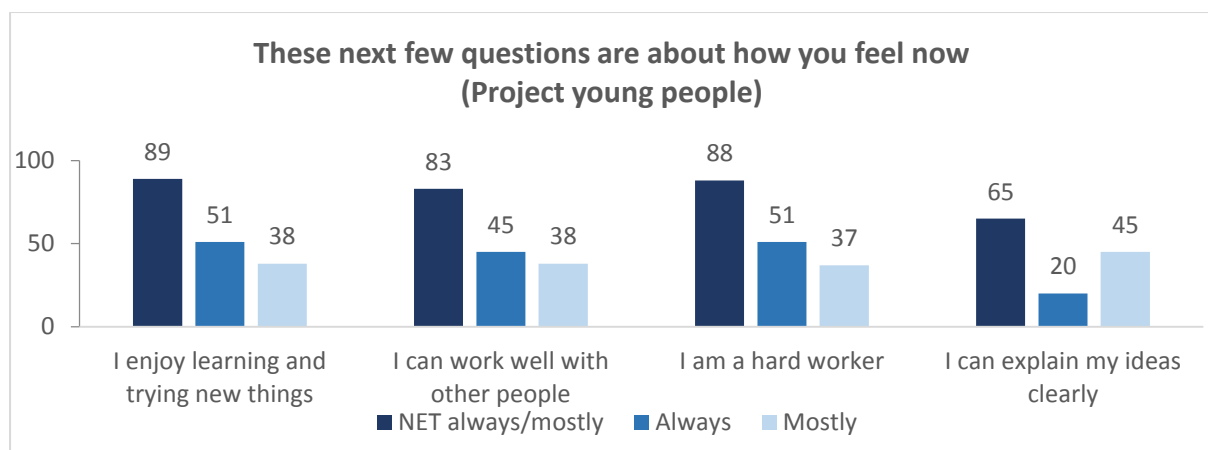


Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

Most young people agreed that they always/mostly enjoyed learning and trying new things (89%, n=331) and that they worked hard (88%, n=327).

An area where young people felt less confident was around their ability to explain their ideas clearly; around two-thirds (65%, n=243) agreed that they always/mostly were able to do so; just a fifth (20%, n=75) felt confident enough to say they 'always' clearly explain their ideas and 45% (n=168) felt like this 'mostly'. Again some gender differences were seen; males were significantly more likely to say they 'always/mostly' enjoy learning and try new things (males 57%, n=112, females 46%, n=77) and that they could explain their ideas clearly 'always' (males 24%, n=48, females 15%, n=26) as compared to females.

Figure 6: These next few questions are about how you feel now. For each question, please only tick one answer. If you are not sure about a question or don't have an opinion just tick 'don't know'...

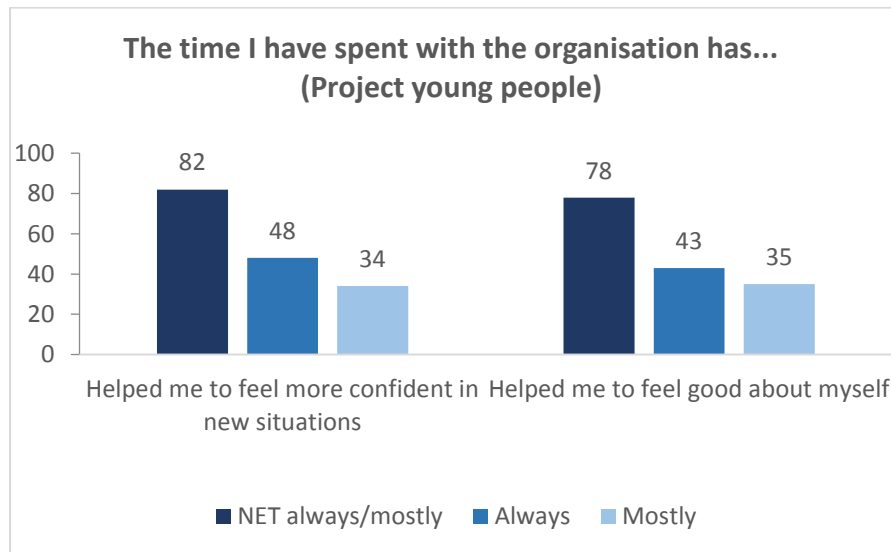


Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

1.2.3 Confidence

The Project young people reported a positive impact on their confidence as an outcome of their experience with the project. More than 4 out of 5 (82%, n=305) said their time with the organisation had helped them to always/mostly feel more confident in new situations. Males were significantly more likely to feel that their involvement with the organisation had always/mostly made them feel more confident in new situations than females (males 87% vs. females 77%).

Figure 7: Please tell us how you feel about the following statements: I think that the time I have spent with the organisation has...



Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

Qualitatively, this was well supported by the case study interviews. The young people and staff members interviewed described how their experiences with the organisations had greatly improved the confidence of the young people in a wide variety of situations, in particular speaking in front of others, meeting new people and taking on new challenges.

Involvement with the Youth United Project also had a positive impact on how young people felt about themselves. Over three-quarters agreed that their involvement with the organisation had always/mostly helped them to feel good about themselves (78%, n=289). For males this was particularly pertinent; a significantly higher proportion stated that their involvement in the organisation had always/mostly helped them to feel good about themselves compared to females (males 87% versus females 68%).

1.2.4 Aspirations

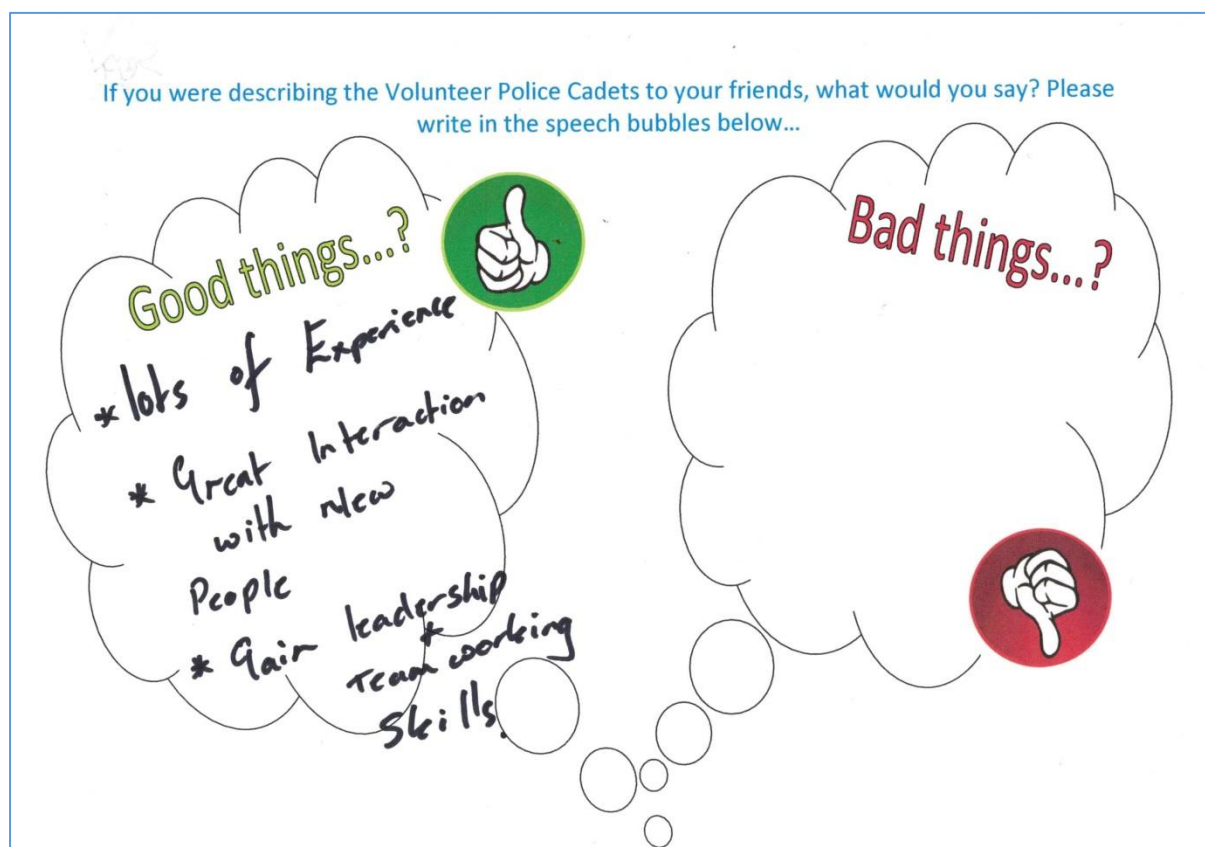
The vast majority of young people surveyed felt motivated for their future, with 86% agreeing they have goals and plans (always/mostly n=321). This closely mirrors the findings from the case study visits; many of the young people interviewed had aspirations for the future, with a number having clear and focussed plans for their future career. Even amongst those who had not yet decided what they would like to do for a career, most had plans to carry on with their studies at college or university.

"Just learning new things and a bit of competition between different watches and just having fun but learning and taking part."
(Female aged 14, Fire Cadets)

"The thing I have enjoyed most about the Sea Cadets is learning new things and making new friends."
(Female aged 16, Sea Cadets)

"Meeting new people and learning new skills. I have been able to grow in confidence and I like that I am able to get involved."
(Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

Figure 10: If you were describing Volunteer Police Cadets to your friends, what would you say?



Over one in six (15%, n=54) young people mentioned participating in events/days out as an aspect they enjoyed the most and a similar proportion mentioned practical activities (13%, n=50).

"Doing all the practical side of things as well all the days out that have been sorted."
(Male aged 16, Fire Cadets)

"Being able to put my first aid skills to practice in my community."
(Male aged 17, St John Ambulance)

This finding also emerged quite clearly in the case study visits, where the young people described some of their best experiences as supporting or attending events and demonstrations, taking part in competitions and 'hands on'/practical activities.

Camping trips in particular were often mentioned by young people as having provided some of the best experiences within the organisations. Quantitatively, 5% (n=20) of respondents specifically mentioned 'camping' as an aspect they had enjoyed the most.

“The residential camp because it was fun to be involved in it all.”

(Male aged 14, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“Climbing Scafell Pike and camping in the Lake District.” (Male aged 13, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“Training weekends and camps, meeting new people, understanding what the Sea Cadets is all about.”

(Female aged 12, Sea Cadets)

During the case study visits, the young people talked excitedly about their experience of camping or staying away from home with their organisation

“Camp is the best thing! Each year we go away and we have a boating week. In the day you get your sailing, power boat or kayaking qualifications and then in the evening it’s fun activities.”

(Female aged 16, Sea Cadets)

Learning and using first aid (5%, n=20) was mentioned as a specific skill that the young people enjoyed as it gave them a feeling of confidence that they could help others. A similar proportion mentioned that they enjoyed being able to help others/people in the community.

“Learning first aid and knowing that I can help someone if they need it.”

(Female aged 15, Fire Cadets)

“Being able to put my first aid skills to practice in my community.”

(Male aged 17, St John Ambulance)

“Making new friends, learning different skills, putting back into community.”

(Male aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

These are important findings, as one of the key objectives of the Youth United Network is to engage young people with their communities.

1.2.6 Aspects enjoyed the least

Positively, many young people did not mention anything negative about their experiences and the most frequent answer to this question was ‘nothing’ (18%, n=68).

A similar response was found during the case study visits, where the young people found it difficult to think of any negatives.

“Nothing, I have enjoyed every moment.”

(Female aged 17, Fire Cadets)

“Everything has been really good so far.”

(Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

“I haven’t been through a situation which I haven’t liked in cadets.”

(Male aged 13, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Figure 12: If you were describing St John Ambulance to your friends, what would you say?



1.2.7 Improvements

Positively, the majority of the young people surveyed did not suggest that any improvements were required.

"I don't think there are any parts that could be improved."
(Male aged 16, Volunteer Police Cadets)

"No it has been perfect."
(Male aged 10, Sea Cadets)

"There is nothing that could be improved."
(Female aged 17, Fire Cadets)

Those improvements that were suggested by the young people mostly centred on providing more or different activities and experiences (10%, n=37).

"More visits, for example dog unit and more sports." (Male aged 18, Volunteer Police Cadets)

"Do different activities instead of repeating the same things every week."
(Female aged 16 Fire Cadets)

"More practical activities."
(Female aged 16, St John Ambulance)

A minority of young people mentioned that the planning and organisation of sessions could be improved (5%, n=16).

"Sessions to be more planned out with a wider variety of things to do."
(Female aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

"Being more organised."
(Male aged 13, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Section 2: Impact of Participation

A key objective of the evaluation was to understand the impact of involvement with the Youth United organisations on the young people involved; on their skills, feelings, motivation and involvement in activities, volunteering and their community. During the case study visits Unit Leaders and the young people themselves described how they felt their experiences had impacted upon these aspects, and in the post stage questionnaire the Project young people were asked their level of agreement with a number of statements about the impact of their experiences within the organisations. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, a very positive impact from being involved with the organisations was found.

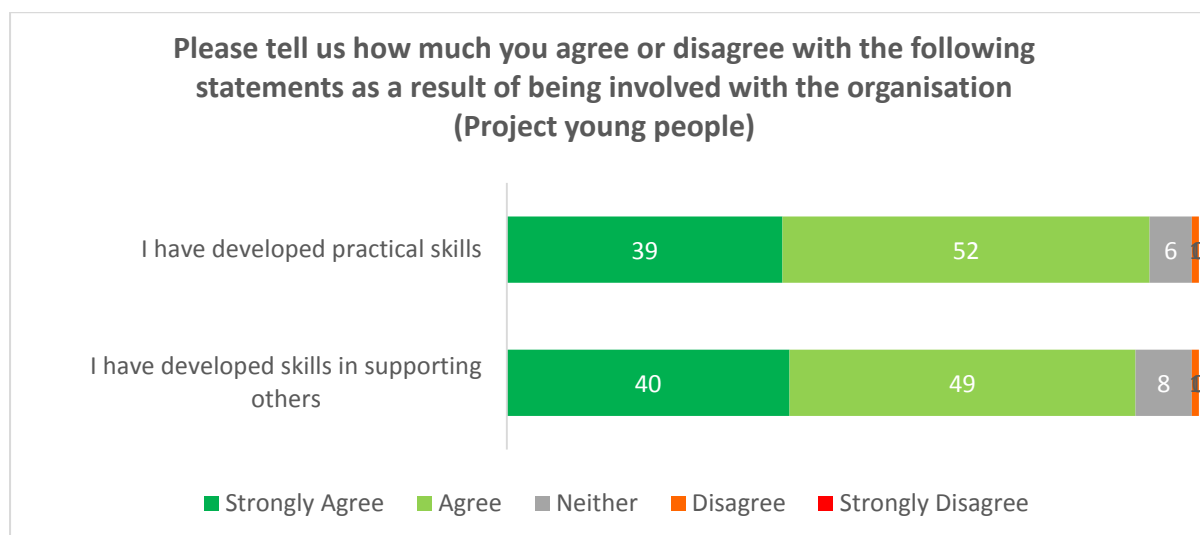
2.1 Impact on skills

9 out of 10 (91%, n=310) young people agreed that they had developed practical skills as a result of being involved with their organisation; two in five agreed strongly with this statement (39%, n=134). Agreement was particularly high amongst 14-15 year olds (95%).

A similar proportion of Project young people agreed that they had developed skills in supporting others (89%, n=302) and again agreement was highest amongst 14-15 year olds (92%), and significantly higher than that seen for under 14's (78%, NB low base n=37).

There were no differences between boys and girls on these measures.

Figure 13: Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of being involved with the organisation

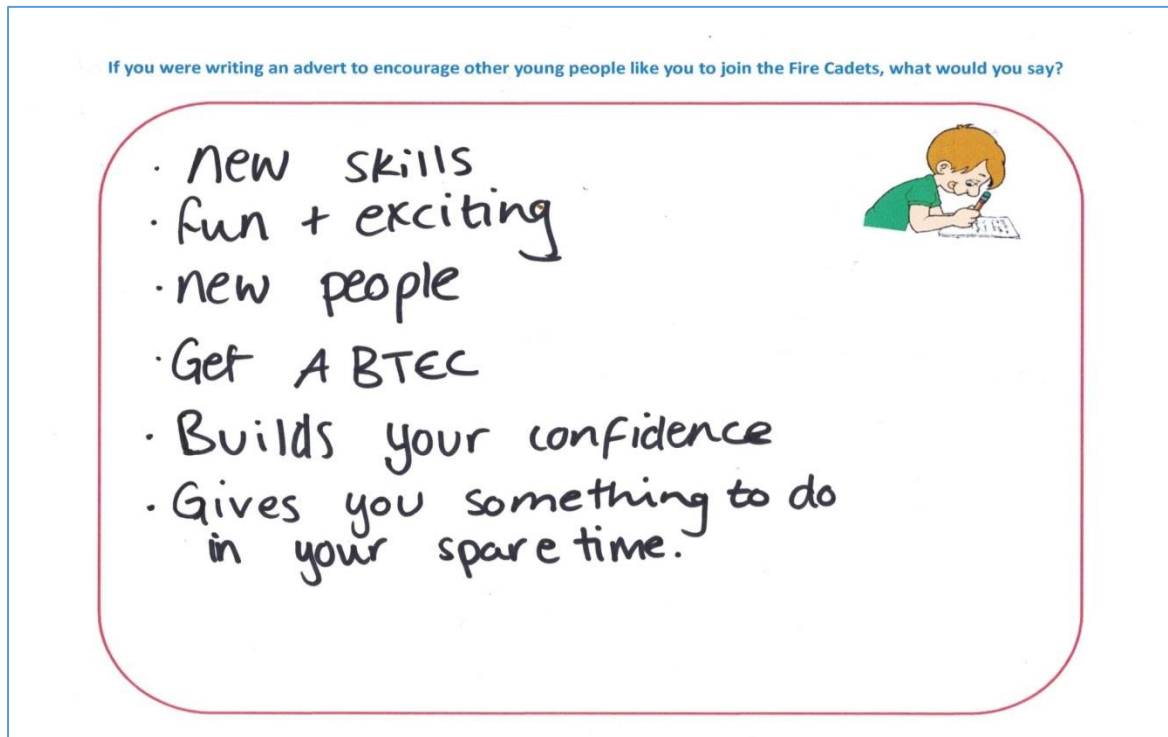


Base: Youth United post (340)

During the case study visits, the opportunity to learn new skills was often described as an important driver of joining an organisation and hence was seen as a key benefit. This applied to all organisations to some extent. For organisations such as Volunteer Police Cadets, Fire Cadets, St John Ambulance and Sea Cadets there was a clear link to learning particular practical skills and in some cases the young people could obtain a recognised qualification such as BTEC. However, all organisations provided the opportunity to learn some practical skills, including life skills such as

cooking, cleaning and maintaining their uniform etc. St John Ambulance regularly provided first aid training courses to young people within the other organisations and these skills were described by young people as particularly valuable. Learning important skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, planning and patience were also seen as positive benefits.

Figure 14: If you were writing an advert to encourage other young people like you to join Fire Cadets what would you say?



All organisations were described as offering the opportunity for young people to engage in a range of experiences that they would not normally have access to. These new experiences were wide ranging, for example, attending and supporting official functions such as sporting events, memorial events and festivals, opportunities to go on training courses and other away-from-home experiences such as camping trips.

"I have been given opportunities to learn interesting things and go to places with people I otherwise wouldn't have met." (Female aged 15, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Young people clearly enjoyed being part of their organisation and taking part in the activities and experiences offered. 'Having fun' was often described as one of the 'best things' about being involved with their organisation. It was therefore clear that whilst these organisations played an important role in terms of teaching young people important practical and life skills, in order to keep young people interested the experiences also had to be enjoyable.

Figure 15: If you were writing an advert to encourage other young people like you to join St John Ambulance what would you say?

If you were writing an advert to encourage other young people like you to join St John Ambulance, what would you say?

- * ~~not~~ Get the chance to meet new people
- * learn life Saving Skills
- * Going out regularly on events
- * Providing Support to the community
- * **HAVING FUN!!!**

Unit Leaders were also aware of the importance of this ethos of combining learning with fun.

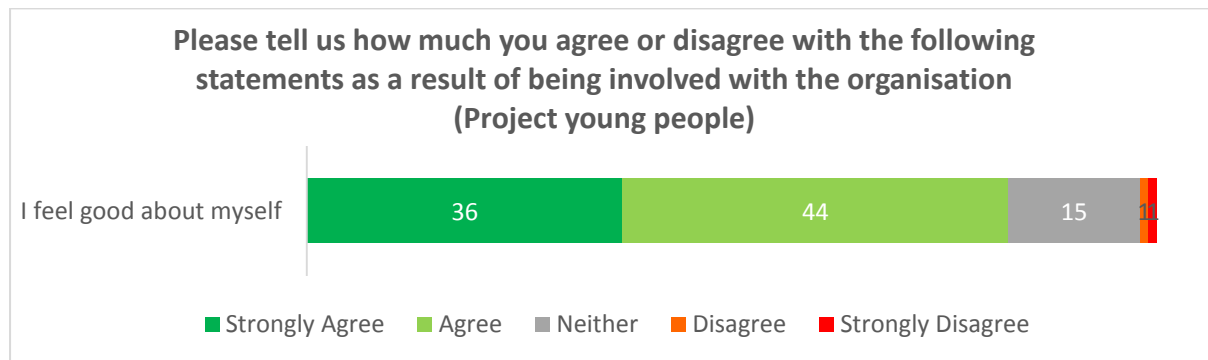
“The idea of the Sea Cadets corps is to make good citizens based on the traditions of the Royal Navy. We wear a uniform, we are governed by rules and regulations, but it is a youth organisation. What we try to do is give the people of Salisbury something to do, have a lot of fun, have competitions and they build friends for life. That’s what it’s about.”

(Commanding Officer, Sea Cadets)

2.2 Impact on feelings

Four out of five young people (80%, n=272) agreed that ‘I feel good about myself’ as a result of being involved with their organisation and over a third agreed strongly with this statement (36%, n=122). Positively, very few young people disagreed with this statement; just 8 out of 340 young people (2%).

Figure 16: Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of being involved with the organisation



Base: Youth United post (340)

Agreement was significantly higher amongst males (86% versus 71% for females). Males in particular were significantly more likely to strongly agree (47% versus 21% for females). Young people under 14 (NB low base n=37) were also more likely to agree strongly that they felt good about themselves (51% versus 35% for 14-15 year olds and 34% for those aged 16+).

Interestingly, there is a difference in those who strongly agree with this statement based on ethnicity. Young people who described themselves as from ‘white’ ethnicity⁹ were significantly less likely to ‘strongly agree’ with this statement as compared to those from other ethnic groups¹⁰ (34% versus 51% strongly agree). This suggests that the impact of involvement with organisations may be particularly strong for young people from non-white ethnic groups. This finding reflects other recent research (World Health Organisation) which indicates that while overall young people’s level of satisfaction and happiness has increased, young people in northern Europe (and especially the UK) are less happy. Belonging to a group, having a religious belief and strong family ties are shown to increase levels of satisfaction and happiness¹¹:

The detailed analyses revealed that girls, older children and in particular those in Northern European countries experience lower levels of life satisfaction.

‘Trends in young people’s health and social determinants’ (April 2015)¹²

Improved confidence was a key benefit mentioned by both staff and the young people in the qualitative research carried out for the case studies, reflecting findings from the quantitative research (see 3.2.3 pp 24). Being part of the organisation was described as giving young people a sense of empowerment, encouraging them to excel and gain a personal sense of satisfaction in what they do.

⁹ ‘White’ ethnicity includes English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller or any other White background

¹⁰ ‘Other’ ethnicity includes Black (Black British, African, Caribbean and any other Black background), Asian (Asian British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and any other Asian background), Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian and any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background), Other ethnic group (Arab and any other ethnic group)

¹¹ See: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/news/archive/2015/title,255549,en.php>

¹² The European Journal of Public Health (April 2015) Volume 25: Issue 2
http://eurpub.oxfordjournals.org/content/25/suppl_2

“Meeting and talking to new people who otherwise I would have not spoken to before. This has helped me to gain more confidence and has helped me in other situations I otherwise may have not been as confident in.” (Female aged 15, St John Ambulance).

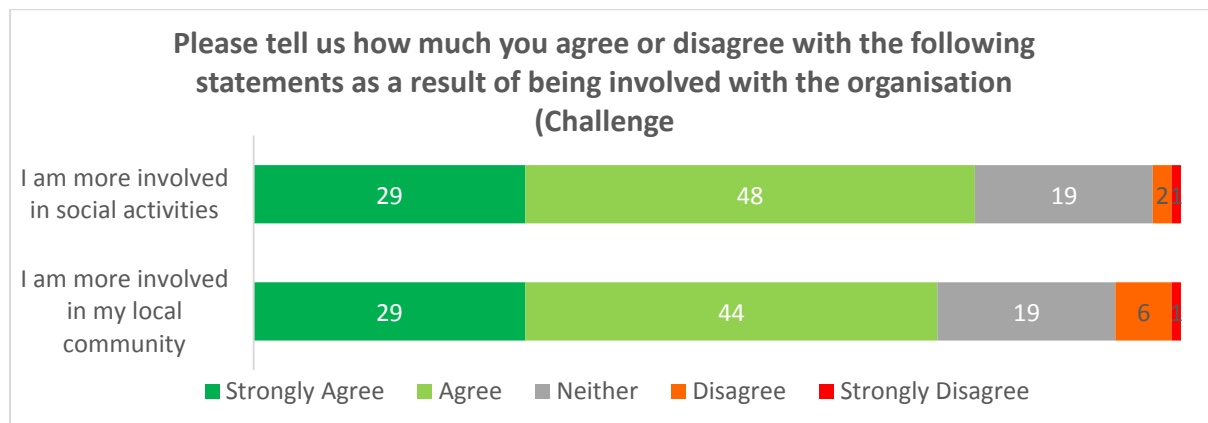
“Becoming more confident when speaking to an audience.” (Female aged 13, Sea Cadets)

In the focus groups (part of the case studies) some young people explained that before joining their organisation they had very little confidence, but over time this had improved immensely and they now felt better able to communicate confidently with other young people and adults. For example, a Young Leader and a Young Attendee at St John Ambulance each described how they felt the organisation had allowed them to ‘come out of their shell’. The Unit Leader explained that while initially many of the young people would be reticent about becoming involved, over time they see a notable change, particularly in those who were previously disengaged at school.

2.3 Impact on involvement in activities

Young people in the Youth United Project described themselves as more involved with activities as a result of their participation. 86% agreed they were more involved in *positive* activities (n=294) as a result of their time with the organisation and 77% agreed they were more involved in *social* activities (n=261). More involvement in positive activities was reported in particular by young people aged 14+ (88%, n=263) compared to under 14’s (73%, n=27 NB low base).

Figure 17: Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of being involved with the organisation



Base: Youth United post (340)

2.4 Propensity to stay/get involved with organisations

Positively, almost all the young people surveyed agreed that they want to stay involved with their organisation; 94% agreed (n=321), 75% strongly (n=255), the highest level of agreement of all the statements. Levels of agreement were high across both girls and boys and also across all age groups,

however under 14's (81% strongly agreed) and 14-15 year olds (82% strongly agreed) in particular strongly agreed that they want to stay involved with their organisation.

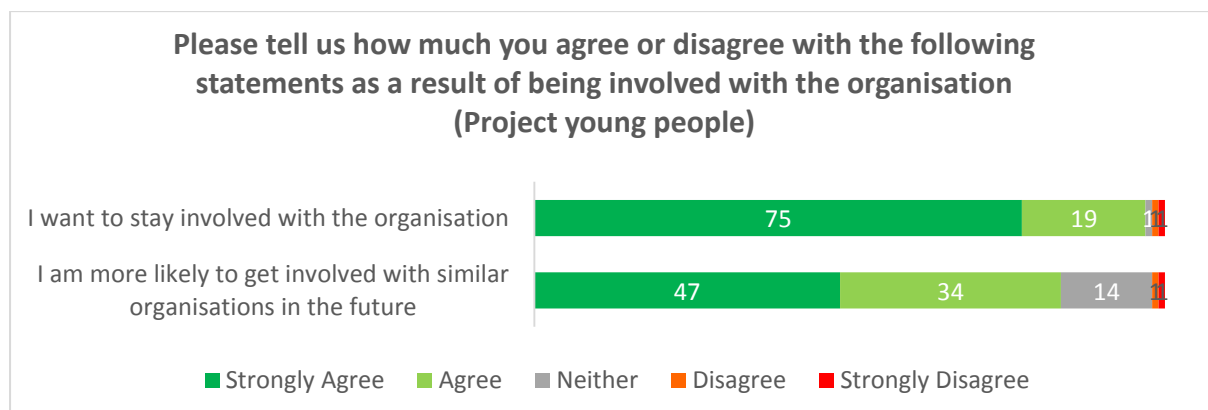
From the focus groups it emerged that a sense of pride and feeling respected by peers and in the community was a key part of belonging to the group; this was associated with wearing a uniform, and having a role in the community. For example one cadet described how he had received positive remarks at school about his involvement with St John Ambulance.

Young people and staff in the qualitative research frequently described this sense of belonging as 'being part of a family' which provided young people with support and friendship.

"I like being at the sea cadets because you can share important things with people and everyone is friends."
 (Female aged 10, Sea Cadets)

However, some young people aged 16-18 explained that whilst they wanted to stay involved with their organisation, increased pressure on their time from school/college work made it difficult for them to maintain the level of commitment that was required. Also, some young people planned to move away from home to attend college/university and expected that they would stop being involved as a result. Despite this, the young people could envisage becoming involved with the organisation again in the future.

Figure 18: Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of being involved with the organisation



Base: Youth United post (340)

The experiences of young people within the organisations has also had a positive impact on their propensity to become involved with other similar organisations in the future¹³; four out of five (81%, n=275) agreed that they were more likely to become involved and almost half (47%) agreed strongly. This is another positive example of the impact of the Youth United Project.

¹³ The question asked was: 'as a result of being involved with the organisation, I am more likely to get involved with similar organisations in the future'

2.5 Other benefits

Other benefits of involvement with the organisations were described by the young people surveyed and by staff and young people during the case study interviews.

2.5.1 Behaviour/discipline

Improved behaviour and a decrease in antisocial behaviour amongst the young people were described by Unit Leaders in the qualitative research to be an important impact of participation. For example a Unit Leader at Volunteer Police Cadets described both the wide range of young people and their behaviour amongst those who had joined the scheme; many had previously begun to show signs of criminal behaviour and some had joined through the Young Offenders team. The Unit Leader believed the sessions acted as a positive distraction once a week and provided the young people with focus and a sense of pride. This improvement in behaviour was also recognised outside of the cadet's environment. Support Workers and Line Managers at Fire Cadets, for example, said that parents frequently reported an improvement in the confidence, motivation and behaviour of their children when at home.

For some young people, being part of an organisation was described simply as a way of 'filling time' which prevented them from engaging in other activities that were less desirable.

Discipline was often described as an important aspect of some organisations, in particular Volunteer Police Cadets, Fire Cadets and Sea Cadets and the benefit of these environments was seen as translating into other aspects of a young person's life. However for some cadets the level of discipline required was quite difficult, particularly if they came from a family environment which had not had experience of organisations such as these.

Interestingly, the young people themselves described the way in which their participation in these organisations helped dispel the stereotypical view of young people. At Volunteer Police Cadets for example cadets described how the public approached them while they were in their uniform and enquired about Volunteer Police Cadets. The cadets felt this helped to demonstrate that young people were involved in positive action and that not all young people behaved antisocially.

2.5.2 Friendships

'Making new friends' was often described by young people as an important benefit of being involved with their organisation. This was viewed as a particularly important benefit of being involved in the NCS programme, where the young people had maintained contact with new friends they had made on their course.

A cadet interviewed at Sea Cadets provided a perfect example from her experience of taking part in NCS. Initially three cadets had expressed an interest in attending the course, however she was the only person from her unit who actually took part. As a result, she was apprehensive to begin with, but quickly bonded and made friends with other participants with whom she subsequently kept in contact through social media.

"I was originally going with two other Cadets from the unit, but then when I did it I was the only one. I was the first one on the bus and then it was going to Swindon so I was sat on my own for

an hour and a half. When the Swindon lot came on they were all school friends! But I just joined in and made friends with them so that was quite cool.” (Able Cadet aged 16, Sea Cadets)

2.5.3 CV/employment prospects

As highlighted earlier (see section 2 pp20), being able to add organisation membership/volunteering to their CV was described by both staff and young people in the case study qualitative research as a key benefit. This was felt to improve the young people’s future employment prospects as it demonstrated to prospective employers that they had both drive and commitment, providing them with an advantage over other young people competing for jobs.

Section 3: The link between joining a Youth United Organisation and behaviour change

3.1 Evaluation Outcome Measures

The Cabinet Office has developed a number of key outcome statements used to evaluate the impact of Social Action programmes¹⁴. Young people who completed the Youth United pre survey and the Youth United post survey were asked the extent to which 13 statements (Table 2) described how they felt on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is 'completely' and 1 is 'not at all'. Throughout this section, percentages are based upon the net of those who gave a rating of 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 (top 3 score) and those who gave a rating of 1, 2, or 3 out of 10 (bottom 3 score). In most cases measures where significant differences in the top 3/bottom 3 scores are identified are also significant when the mean scores (average scores) are compared (unless otherwise specified)¹⁵.

Table 4: Cabinet Office evaluation outcomes measures statements

Label	Statements
Communication	I feel confident talking in front of large groups of people.
Creativity	I like thinking of new ways of doing things.
Confidence	I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work.
Agency	I can do just about anything I set my mind to.
Planning	I can find a way to stick with my plans and goals, even when it's tough.
Problem solving	When a problem comes along I enjoy finding a way to fix it.
Resilience	I can bounce back after disappointment or when something goes wrong.
Leadership	I am good at listening to other people and including them in a plan.
Relationships	I respect the ideas of my team mates, even when I don't agree with them.
Managing feelings	I think carefully before I do something.
Empathy	I can usually see the other person's point of view, even if I don't agree with it.
Community	I want to do things to help other people or the world around me.
Wellbeing	Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

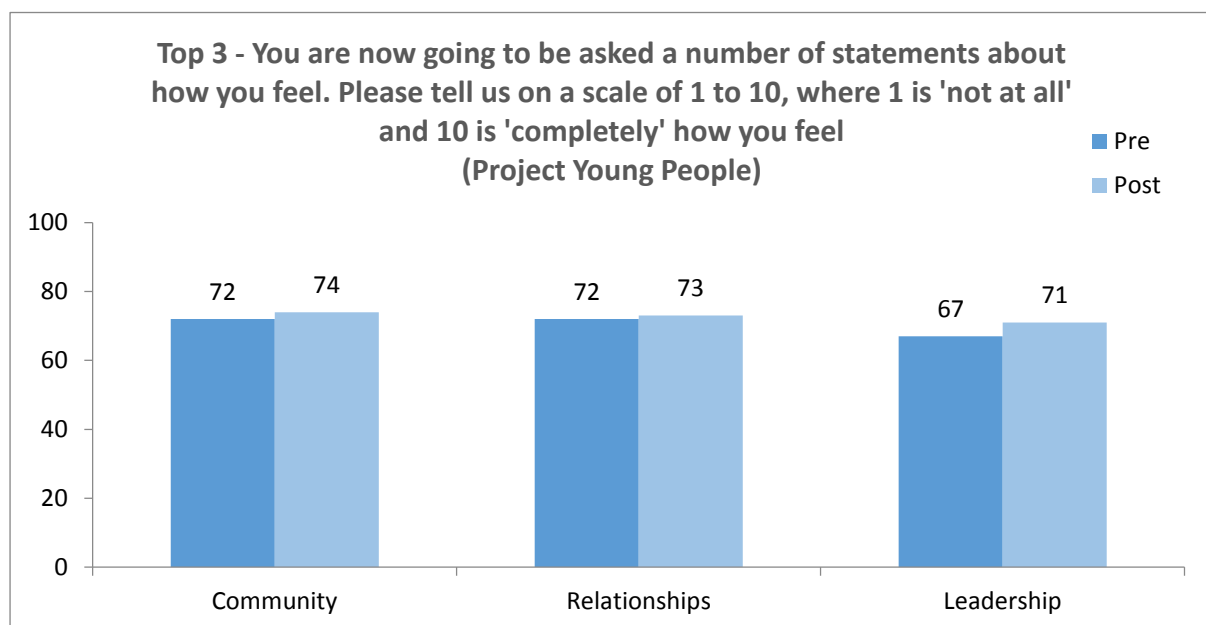
¹⁴ See: www.gov.uk [here](#) and [here](#).

¹⁵ For further explanation of analysis see appendix 2.

3.2 Community, relationships and leadership

Project young people already felt the most confident in the areas of community, relationships and leadership at the pre stage and showed the least change between the pre and post stage for these areas. The highest top 3 scores were seen for 'I want to do things to help other people or the world around me' (community, pre=72%, post=74%), 'I respect the ideas of my team mates, even when I don't agree with them' (relationships, pre=72%, post=73%) and 'I am good at listening to other people and including them in a plan' (leadership, pre=67%, post=71%). Although the Youth United Project did not appear to impact in a major way on these areas their involvement is likely to have consolidated and supported their existing feelings and skills.

Figure 19: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

Feelings of leadership (pre 66%, post 75%) and community (pre 74%, post 80%) increased amongst females pre to post, although these changes were not deemed as significant. By contrast the top 3 scores for these measures given by males remained fairly consistent at both stages (leadership pre 70%, post 70%, community pre 71%, post 70%). This resulted in a significant difference between males and females at the post stage for feelings of community (females 80%, males 70%).

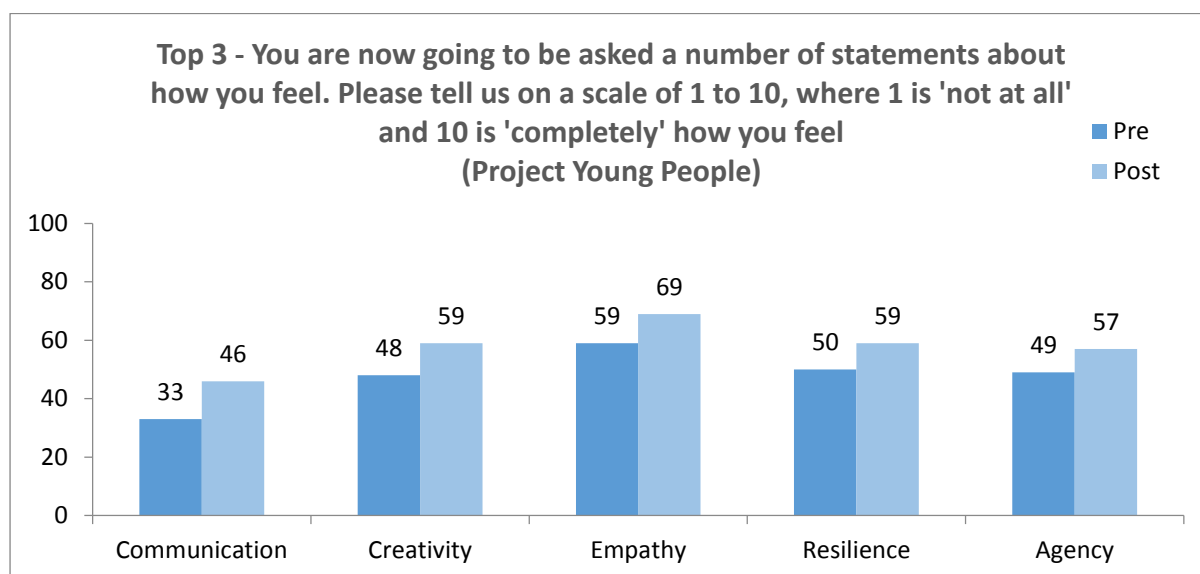
At the post stage, feelings of leadership increased with age and were significantly higher amongst young people aged 16+ (77%) compared to those aged under 14 (57% NB low base), however the difference in the mean scores is not significant (7.8 versus 8.2).

There were no significant differences between males and females or across the different age groups for the relationships measure. Furthermore, no differences by ethnicity were found across all three measures.

3.3 Communication, creativity, empathy, resilience and agency

The greatest positive change seen in young people's ratings between the pre and post stage was in relation to communication, creativity, empathy, resilience and agency. The proportion of Project young people who gave a top 3 score on these measures increased significantly between the pre and the post stages, suggesting a positive impact through involvement in the Youth United Project.

Figure 20: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.

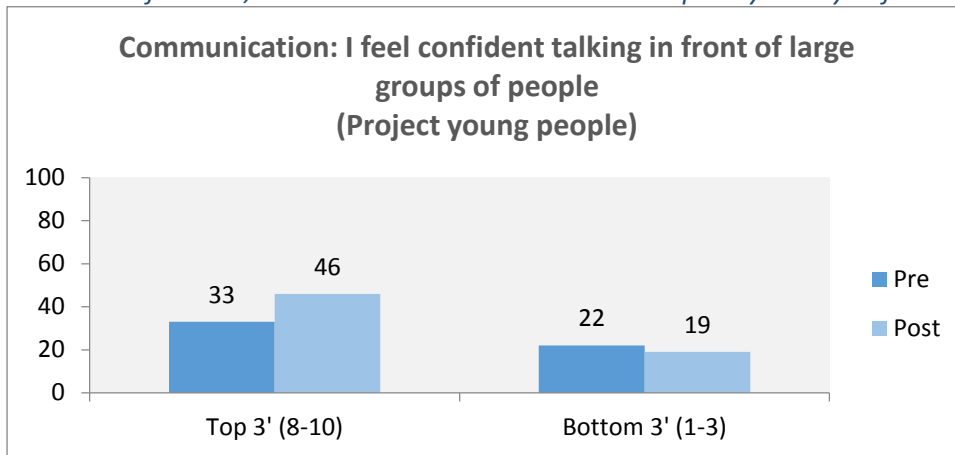


Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

3.3.1 Communication

The greatest increase in agreement from pre to post was seen in young people's feelings about their communication skills ('I feel confident talking in front of large groups of people') with a shift of 13%. At the pre stage, a third (33%, n=169) of Project young people felt confident in this situation; at the post stage this increased significantly to nearly half of young people (46%, n=156). However, this remained the area where young people had the least confidence at both stages. Notably, the proportion giving scores of 1-3 on this measure was the highest of all measures for both the pre and post stage. At the post stage, 19% (n=65) gave a bottom 3 score, compared to 22% of young people at the pre stage (n=113). This suggests that although the Youth United Project was successful in helping to build communication skills amongst young people, an opportunity to improve this even further still remains.

Figure 21: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

The significant improvement in young people's confidence in talking in front of large groups of people was seen for both males (pre 40%, post 53%) and females (pre 24%, post 37%). However females remained significantly less confident than males in this area at the post stage, suggesting increased efforts to improve communication skills would be particularly important for girls.

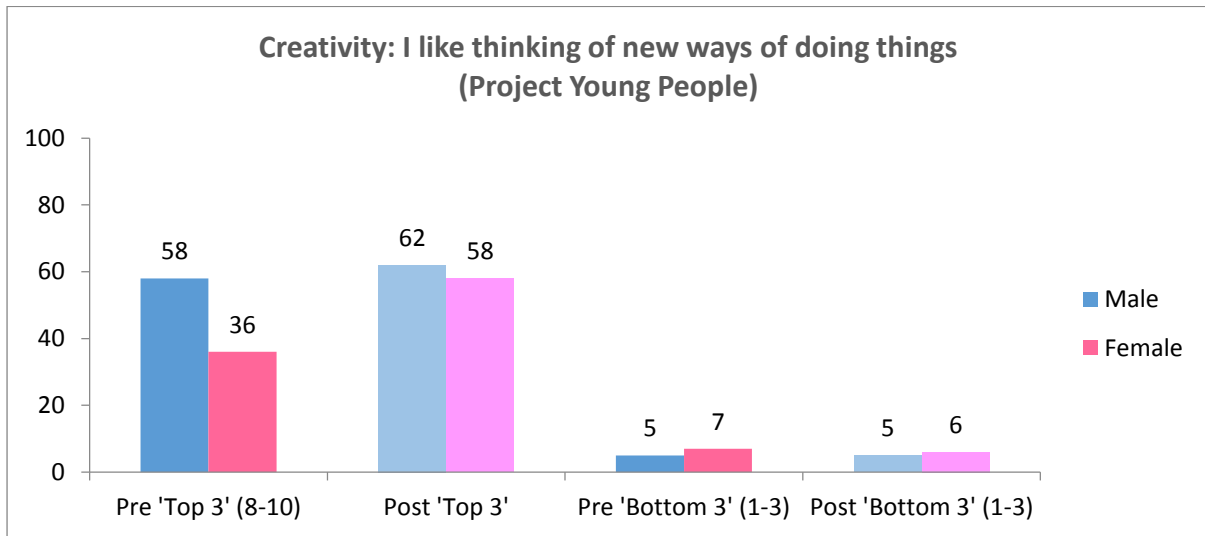
For 14-15 year olds and 16-17 year olds the change in their confidence in talking in front of large groups of people increased significantly through involvement in the Youth United Project. For 14-15 year olds the proportion giving scores of 8-10 at the post-stage increased to 39% (from 28% at the pre stage) and for 16-17 years it increased to 51% (from 35% at the pre stage). An increase was also seen amongst the under 14's (pre 34%, post 49%) but the difference was not deemed as significant due to the low base size at the post stage (base pre n=133, post n=37).

3.3.2 Creativity

Although the number of Project young people who liked to think of new ways of doing things increased significantly between the pre and post stage, the change was only evident amongst females. At the pre stage just over a third of females (36%, n=83) gave a top 3 score for this measure which was significantly lower than for males (58%). At the post stage this had increased significantly to nearly three-fifths (58%, n=83), which was more in line with males (62%). By contrast males showed little change on this measure between the pre and post stage (58% pre, 62% post) suggesting that involvement in the Youth United Project had impacted more on the creativity of females, bringing it in line with males.

There were no differences in the proportion of young people giving a bottom 3 score.

Figure 22: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre males (273), females (230), Youth United post males (189), females (143)

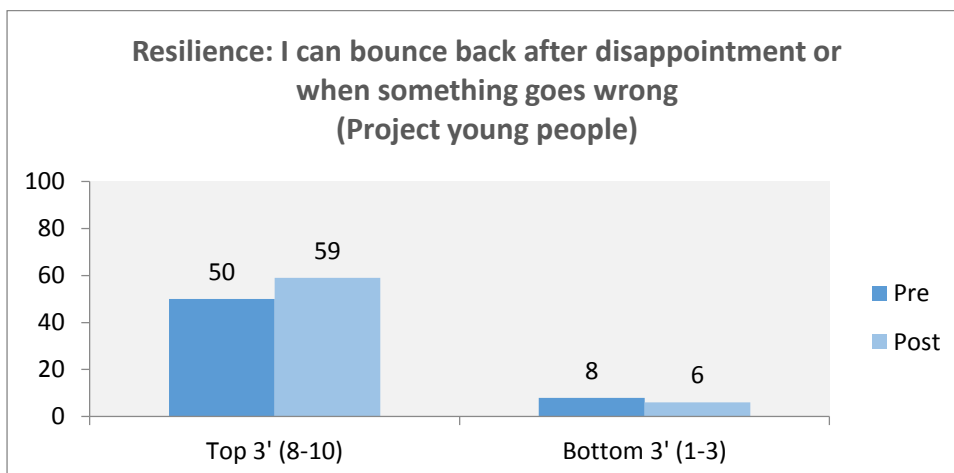
Analysis by young people's age shows that Project young people aged 16+ reported the greatest change in their feelings of creativity between the pre and post stage. Whereas at the pre stage 49% (n=82) gave a top 3 score, this had increased significantly at the post stage to 62% (n=106). Young people aged 14-15 (pre 44%, post 55%) and under 14 (pre 53%, post 68%) also showed an increase in their feelings of creativity, although this was not statistically significant.

3.3.3 Resilience

Young people's feelings of resilience increased significantly between the pre and post stage.

Around three-fifths of the Project young people (59%, n=200) at the post stage gave a top 3 score for resilience ('I can bounce back after disappointment or when something goes wrong'), a significant increase from half (50%, n=257) of young people at the pre stage.

Figure 23: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

An increase in resilience was seen for both males (pre 55%, post 63%) and females (pre 45%, post 55%), although the increases were not statistically significant.

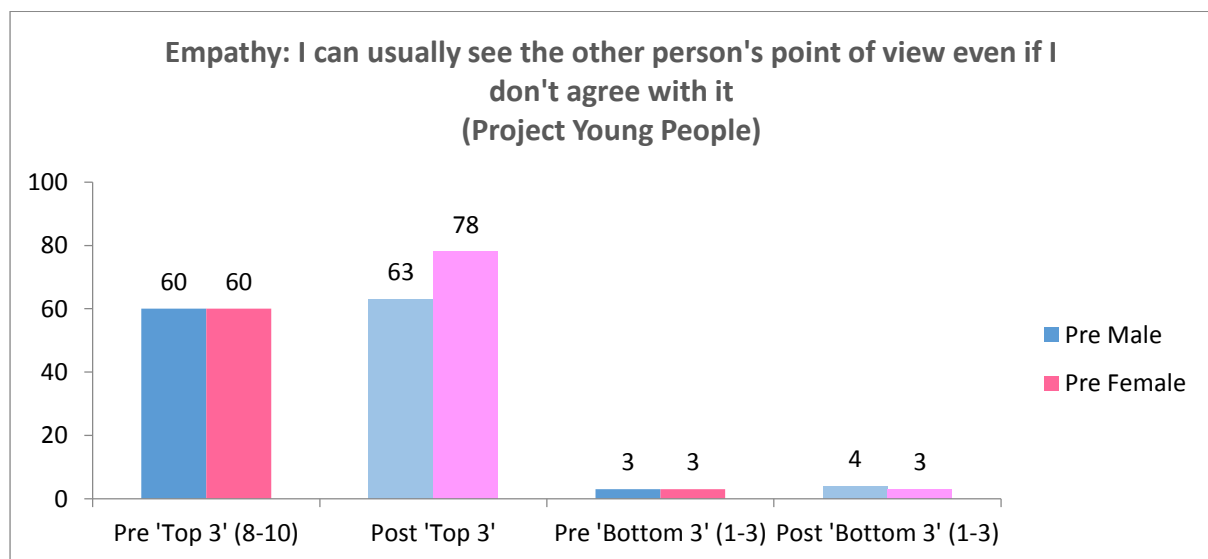
The most noticeable change in young people’s resilience was seen amongst those aged 16-17, with proportion of young people who gave a top 3 score for this measure increasing significantly from 53% (n=77) at the pre stage to 65% (n=97) at the post stage. However, the shift in mean scores was not significant (7.4 pre, 7.6 post) and difference in difference analysis compared to the control group also showed no significant shift.

3.3.4 Empathy

Girls involved in the Youth United Project became significantly more empathetic through their involvement. A significant increase in empathy was seen overall (pre 59%, n=304, post 69%, n=233), however this was primarily driven by females. The difference in total sample mean scores was not significant however (7.6 pre, 7.9 post).

The proportion of females who gave a top 3 score for empathy increased from three-fifths (60%, n=139) at the pre stage, to over three-quarters (78%, n=111) at the post stage. By contrast feelings of empathy remained fairly consistent amongst males at both stages (pre 60%, post 63%).

Figure 24: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

A significant increase in empathy was seen from the pre to the post stage amongst 14-15 year olds (pre 57%, post 69%), however the difference in mean scores was not significant. Empathy also increased amongst under 14’s (pre 53%, post 62%), however this change was not deemed as significant due to the low base size at the post stage (n=37). Amongst those aged 16+, levels of empathy increased slightly from 67% to 71%, however this shift was not significant.

3.3.5 Agency

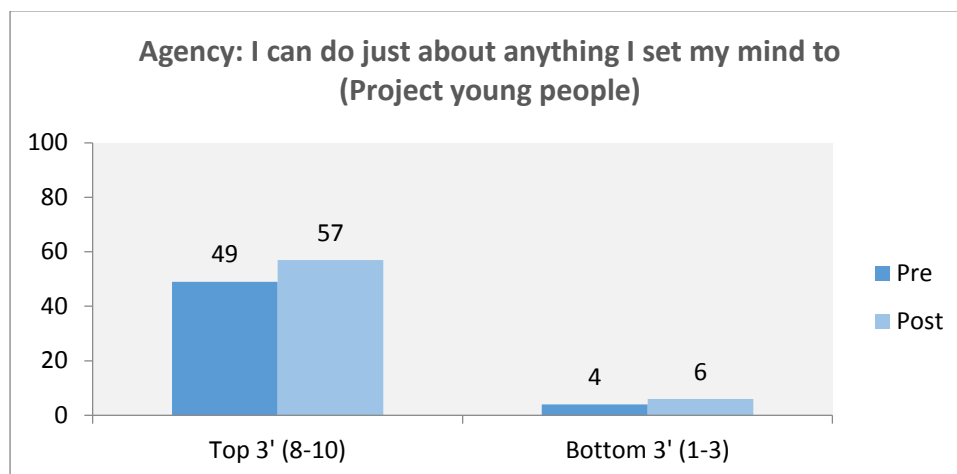
Project young people were significantly more likely to feel they could do anything they set their mind to at the post stage. At the pre stage just over half of the young people surveyed agreed 'I can do just about anything I set my mind to' (top 3 49%, n=252), at the post stage this had increased significantly to 57% (n=195). However, this change was not found to be significant when analysing the mean scores and difference in difference, when compared to the control group.

An improvement in young people's feelings of agency was seen for both males (pre 53%, post 61%) and females (pre 46%, post 55%), although these shifts were not identified as statistically significant.

Young people under 14 showed the greatest increase in their top 3 scores for this measure; the proportion who gave a rating of 8-10 increased from 47% (n=62) to 65% (n=24, NB low base).

The proportion of Project young people who gave a bottom 3 score on this measure remained consistent between the pre and post stage (pre 4%, post 6%).

Figure 25: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

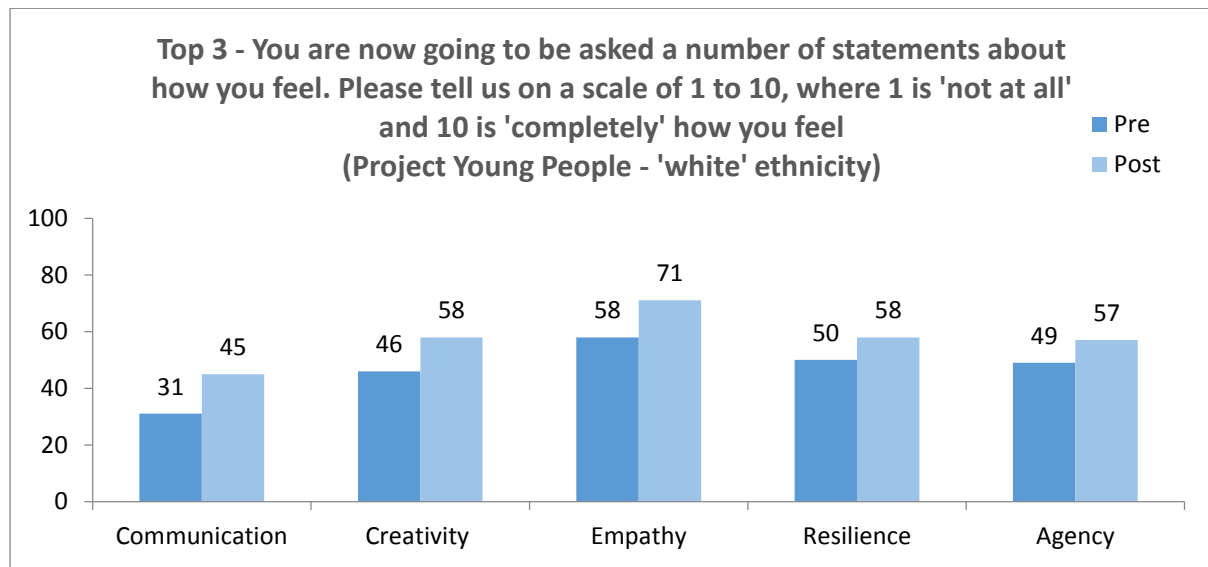
3.3.6 Differences by ethnicity

Analysis by ethnicity highlighted some differences across these measures. At the pre stage, young people from white ethnicity were significantly less likely than those from other ethnic backgrounds to give a rating of 8, 9 or 10 for communication (white ethnicity 31%, other ethnicity 47%), creativity (white ethnicity 46%, other ethnicity 61%) and empathy (white ethnicity 58%, other ethnicity 71%, although the mean scores were not significantly different). Feelings of agency (white ethnicity 49%, other ethnicity 54%) and resilience (white ethnicity 50%, other ethnicity 57%) were also lower at the pre stage amongst those from white ethnicity, however this difference was not deemed as significant.

At the post stage, top 3 scores increased significantly amongst young people from white ethnicity across all these measures. Increases were also seen amongst those from other ethnic backgrounds for communication, creativity, resilience and agency, however these were not deemed as significant.

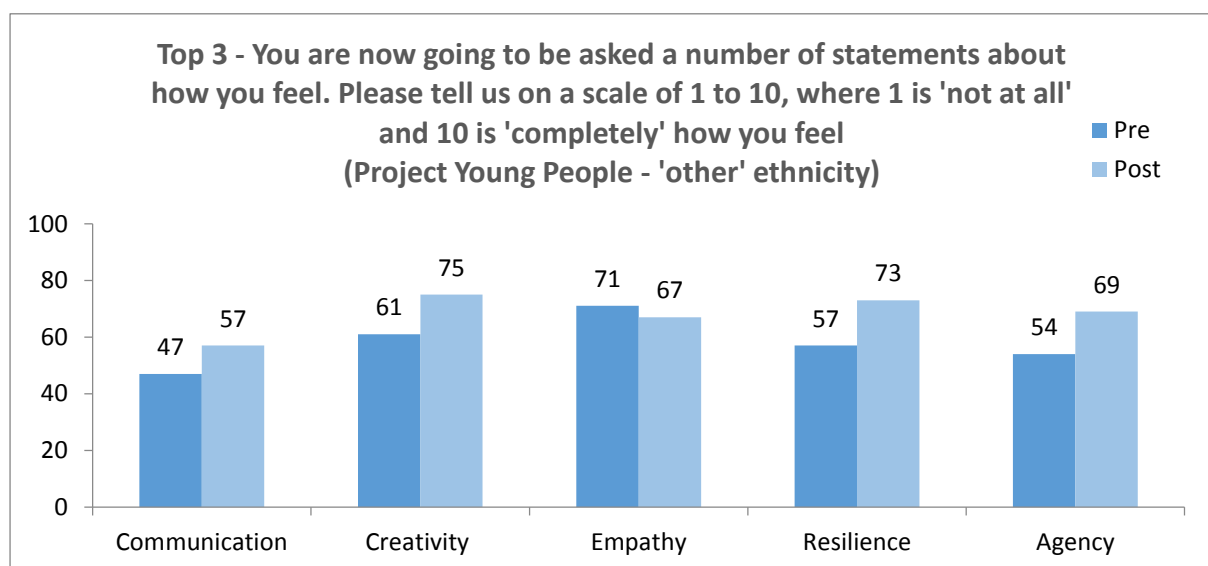
These increases resulted in there being no significant differences in top 3 scores by ethnicity at the post stage for communication (white ethnicity 45%, other ethnicity 57%), agency (white ethnicity 57%, other ethnicity 69%) and empathy (white ethnicity 71%, other ethnicity 67%). However, a significant difference was seen at the post stage for creativity (white ethnicity 58%, other ethnicity 75%) and resilience (white ethnicity 58%, other ethnicity 73%; the difference in mean scores was not deemed as significant).

Figure 26: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United 'white' ethnicity pre (421), post (279)

Figure 327: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United 'other' ethnicity pre (76), post (51)

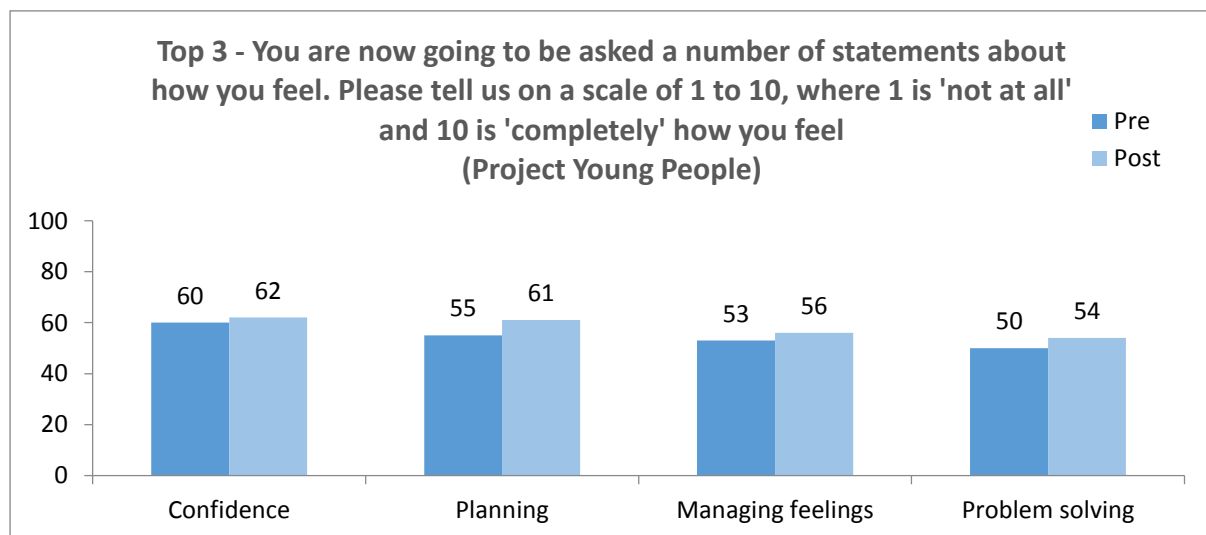
3.4 Confidence, planning, managing feelings and problem solving

No significant changes were seen in young people’s feelings of confidence, planning, managing feelings or problem solving. Although slight increases were seen in these measures pre to post these changes were not significant.

At the post stage, around three in five Project young people agreed that ‘I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work’ (confidence top 3 62%, n=212) and a similar proportion agreed that ‘I can find a way to stick with my plans and goals, even when it’s tough’ (planning top 3 61%, n=206).

Over half of the Project young people at the post stage felt that ‘I think carefully before I do something’ (managing feelings 56%, n=192) and a similar proportion agreed that ‘when a problem comes along I enjoy finding a way to fix it’ (problem solving top 3 54%, n=183).

Figure 28: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

Some gender differences were seen for the planning, confidence and managing feelings measures. Females gave a significantly lower mean score for planning at the pre stage (pre 7.1, post 7.6), indicating that females ability to ‘stick with their plans and goals’ improved through their involvement in the Youth United Project, bringing it in line with males. No significant difference was seen for males between the pre and post stage (pre 7.7, post 7.6). There was also a significant difference in the planning measure at the post stage by ethnicity (white ethnicity 60%, other ethnicity 75%).

An increase in the proportion of females who reported wanting to try something even if there was a chance it might not work was seen (pre 56%, post 64%), although this difference was not statistically significant. By contrast, there was a small decrease in the proportion of males who gave a top 3 score to their confidence (pre=65%, post=62%).

For the managing feelings measure, a significant decrease in the bottom 3 score was seen amongst females, from 9% at the pre stage to 1% at the post stage, suggesting there had been some

improvement amongst girls who felt the least able to manage their feelings. The change in mean score amongst females was not significant, however.

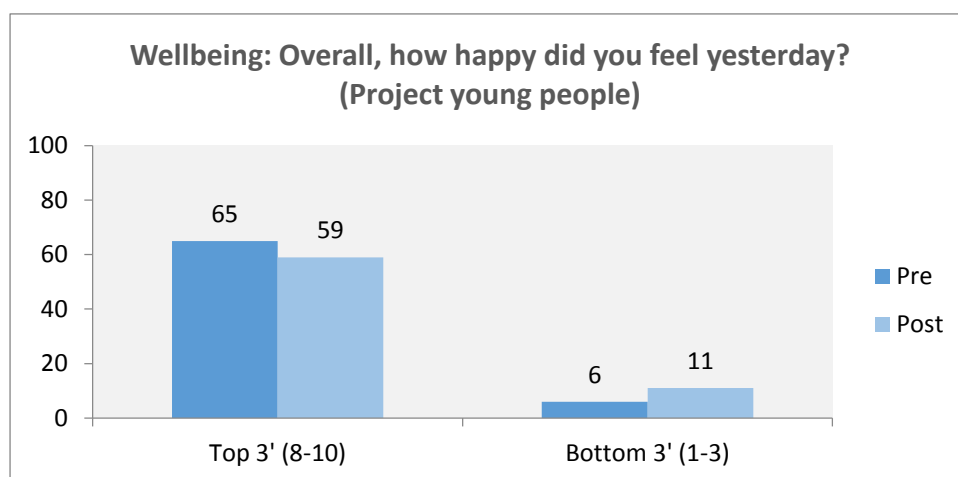
No significant changes in the problem solving measure were seen based on age or gender.

3.5 Wellbeing

The only measure which saw a decrease between the pre and the post stage was for young people's feelings of wellbeing. At the pre stage 65% (n=336) of young people gave a score of 8-10 for how happy they felt on the previous day; at the post stage this had decreased slightly to 59% (n=200) of young people. Furthermore there was a significant decrease in the mean score for this statement between the pre and post stage (pre = 7.9, post=7.5) and a significant increase in the proportion of young people who gave a score of 1-3 for this measure (pre 6%, post 11%). However, this change was not found to be significant when analysing the difference in difference compared to the control group.

Further analysis shows that this is driven mainly by a significant increase in those who gave a score of 1 or 2 amongst 16-17 year olds (pre=3%, post=10%) and amongst males (pre 3%, post 8%).

Figure 29: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

There was also a significant decrease in the top 3 score for wellbeing amongst those from other ethnic backgrounds, from 82% at the pre stage to 63% at the post stage.

It is difficult to identify what caused this reduced feeling of wellbeing amongst these young people as there is no clear evidence within the data to suggest that their experiences in the Youth United Project could have caused this decrease. Wellbeing could have been influenced by a wide range of factors outside of the Youth United Project.

It is also important to note the context in which the surveys were completed. The questionnaires were generally completed by young people whilst at their unit, which the majority of young people attend once a week. Therefore the question 'overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?' would refer to a day when the young people were not attending the unit. The feedback provided by the young people suggests that they feel *more* positive due to their involvement with the organisations, rather

than less positive. This notion is further reinforced by the high level of agreement with the statements evaluating young people's feelings about the impact of being involved with their organisation at the post stage in Section 4 (see pp 40). In particular, 80% agreed that 'I feel good about myself' as a result of being involved with their organisation and over a third agreed strongly (36%) with this statement (see 4.2, pp 36). Agreement is also significantly higher amongst those from other ethnic backgrounds (white ethnicity 34% versus other ethnicity 51% strongly agree), which is in contrast to the fall in wellbeing score amongst those from other ethnic backgrounds described above. This clearly suggests that the two measures are different and that the wellbeing measure is influenced by other factors outside of the Youth United Project.¹⁶

The timing of the post survey may also have impacted upon feelings of wellbeing. Many people are affected by seasonal variations in mood which can lead to lower feelings of wellbeing during the winter months¹⁷. As the post survey took place in January/February it is possible that the timing of the post survey may have impacted, rather than specifically young people's involvement in the Youth United Project.

These outcomes statements were also asked of a Control group of young people at the pre and post stage to provide an additional point of comparison and we now go on to compare their responses to those of the Youth United group.

3.6 Evaluation Outcomes Measures – Control Young People

Similar to Project young people, Control young people were most likely to feel that 'I want to do things to help other people or the world around me' (Community, pre=58%, post=52%), 'I respect the ideas of my team mates, even when I don't agree with them' (Relationships, pre=58%, post=56%) and 'I am good at listening to other people and including them in a plan' (Leadership, pre=64%, post=55%).

Although some shifts in agreement were seen from pre to post amongst the Control sample, none were deemed as significant.

Measures which saw a slight increase in top 3 ratings between the pre and post stage were Agency ('I can do just about anything I set my mind to', pre=38%, post=45%) and Communication ('I feel confident talking in front of large groups of people', pre=21%, post=26%).

The majority of the statements saw a decrease in top 3 ratings amongst the Control group. Statements relating to Creativity (pre=44%, post=29%), Empathy (pre=56%, post=45%), Leadership (pre=64%, post=55%), and Community (pre=58%, post=52%) saw the largest decrease in top 3 ratings. However, small decreases in ratings were also seen for the following statements amongst

¹⁶ See also references below to recent World Health Organisation Research (2015)

¹⁶ See: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/news/archive/2015/title,255549,en.php>

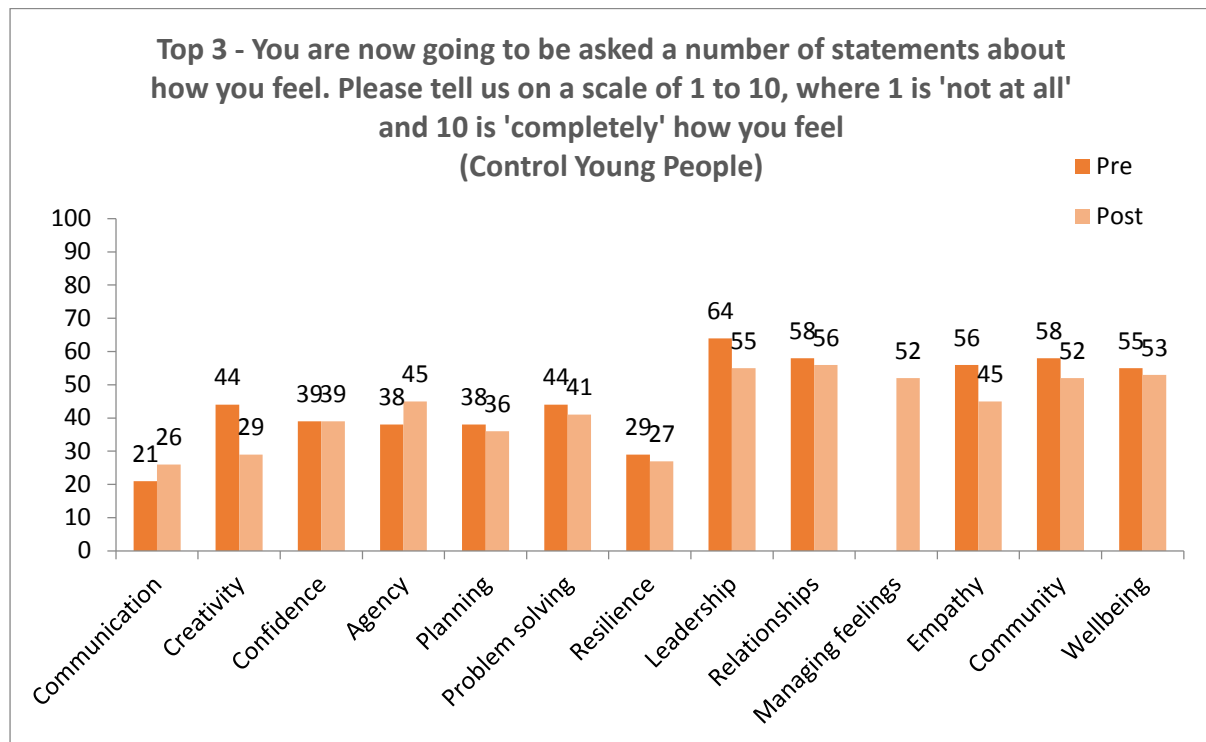
¹⁶ The European Journal of Public Health (April 2015) Volume 25: Issue 2
http://eurpub.oxfordjournals.org/content/25/suppl_2

¹⁷ Haggag, A., Eklund, B., Linaker, O. and Götestam, K. G. (1990), Seasonal mood variation: an epidemiological study in northern Norway. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 81: 141–145; Kasper, S., Wehr, T.A., Bartko, J.J., Gaist, P.A., Rosenthal, N.E. (1989), Epidemiological findings of seasonal changes in mood and behavior. A telephone survey of Montgomery County, Maryland. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 1989 Sep; 46(9):823-33.

the Control group: Planning (pre=38%, post=36%), Resilience (pre=29%, post=27%), Relationships (pre=58%, post=56%), Wellbeing (pre=55%, post=53%) and Problem solving (pre=44%, post=41%).

The Control young people’s top 3 rating of confidence (‘I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work’) remained consistent between the pre and post stage (39%).

Figure 30: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66)

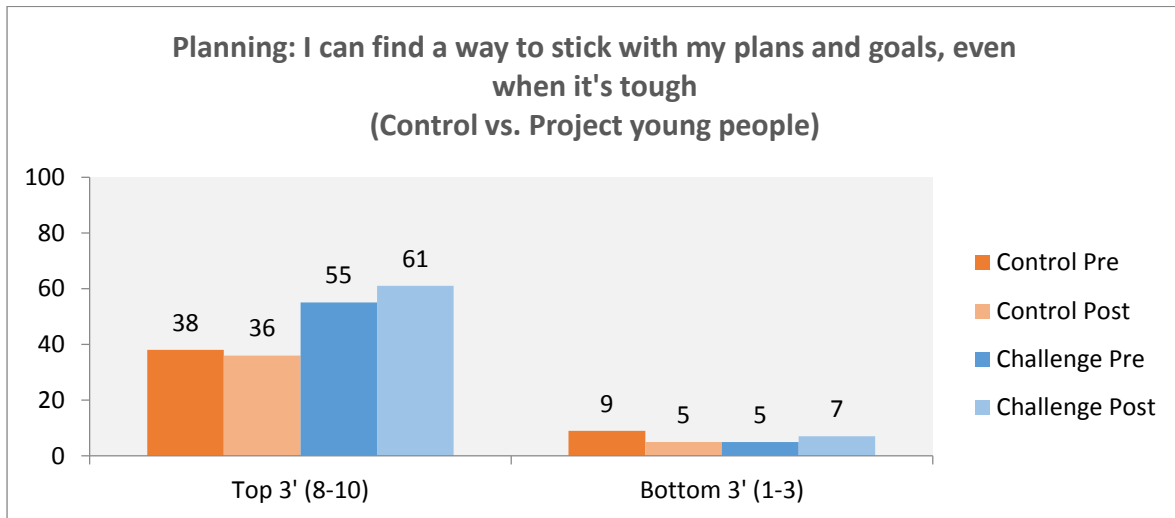
3.6.1 Differences between Control and Project Young People

Exploring the differences between the ratings of the key outcome statements given by the Control young people and the Project young people helps to explain whether these groups of young people differ in some way in terms of their skills and feelings. Furthermore, such differentiation assists in providing greater understanding of the way in which involvement in the Youth United Project may have helped to influence young people’s skills and feelings. For the purposes of the analysis we discuss below specific statements which demonstrate noticeable differences between the Control young people and the Project young people.

3.6.1.1 Planning

Project young people were significantly more likely to give a top 3 rating to the statement ‘I can find a way to stick with my plans and goals, even when it’s tough’ than Control young people. Whereas less than two-fifths of Control young people at the pre and post stage gave a top 3 rating (pre=38%, post=36%), more than half of Project young people did so (pre=55%, post=61%), suggesting that Project young people already felt more confident in this area.

Figure 31: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



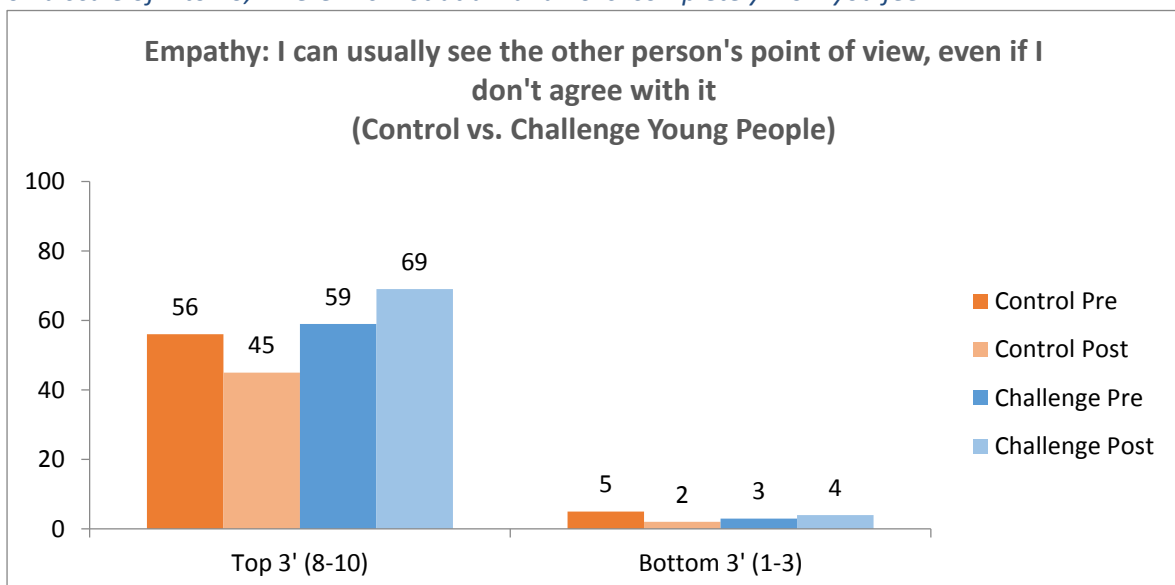
Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66), Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

3.6.1.2 Empathy

Both Control and Project young people were very similar in terms of their ratings of empathy at the pre stage (Project young people 59%, Control young people 56%). However, whereas Control young people's ratings decreased at the post stage (pre=56%, post=45%), Project young people's ratings increased significantly (pre=59%, post=69%).

This suggests that young people's involvement in the Youth United Project has contributed to their increased empathy.

Figure 32: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.

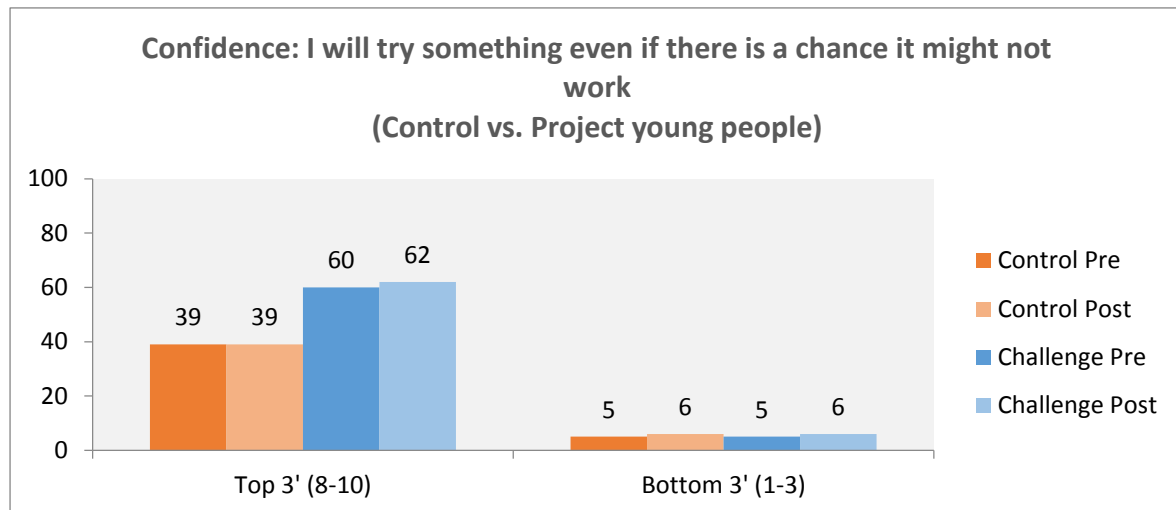


Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66), Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

3.6.1.3 Confidence

Ratings of confidence were significantly higher amongst the Project young people at both the pre and post stage (pre=60%, post=62%). By contrast, around a fifth of Control young people at both stages gave a top 3 score to the statement 'I will try something even if there is a chance it might not work' (39%). This suggests that the Project young people were generally more confident at both stages than the Control young people.

Figure 33: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.

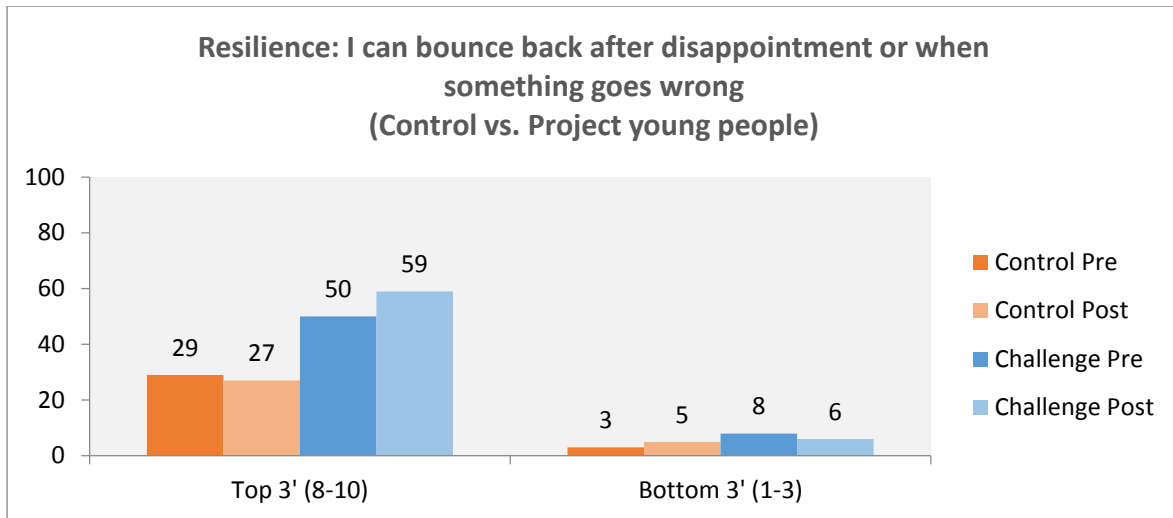


Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66), Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

3.6.1.4 Resilience

Control young people were significantly less likely to provide top 3 scores for the resilience statement at the pre and post stage than the Project young people (pre=29%, post=27%). By contrast Project young people had much greater resilience at the pre stage, which was strengthened further through their involvement in the Youth United Project (pre=50%, post=59%).

Figure 34: You are now going to be asked a number of statements about how you feel. Please tell us on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' how you feel.



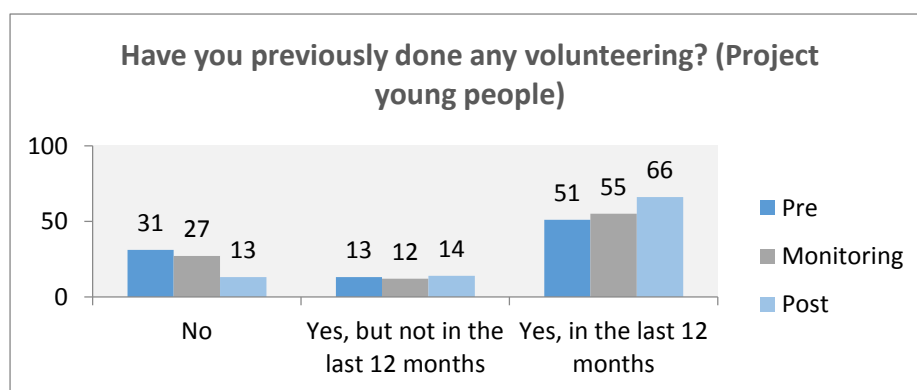
Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66), Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

Section 4: The way in which Youth United membership increased engagement with the community

4.1 Previous volunteering

Volunteering¹⁸ in the last year increased significantly amongst Project young people. At the pre-participation stage, half (51%, n=265) of the young people surveyed had volunteered in the previous 12 months and a further 13% (n=69) had volunteered more than a year ago. Nearly a third had never volunteered before (31%, n=160). Levels of volunteering increased slightly, but not significantly, at the monitoring stage (55%, n=205). However, at the post-participation stage, volunteering levels had increased significantly; two thirds (66%, n=226) of Project young people had volunteered in the previous year, which is a significant shift versus the pre stage.

Figure 35: Have you previously done any volunteering?

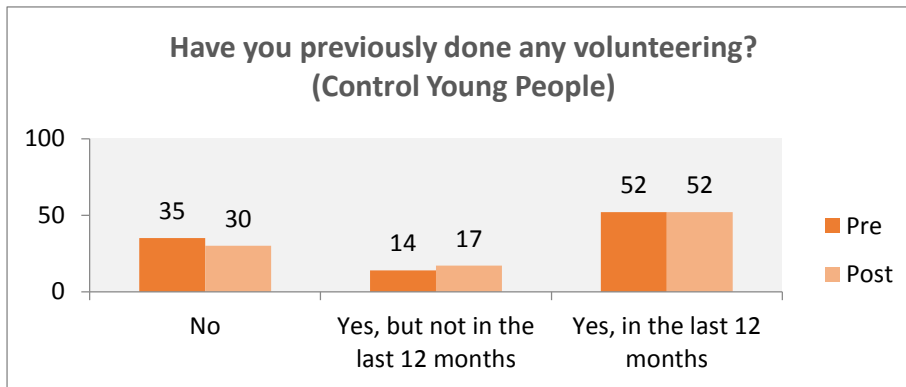


Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United monitoring (372), Youth United post (340)

Comparing the Project young people to the Control group, levels of volunteering are very similar at the pre stage; in the previous 12 months, 52% of Control young people had taken part in volunteering (n=34) and 14% had done so more than a year ago (n=9). However, in contrast to the Project young people, there was no significant change in the level of volunteering amongst Control young people pre to post.

¹⁸ Give unpaid help at a local club, group, organisation or place of worship; Raise money for charity; Organise a petition or event to support a local or national issue; an activity to help other people improve the local community.

Figure 36: Have you previously done any volunteering?

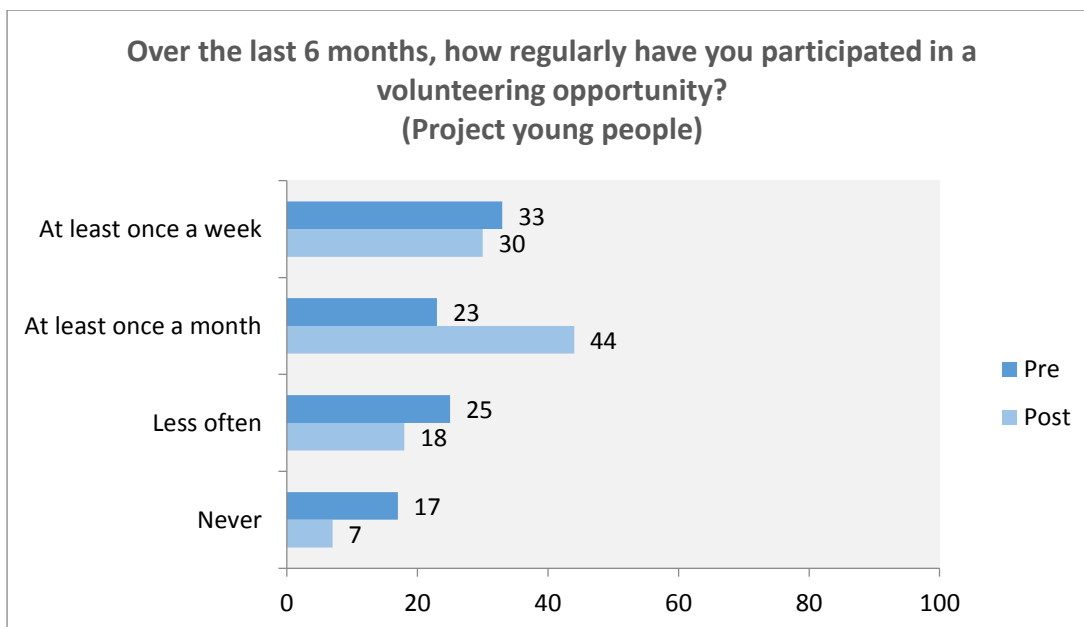


Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66)

4.2 Frequency of volunteering in the last six months

There also appears to have been an overall increase in the frequency of volunteering amongst **Project young people**. Whilst the proportion who volunteered at least once a week did not change significantly (pre 33%, post 30%), there was a significant increase in those who volunteered at least once a month, from 23% at the pre stage to 44% at the post stage (pre n=120, post n=151). Furthermore, there was a significant decrease in those who said they volunteered less than once a month (pre 25% n=129, post 18% n=60) and in those who had not volunteered in the previous 6 months (pre 17% n=90, post 7% n=23).

Figure 37: Over the last 6 months, how regularly have you participated in a volunteering opportunity outside of school/working hours?

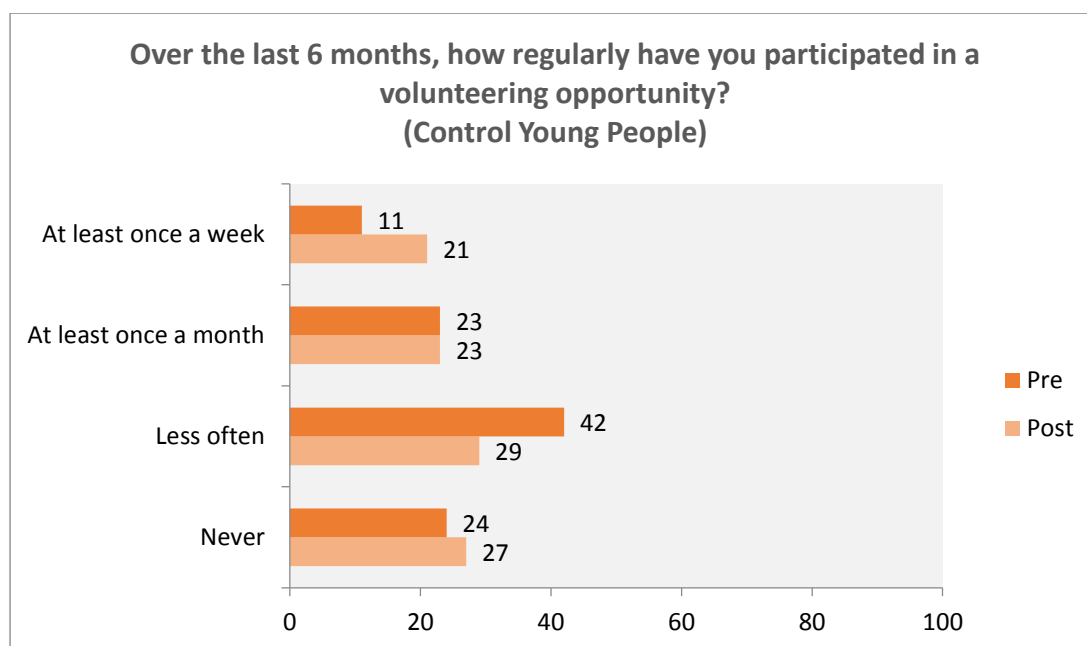


Base: Youth United pre (516), Youth United post (340)

In comparison, amongst the Control young people no significant change in the frequency of volunteering in the previous 6 months was seen.

There was an increase in those who said they had volunteered at least once a week amongst Control young people, from 11% at the pre (n=7) to 21% at the post (n=14), however this shift was not significant. A larger shift was seen for those who said they had volunteered less than once a month, falling from 42% at the pre (n=28) to 29% at the post stage (n=19), however again this shift was not significant.

Figure 38: Over the last 6 months, how regularly have you participated in a volunteering opportunity outside of school/working hours?



Base: Control pre (66), Control post (66)

4.3 Consideration of volunteering in the future

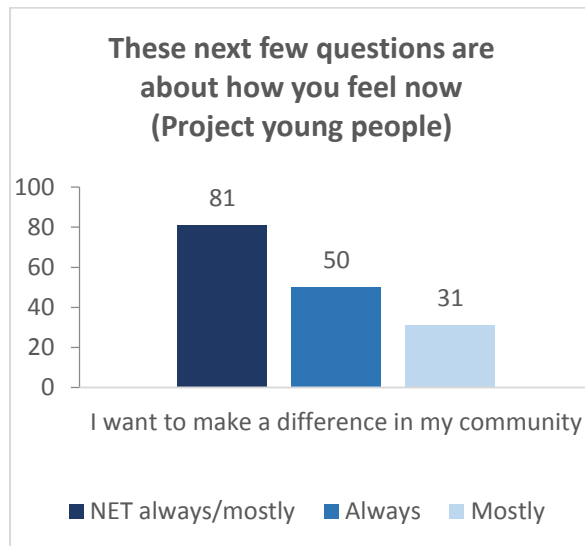
Amongst the Control group, 16 respondents (24%) at the pre stage and 18 respondents (27%) at the post stage said that they had not taken part in any volunteering in the previous 6 months. Positively, of these, very few said that they would not consider volunteering in the future; just 3 respondents at the pre stage and 2 respondents at the post stage. Of the remainder, at the pre stage 8 young people said they would consider volunteering and 5 said they were unsure; at the post stage, 12 young people said they would consider volunteering and 4 said they were unsure. Clearly there is great potential to encourage young people from lower social grade backgrounds to take part in volunteering opportunities and these results do not suggest that there is anything particularly different about Project young people compared to similar young people from the general population on this aspect.

4.4 Impact on attitudes to volunteering

There was strong evidence to suggest that involvement with a Youth United organisation had a positive impact on the attitudes of young people towards volunteering.

The young people reported a strong feeling of wanting to make a difference in their community; half (50%, n=186) said they ‘always’ wanted to make a difference and a further 31% (n=116) ‘mostly’ wanted to make a difference in their community.

Figure 39: These next few questions are about how you feel now. For each question, please only tick one answer. If you are not sure about a question or don't have an opinion just tick 'don't know'...



Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

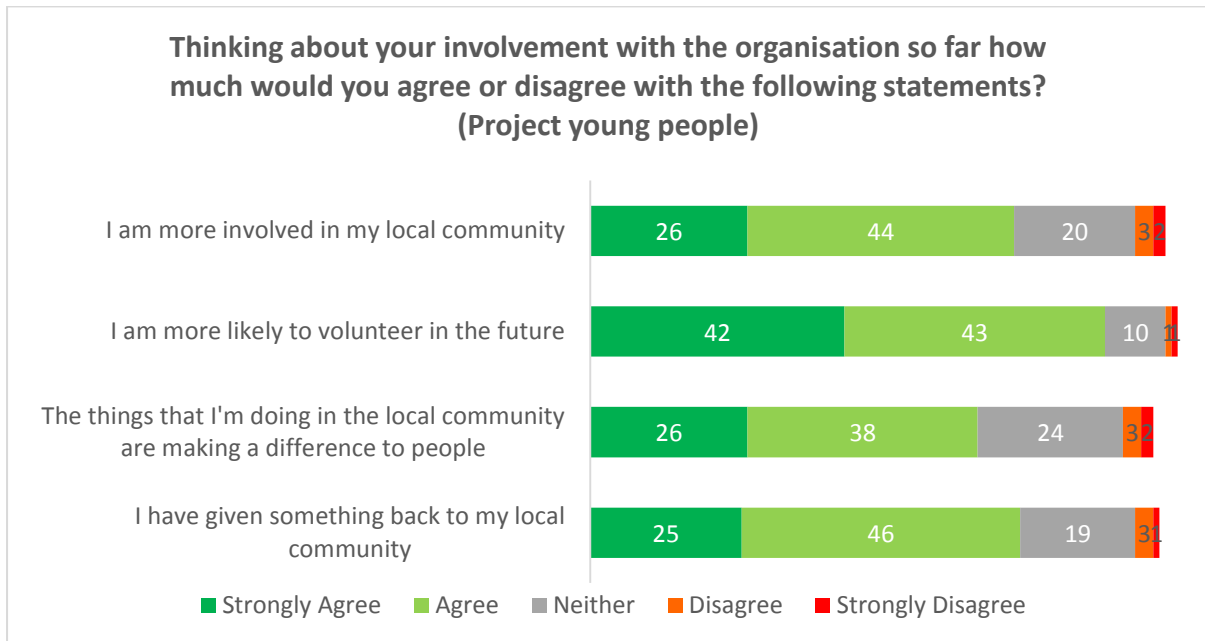
Qualitatively, the young people were asked about what the term ‘volunteering’ meant to them. One described it as ‘giving up your free time to do something positive’ and ‘helping people in the community’. The young people viewed their attendance at events as ‘volunteering’ and they experienced a great amount of pride from this action.

Quantitatively, seven in ten young people agreed that they were more involved in their local community (70%, n=259) and around a quarter (26%, n=95) strongly agreed.

The young people surveyed clearly believed that their involvement with the Youth United Project provided them with opportunities to undertake positive work in their communities. Overall, nearly three quarters agreed that ‘I have given something back to my local community’ (71%, n=264) and around two-thirds (64%, n=238) believed that the community activities they were involved in made a difference to people.

Involvement with the Youth United Project also appeared to have a positive impact on the propensity of young people to volunteer in the future; over 8 out of 10 young people agreed that they are more likely to volunteer in the future (85%, n=317) and around 2 out of 5 young people strongly agreed (42%, n=156).

Figure 40: Thinking about your involvement with the organisation so far how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: Youth United monitoring (372)

Section 5: NCS Graduates

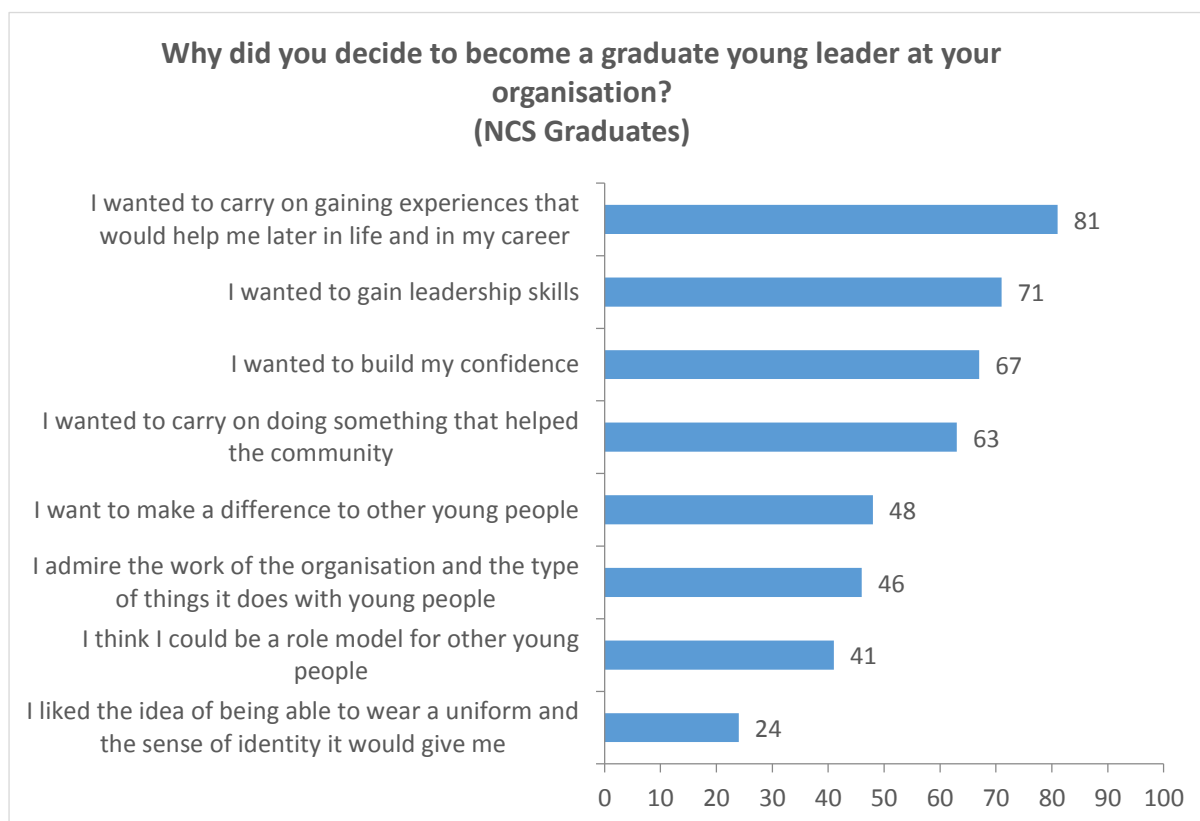
Young people who had completed the NCS programme were recruited as graduate Young Leaders to volunteer within the organisations. An NCS Graduate Young Leader survey (see appendix 3.4) assessed young people's reasons for becoming a graduate Young Leader, the experiences and skills they had hoped to bring to the organisation and those they hoped to gain from their role as a Young Leader.

5.1 Reasons for becoming a graduate Young Leader

Becoming an graduate Young Leader was driven by a number of reasons, mainly based on a positive and mature attitude towards planning for the future, something which Youth United organisations encourage in their young people. It is significant, for example, that 8 out of 10 chose to join the scheme to help them with their future career and 7 out of 10 to gain leadership skills.

Other reasons reflect the ethos that drives Youth United organisations, for example the opportunity to build confidence and the desire to continue helping others in the community.

Figure 41: Why did you decide to become a graduate young leader at [organisation]?



Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

The young people could see a clear benefit for their future career prospects through becoming a volunteer. Over 8 in 10 (81%) made the decision to become a graduate Young Leader as they wanted to carry on gaining experiences that would help them later in life and in their career. Males (89%, n=39) and 17-18 year olds (87%, n=54) were particularly likely to mention this as a reason for

becoming a graduate Young Leader, although the differences were not significant (females 78%, n=52; 16 year olds 78%, n=36).

The opportunity to improve leadership skills (71%, n=79) and levels of confidence (67%, n=75) were also particularly prevalent reasons for becoming a graduate Young Leader.

Positively, a desire to help others was also expressed by young people. Almost two thirds (63%, n=71) indicated that they had become a graduate Young Leader so that they could continue to do things that help their community. Furthermore, almost half (48%, n=54) expressed the desire to make a difference to other young people and two-fifths (41%, n=46) believed they could be a good role model for other young people.

A sense of admiration for the organisation and pride in wearing the uniform were also mentioned by some young people as reasons for becoming a volunteer. Nearly half (46%, n=52) agreed that they admire the work of the organisation and a quarter (24%, n=27) liked the idea of wearing a uniform and felt that it would give them a sense of identity.

Becoming a graduate young leader in order to “carry on doing something that helped the community” (63%, n=71) was significantly more prevalent amongst 17-18 year olds; nearly three-quarters (73%) chose this reason compared to just over half (52%) of 16 year olds. Furthermore, significantly more 17-18 year olds (61%) than 16 year olds (28%) decided to become a young leader as they admired the work of the organisation and the type of things it does with young people. These significant differences between younger and older volunteers further support our findings of an increase in altruistic behaviour as age increases (see Section 2 pp18).

In addition to the prompted list of reasons for becoming a volunteer, respondents were also able to provide their own reasons. Analysis of the verbatim further supports the findings above; 16% (n=18) mentioned career-related reasons for joining the organisation as a Young Leader and over 1 in 10 (11%, n=12) mentioned helping or teaching other people.

“To pursue a career in the police and help out the community in some way”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“I want to be a doctor and this gives me good experience and skills”

(Male Young Leader aged 17, St John Ambulance)

“I decided to become a graduate young leader with St John Ambulance because I admire the work they do and would like to contribute more to helping the community”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, St John Ambulance)

5.2 Previous volunteering

The positive experience of being part of a Youth United organisation had been a highly motivating factor in young people's decision to take part in NCS. *"I was in the Boys Brigade when I was young and I wanted to go back to see how it had improved and because I enjoyed it."*

(Male Young Leader aged 16, Boys Brigade)

"I wanted to become a graduate young leader to pass on my experiences as a cadet and lead by a good example."

(Male Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Some respondents recognised that their previous volunteering experience provided them with the skills and experiences necessary to help and train other young people.

"I have volunteered for a couple of years for Everton in the community so I understand the role of being a volunteer in trying to help out as much as you can. I believe I have very good leadership skills."

(Female Young Leader aged 18, St John Ambulance)

5.3 Becoming a graduate Young Leader

The vast majority (86%, n=96) of the young people surveyed took part in NCS in summer 2014 (ie July or August). 15% (n=17) took part in the Autumn 2014 NCS programme (September, October or November) and 12% had taken part in the first half of 2014 (12 respondents in June and 1 respondent in February).

Interestingly, 17% of the young people surveyed provided more than one date, suggesting they participated in NCS programme and then returned to participate as a volunteer (n=19). This was mentioned during the case study visits by one of the Cadets.

"I really enjoyed it, after I did it in summer I now volunteer. I spend my half terms volunteering at NCS, as well as having responsibilities there you also get to take part for free!"

(Female Young Leader aged 16, Sea Cadets)

After taking part in the NCS programme, most of the young people surveyed appeared to become graduate Young Leaders in an organisation relatively quickly. 19% (n=21) joined an organisation as a graduate Young Leader in the first half of 2014, 44% (n=49) in Q3 and 25% (n=28) in Q4. 2 respondents (2%) had joined in February 2015

Some organisations utilised a formal recruitment process which included a formal interview with the young person, and in some cases also with parents. The formal interview process could be a daunting experience for some young people. For example, at St John Ambulance a Young Leader described the way in which she initially felt quite intimidated by the application process, however she later recognised that it was a beneficial experience and she was pleased with her performance.

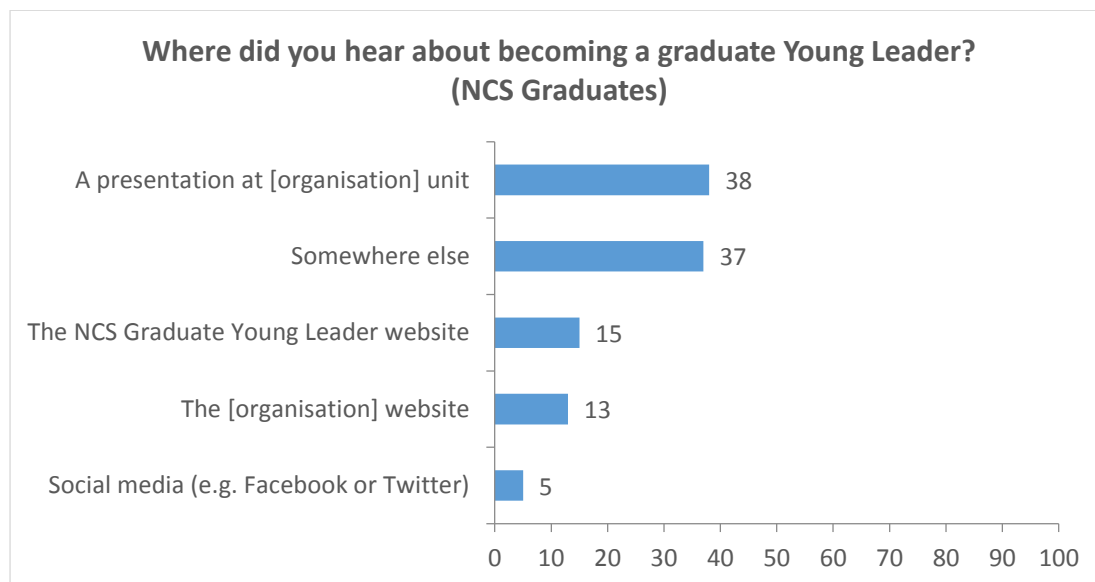
5.4 Sources of awareness

Nearly two-fifths (38%, n=43) of young people had discovered the opportunity to volunteer as a graduate Young Leader through a presentation at their organisation unit. The Youth United NCS graduate recruitment website (www.youcanlead.org.uk) and individual organisation websites were

accountable for 15% (n=17) and 13% (n=14) of interest respectively, whilst a minority were alerted through social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter (5%, n=6).

Nearly two-fifths (37%, n=41) were informed of this opportunity by other means than those listed. Feedback from the case study visits suggests that presentations at school and word of mouth were other important sources of awareness.

Figure 42: Where did you hear about becoming a graduate Young Leader?



Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

5.5 Skills Young Leaders hoped to gain

Whilst many of the graduate Young Leaders surveyed felt that they had some experience and skills which would help them in their role, it is clear from the verbatim responses that they hoped to gain or improve these skills from being a volunteer. These could be broadly categorised into a number of themes.

The skills that Young Leaders most often hoped to gain or improve included leadership (47%, n=53), confidence (33%, n=37), communication and people skills (20%, n=22) and practical/life skills (14%, n=16).

“More confidence and leadership skills.”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Girlguiding)

“Taking on the responsibility of being a leader.”

(Male Young Leader aged 17, Fire Cadets)

“I hope to build on my confidence and leadership skills. I also aim to build on my people skills and communication skills.”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

5.6 Experiences of graduate Young Leaders

5.6.1 Enjoyment

Analysis of verbatim responses clearly demonstrates the fun and enjoyment felt by the Young Leaders and the volunteers had already enjoyed a wide range of experiences. Aspects enjoyed the most so far were making new friends and meeting people (23%, n=26), learning new skills (22%, n=23), helping other people and their community (17%, n=19) and the duties and activities they had been involved in (10%, n=11).

“I have enjoyed getting to learn all the skills and gaining the knowledge that shall hopefully help me obtain a job within the police”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“I have enjoyed going on different courses and gaining new experiences and new friends.”

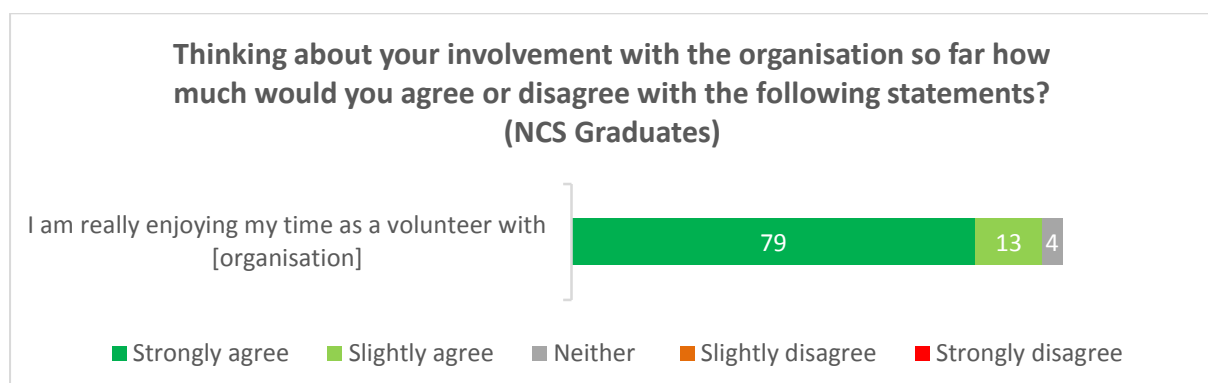
(Female Young Leader aged 16, Sea Cadets)

“I have most enjoyed being an active member of my community and engaging with the public. I enjoy displaying a positive image of Beds police and young people as a whole.”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

The experience of becoming a NCS graduate was extremely positive, with nearly all (92%) claiming ‘I am really enjoying my time as a volunteer with [the organisation]’ and almost 8 out of 10 (79%) ‘strongly agreeing’. This was the highest agreement seen across all the statements and positively, no Young Leaders disagreed with this statement.

Figure 44: Thinking about your involvement with the organisation so far how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

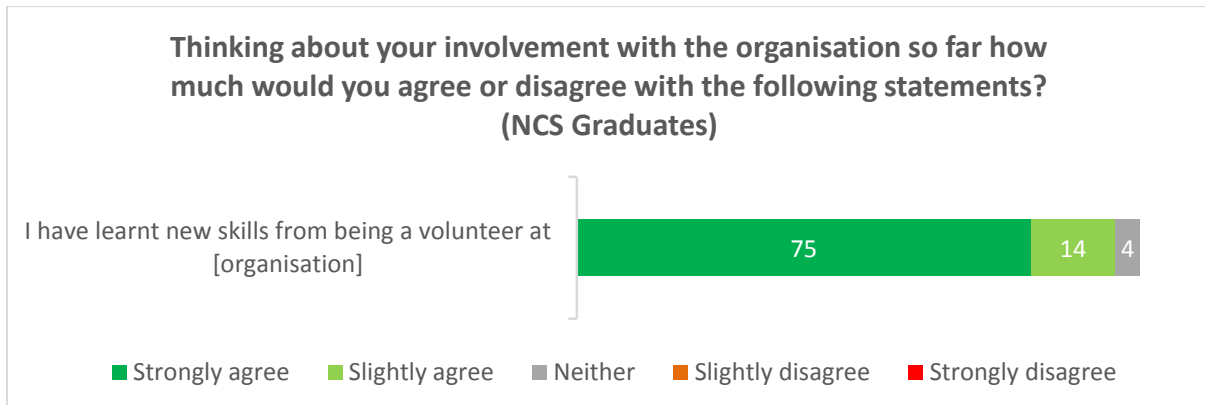


Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

5.6.2 Skills

As already seen in Section 6.4 (see page 52), learning and improving their skills was an important driver of young people’s decision to become a graduate Young Leader and it is positive to see that 9 out of 10 (89%, n=100) agreed and three-quarters (75%, n=84) strongly agreed that they had learnt new skills through being a volunteer.

Figure 45: Thinking about your involvement with the organisation so far how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

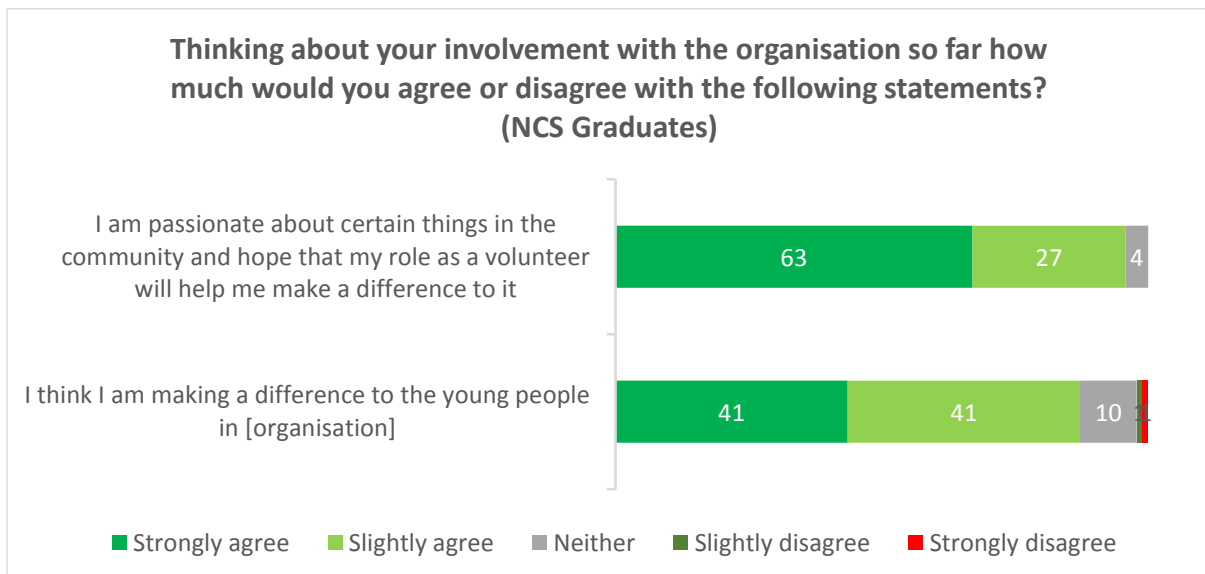


Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

5.6.3 Making a difference

It is particularly encouraging to find that 9 out of 10 Young Leaders are passionate about their role as a volunteer and hoped they can make a difference to their community (89%, n=100). The majority of graduate Young Leaders also felt they were making a difference to the young people in their organisation (82%, n=92), with two-fifths (41%, n=46) strongly agreeing this was the case.

Figure 46: Thinking about your involvement with the organisation so far how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

Young people clearly gained great personal satisfaction from their experience, enthusiastically expressing the way in which helping others and their community gave them a sense of satisfaction and pride. *“I have most enjoyed being an active member of my community and engaging with the public. I enjoy displaying a positive image of Beds police and young people as a whole.”*

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“The ability to teach new kids new things which will help them progress in later life, may it be within cadets and outside”
 (Female Young Leader, aged 16, Sea Cadets)

“I think it's extremely rewarding knowing that you're making an impact in someone else's life. A lot of the kids have made me small creative gifts which really makes me feel as if I am helping them.”
 (Female Young Leader, aged 17, St John Ambulance)

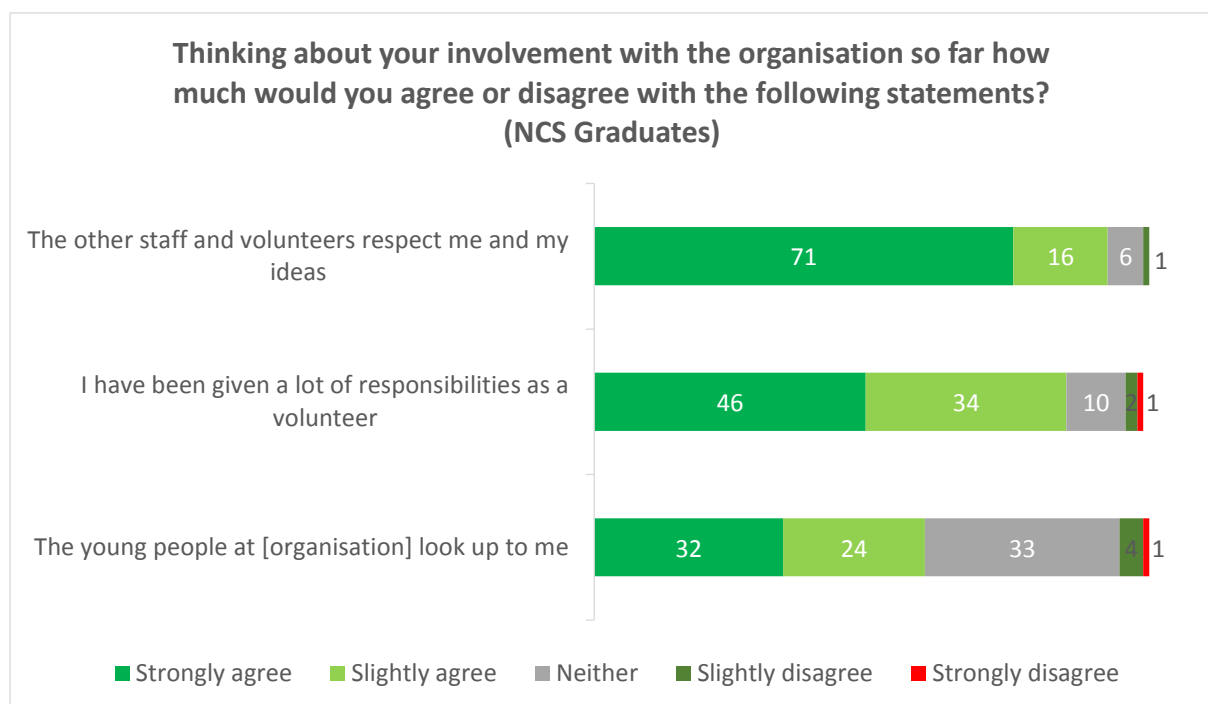
5.6.4 Respect and responsibility

Importantly, being given a sense of responsibility and earning respect has been a key driver for being part of the scheme. Most (87%, n=97) of the Young Leaders surveyed agreed that other staff and volunteers respected them and their ideas.

“I have enjoyed the way I have been welcomed by the volunteers, as they made me feel like part of a team.”
 (Female Young Leader aged 16, St John Ambulance)

Young Leaders were clearly being trusted to take on responsibility early in their role as a graduate Young Leader; 8 out of 10 (80%, n=90) agreed that they had been given a lot of responsibilities.

Figure 47: Thinking about your involvement with the organisation so far how much would you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

Their experience in the scheme involved a wide range of activities, all of which had increased their sense of self-esteem. Many wrote about specific tasks and responsibilities which had been delegated to them, including organising events, leading drill sessions, delivering core subjects and helping to supervise young people and children.

"I have been tasked with organising events. I have been tasked with gauging what people want and organising those things"
(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

"Planning and carrying out a day with Rainbows and Brownies."
(Male Young Leader aged 16, Girlguiding)

"I have been helping out with practical sides of the course by setting up equipment, helping them out with tasks by telling them from right and wrong and going to HQ helping out with events."
(Male Young Leader aged 16, Fire Cadets)

An area where the Young Leaders felt less confident at the time they completed the survey was for "the young people at [organisation] look up to me". Just over half (56%, n=63) agreed with this statement, with 32% strongly agreeing. This less positive response could be driven by the timing of the survey. Young Leaders were asked to complete the survey soon after they had joined an organisation, therefore they would have had just a short amount of time in their role. This notion is supported by the high proportion were unable to agree or disagree with this statement (33%, n=37), suggesting that these Young Leaders felt unable to judge at that stage whether the young people looked up to them or not.

5.6.5 Challenges

There were however some areas in which the young people felt less confident at first, especially public speaking. Young Leaders described a range of challenges with their role which could broadly be categorised under the theme of 'leadership'; having the confidence and authority to lead and control the group/session, engage the Cadets and communicate effectively. Presenting or speaking in front of a group was a challenge for some Young Leaders.

"There was one thing that was challenging at first which was knowing how to communicate with the new cadets."
(Male Young Leader aged 16, Fire Cadets)

"When trying to control certain situations trying to reach the best outcome, I feel that being a leader is challenging in this particular task, but you have to meet them head on in order to get the tasks finished."
(Female Young Leader aged 16, Sea Cadets)

"Confidence standing up in front of people."
(Female Young Leader aged 18, St John Ambulance)

Some Young Leaders felt that this was particularly difficult because they were a similar age to the Cadets they were trying to lead.

"Gaining authority, because I'm so close to the cadets' age."
(Male Young Leader aged 18, Fire Cadets)

"A little bit daunting, when working with others who are my age."
(Female Young Leader aged 17, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Learning some of the specific tasks or skills required by an organisation was described as challenging by some Young Leaders.

"Some of the things we learn are difficult to comprehend and maintaining the information is sometimes difficult, especially if you have little opportunity to practice them."

(Female Young Leader aged 16, Volunteer Police Cadets)

Making friends and getting along with others was also mentioned.

“The first few times I went making friends was hard but I have noticed a huge change in my confidence around strangers since then.”

(Female Young Leader aged 16, Volunteer Police Cadets)

“Getting along with people who have conflicting views but most importantly, getting the kids to listen.”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, Girlguiding)

5.7 Future volunteering

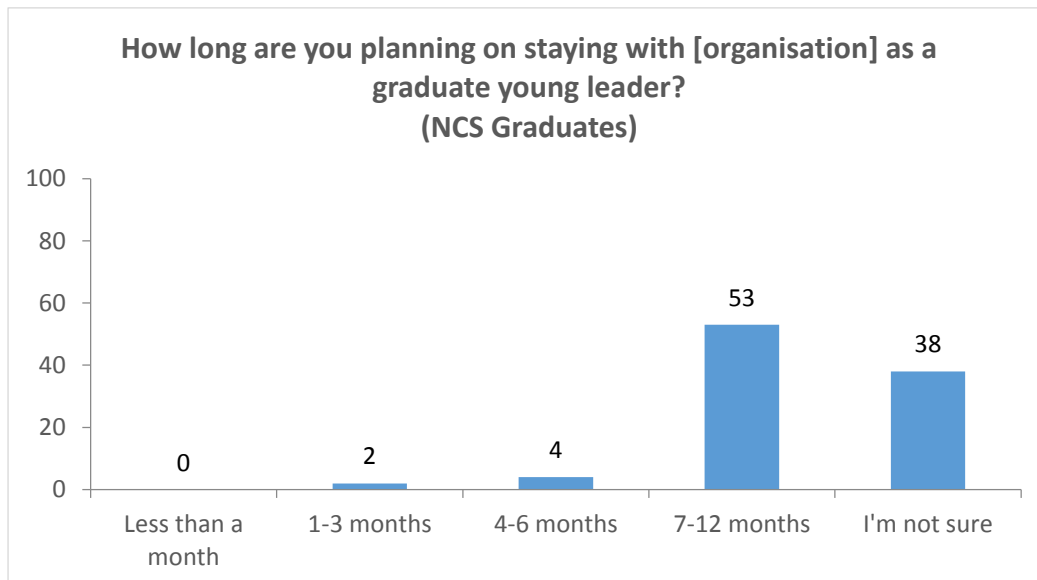
The young people had a clear vision for their future in volunteering. The majority of Young Leaders believe they will stay with the organisation for at least 7-12 months (53%, n=59). Nearly two-fifths were unsure of how long they planned to stay as a volunteer (38%, n=43). Positively, just 6% (n=7) plan on staying less than 6 months.

As already mentioned in Section 4 (see pp38) some Young Leaders found it difficult to manage their time and that volunteering could clash with college and work responsibilities. This meant that although they would like to continue with the organisation, they were concerned that other commitments may prevent them from doing so longer term.

“The only thing I have found difficult is finding time to do duties that fall around college hours.”

(Female Young Leader aged 17, VPC)

Figure 48: How long are you planning on staying with [organisation] as a graduate young leader?



Base: NCS graduate Young Leaders (112)

Section 6: Delivering the Project

This section summarises the key findings from the case studies and a Senior User Group meeting group discussion, focussing on how the organisations delivered the project and the challenges the organisations faced.

6.1 Implementation of the project

Most organisations already had some sort of development service for recruiting young people in place and these structures were utilised to set up the Youth United Project.

For some organisations, such as Volunteer Police Cadets, Fire Cadets and St John Ambulance, a Development Worker had been in place within the organisation for some time working on similar projects such as SIP (Supporting Inclusion Programme) and these Development Workers were transferred to work on the Youth United Project. Other organisations utilised Development Teams who were already working on similar projects in specific areas of the country, and the Youth United Project was incorporated into the remit of those teams.

In some cases, recruitment of new staff was required and these positions took a certain amount of time to fill, which initially caused delays to the progression of the project.

6.2 Units

The organisations used different approaches with regards to setting up units; some used established units, some opened new units, and some utilised a mix of both established and new units.

New units were generally created in one of two ways:

- Planned drive to open new units in specific regions; some organisations created a plan to open new units in specific locations, for example, Volunteer Police Cadets, St John Ambulance and Girls' Brigade focussed on opening a planned number of new units in specific regions of the country.
- Response to feedback/requests; some organisations opened new units in response to requests from schools, social services or staff working within the organisation. Fire Cadets planned to open 14 new units, but the location of these units was driven by where there was interest from staff or the community and the capacity within the organisation to support the opening of a new unit.

Within established units, organisations focussed on recruiting new young people to the unit, driving young people to take part in NCS (both current and new members) and also on recruiting NCS graduates as Young Leaders. In some cases, these established units had not been involved with a 'project' before or were unaware that their unit was included in the Youth United Project, which presented some difficulty in terms of managing staff expectations and the evaluation process.

6.3 Staff and structure

A mix of paid and volunteer staff worked on the Youth United Project within the organisations. The project team was usually headed up by one or more Development Workers/Youth Support Workers who often have experience of working specifically with young people/'at-risk youth' (i.e. vulnerable

through socio-economic circumstances, mental/physical health issues or other personal circumstances). These Development Workers/Youth Support Workers managed and supported the cadet units, often working with a number of units.

The units were usually staffed by volunteers. Within organisations such as Volunteer Police Cadets and Fire Cadets, volunteers were staff from the parent organisation who gave up their free time to run the cadet units. For example, at Volunteer Police Cadets all staff were internal full-time Police Officers who volunteered to work additional hours for the cadets. Although they did get the hours reimbursed through time off in lieu, staff found the work extremely challenging. 'All-consuming' was the phrase used by the volunteer staff at one Volunteer Police Cadets unit.

For the other organisations, Unit Leaders and other staff typically had 'day jobs' in industries which were often unrelated to their volunteering and this also presented a challenge for the organisations in terms of the time and commitment required of volunteers. The commitment of unit staff was described by all organisations as being vitally important for the success of the unit.

"I am also blessed with very good staff, which is important. I am very fortunate that my staff have been together for a long time so we support each other and we know each other's strengths and weaknesses."
(Commanding Officer, Sea Cadets)

6.4 Recruitment

The organisations used a variety of strategies for recruiting young people with differing degrees of success and as a result had varied timelines. Recruitment strategies also varied between units, depending on the specific situation and location of the unit.

Recruitment strategies included:

- Online - utilising organisation websites and social media; Volunteer Police Cadets centrally managed recruitment applications collated by HQ from their website and social media.
- Local community initiatives; St John Ambulance recruited via the 'Stick-Its'¹⁹ course offered in areas with high levels of gang-related crime and where young people expressed a desire to know what to do if a person is stabbed.
- Schools/social service; Fire Cadets Chesterfield and Stavely units recruited through local schools and social services.
- Religious groups; Fire Cadets organised visits to Sikh museums and Muslim mosques; Girls Brigade recruited young people via local church congregations.
- Taster sessions; Scouts organised Explorer taster sessions which were advertised in the local area and through Scout Leaders.
- Word of mouth; young people themselves were encouraged to bring friends along to sessions at all organisations. Peer to peer recommendation was described as particularly important for NCS recruitment.

The strategies that organisations employed to recruit young people evolved over the course of the project as some were found to be less successful than expected. Typically, the organisations had very well developed strategies for recruiting younger children (e.g. 5-12 year olds), however it was found that these strategies did not necessarily work as well for recruiting teens. One example was

¹⁹ 'Stick-Its' is an introductory-level course to First Aid which focuses on gun and knife related injuries.

provided by Scouts; taster sessions worked very well for recruiting Beavers (5-8 year olds) and typically just one taster session would be required in order to have enough children to open a new Beavers unit. However, when this strategy was used to recruit young people for a new Explorers unit (14-18 year olds) it was found that two or three taster sessions were required. Similar experiences were reported by the other organisations.

Overall, the organisations reported varied levels of recruitment success. When interest was very high organisations found it difficult to manage the volume of responses and to successfully convert them into recruits. At other times, poorer than anticipated responses to some recruitment strategies meant that recruitment initially took longer than anticipated. Furthermore, building relationships with young people was described as a process which took time and resulted in a slower recruitment timeline at the start of the project.

Some new recruits also had a probation period before they received their uniform to ensure the organisation was suitable for them and that they could demonstrate commitment. Fire Cadets had a probation period of two months before young people were issued with uniforms and started the BTEC course. This waiting period before receiving the uniform created a level of anticipation, excitement and achievement amongst the young people.

In some cases, Cadets were asked to make a commitment to the organisation when they joined. For example, when young people signed up for Volunteer Police Cadets, they were asked for at least a year's commitment as each uniform bears a significant cost to the organisation.

6.5 The Cadets

The organisations reported that the young people in the units came from a diverse set of backgrounds with a range of different motivations for joining. Unit leaders described this variety as extremely beneficial for the young people as it encouraged them to develop understanding, empathy, patience, respect and an appreciation of the different views of others.

"It's shown them that all young people, no matter where you come from, they are the same and they have the same issues."
(Unit Leader, St John Ambulance)

The young people themselves also reported an awareness of these benefits.

The demography of a unit was heavily influenced by geography. For example, units located in areas with a more ethnically diverse demography had a more ethnically diverse membership. Some organisations had specific targets set for recruitment of a certain number or proportion of vulnerable young people. Volunteer Police Cadets, for example, had a target of 25 per cent vulnerable young people. However, some Unit Leaders described how it could be quite difficult to establish the backgrounds of the young people as they did not feel comfortable asking the young people directly.

As well as the specific recruitment strategies employed by the organisations, some young people became involved with their organisation due to family history or family links with the organisation. For example within Fire Cadets 'firefighting kids' were described as those who have firefighters in the family or a strong interest in the subject, often with the desire to become a firefighter themselves.

Other young people became involved with their organisation through teacher or social services referrals through schemes such as the Youth Engagement Scheme or the Fire Setter Scheme. These young people were more likely to be vulnerable and/or come from disadvantaged areas.

For Young Leaders, there was a notable link with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). Several Young Leaders mentioned that they had become involved with their organisation in order to fulfil the volunteering part of their DofE.

6.6 The sessions/environment

The approach of the organisations towards the sessions could be broadly divided into two types, which all organisations employed to varying degrees:

- Structured learning - these sessions had a set of specific skills which were learnt within a structured programme, including both theory and hands-on learning. Young people worked towards achieving certificates/awards/qualifications and/or promotion to higher ranks. The mix of formal and practical teaching was described as important by both young people and staff.
- Learning through fun – these sessions had a less structured approach. Topics were often driven by cultural and social events, such as Easter or the Chinese New Year. 'Fun' was an important aspect of learning within these sessions and they strived to ensure that the environment was informal and 'not like school'

All organisations aimed to provide active learning environments, where the young people took part in 'hands on' activities designed to facilitate learning. This 'hands on' aspect was described as important by both the Unit Leaders and the young people themselves, as it provided an interactive learning environment and maintained their interest.

Some organisations encouraged young people to get involved in activities and events in the community as soon as possible. The young people enjoyed being on 'active duty', interacting with the public and feeling a sense of pride and responsibility in doing something good for the community. Cadets had been involved in a wide variety of events such as parades, fundraisers, memorial services, public events competitions and fairs.

Instilling a sense of discipline was particularly important for some organisations (e.g. Volunteer Police Cadets, Fire Cadets and Sea Cadets) where the level of discipline expected mirrored that of the parent organisations (i.e. the Police Service, the Fire Service and the Navy). For example, as a method of emphasising the responsibility and importance of what they are doing, young people at Fire Cadets were instructed to apply for 'extended leave' if they were expecting to miss several sessions.

In all cases the Cadets were aware that they represented their organisation, particularly when in uniform and at public events. They understood that their behaviour would reflect on the organisation and felt they should work hard to project a positive image.

6.7 Challenges

The organisations described a number of challenges they faced in delivering the Challenge Project.

6.7.1 Project timescales

All organisations experienced challenges in implementing the project and meeting targets within the project timescale of 1 year. For most organisations there was a period of set-up required for the project which took a number of months and this resulted in delays in opening units and recruiting young people. This set up period included tasks such as establishing staff teams and hierarchies, transferring or recruiting new staff where required, briefing staff on the project requirements, identifying suitable regions/units to implement the project, liaising with Unit Leaders and volunteers, agreeing recruitment processes, liaising with the research evaluation team at FK&Y and putting in place structures and processes to conduct the evaluation. As a result, all the organisations felt that they were 'playing catch up' and under an increased level of pressure to meet project targets.

"One year projects are just not long enough. They are getting to the bit where you can really make a difference and the project wraps up." (Senior User Group member)

Some organisations also experienced delays because planned strategies did not work as anticipated.

"This gave us the opportunity to explore a model of how to open units aiming at recruiting 14-18 year olds. Previously our work has always aimed at younger sections. We had to tweak the younger section model which meant we were behind schedule, so we are starting to deliver on the programme now as it is coming to an end." (Senior User Group member)

Evaluation timescales also presented a key challenge, as in order to meet reporting deadlines the evaluation had to be completed before the project ended. As a result, the evaluation was unable to include data from a large number of young people, particularly for those organisations with delayed start dates.

"Evaluations need to last longer than the project. For us the ball has only just got rolling but the evaluation has finished too soon. A lot of targets come at the end of a project and it feels like they have been missed." (Senior User Group member)

Organisations felt that evaluations should continue beyond the end of a project, as the impact of any project would continue to be felt within the organisation after the project has completed.

"The legacy of the project, the impact of it, is beyond the March deadline. We have seen growth in areas where we wouldn't usually have seen it, so it is positive that the impact will go on afterwards." (Senior User Group member)

6.7.2 Recruitment

The recruitment of young people presented a range of challenges and in some cases these difficulties contributed to the organisation's delayed timings.

As mentioned earlier, while some organisations experienced a very high level of interest, they found it difficult to effectively manage the demand. Lack of resources was a key contributor, in particular resources to follow up expressions of interest within a suitable timescale, including staff to facilitate

taster sessions and staff/trainers to run units in suitable locations for the interested young people to reach.

“We had a huge response in expressions of interest, but it was tricky to turn those into getting young people on board. The window of motivation that the young person has is key. Enthusiasm dips in a short time frame; a few weeks is too long. We needed to shorten the window between their expression of interest and getting in contact with them.”

(Senior User Group member)

“They were spread out over wide area so finding places where we could run leadership programmes was difficult. It was difficult to get the young people together. For example, in Eastbourne, we had lots of expressions of interest, but not enough to run a course in Eastbourne. Motivating young people to come along to a course in Brighton, you think ‘25 minutes on train, that’s not too bad’ but then you find that most of the young people had never travelled to Brighton on their own before, so we needed to work that into it.”

(Senior User Group member)

Other organisations experienced lower than anticipated levels of interest in response to their usual recruitment model, which meant that they had to adapt their current methods. For example, most organisations had evolved strategies to recruit younger age groups, however they found that these did not work as effectively with teenagers. It was found that recruiting teenagers took more time than had been anticipated; this was a key learning for them from the Youth United Project.

“The first hurdle has been getting them into units. With the younger model, we get lots of young people in for a taster session and set up a new unit from there. But with older young people it has to organically grow. So, you might need 3 or 4 taster nights to get enough people, so that delayed things. You might get 3 or 4 from the first session, at the second session they bring some friends and so on. You get there eventually, but it takes longer.”

(Senior User Group member)

Organisations also had to adapt their methods for engaging with this older age group; direct contact, such as telephoning the young people rather than emailing, was found to be more successful.

6.7.3 Staff engagement and training

Maintaining staff motivation and engagement was seen as key to high quality provision and keeping young people engaged, particularly for volunteer staff. A Line Manager at Fire Cadets described how a unit in a different part of the region was ‘fizzling out’ due to low engagement of the young people.

As well as maintaining staff engagement, ensuring staff had the training and ability to deliver the projects was a difficulty, for a variety of reasons. Different levels of skills, experience and teaching ability across staff and a lack of consistent structure and planning of sessions could lead to uneven delivery across an organisation. Some Unit Leaders felt more training was needed to provide staff with the necessary skills and confidence.

Engaging Unit Leaders and volunteers with the reporting and evaluation requirements of the Youth United Project was also described as difficult within some organisations.

“Some of the regions have never worked within a ‘project’ before. Getting the Leaders to understand the caveats and requirements of being part of a ‘project’ has been difficult. No matter how much I have emailed them or spoken to them, it has been a real challenge to get Leaders to do it.”

(Senior User Group member)

In some cases, organisations experienced difficulties in engaging Unit Leaders with NCS, due to a perceived overlap in provision.

“The hardest struggle has been getting local Leaders to buy into NCS. The majority of stuff done on NCS is the same as what we do over a number of years, so getting Leaders to buy into something that they see we are already doing has been a challenge.”

(Senior User Group member)

6.7.4 Liaising with NCS providers

None of the organisations had engaged with NCS prior to commencing the Youth United Project, therefore time was required for them to find and liaise with NCS providers. Because there were a number of different NCS providers and these could vary across and between regions, organisations expressed concerns that there was a lack of clarity around NCS and that they found it difficult to identify appropriate courses.

“If you are a volunteer you are not going to have the time to look into it. You need a clear ‘this is what they provide in your locality, this is when it is’ and so on. Clarity on provision would make it much easier.”

(Senior User Group member)

Making contact with NCS providers was also sometimes difficult due to a high level of staff rotation.

“We developed brilliant links during the summer programme. I have emailed them in the run up to the February programme and I just get a stock email back to say they have left. As far as I am aware, especially in The Youth United [Network]²⁰, they recruit people for one session and one session only and then they are gone. So it’s frustrating. With smaller providers you have a little bit more consistency, but they are spread out all over the place.”

(Senior User Group member)

Organisations also complained of inconsistent experiences with NCS providers, which led to Unit Leaders being reticent to encourage their young people to sign up for NCS.

“We have had a very patchy response from the NCS providers. Some of our leaders have not been willing to work with NCS because of poor experiences in the past. They don’t want to promote something that they don’t have the confidence in.”

(Senior User Group member)

6.7.5 NCS timings

The restricted timing of NCS courses (during the school holidays in spring, summer and autumn) meant that some organisations experienced difficulties in aligning their recruitment of young people with course availability. As a result, young people were unable to get onto a course and had to wait for the next wave.

²⁰ The Challenge is a UK charity running youth and community programmes and is the largest provider of NCS in England.

In addition, because NCS courses all run at approximately the same time, Development Workers representing the organisations experienced difficulties in resourcing staff to attend them..

“NCS waves all happen simultaneously so there would be 6 events all on the same day all over London and the South! So that was particularly difficult.” (Senior User Group member)

Section 7: Evaluation Challenges

A number of challenges were encountered during the execution of the evaluation and this section outlines the main points. As well the challenges outlined below, it is worth noting that behaviour change is difficult to measure over a short time period.

7.1 Number of surveys

Initially the evaluation included a large number of different surveys (up to eight) and this presented a serious risk of survey fatigue both amongst the Unit Leaders who administered the surveys and the young people who completed them. The number of surveys also caused confusion amongst the organisational leaders as to who should fill out each survey and when.

This issue was addressed by reviewing each monitoring survey (initially scheduled for completion in July, October and January) and when it presented a risk to the quality of the evaluation it was omitted from the process. This was the case in July, when feedback from organisations indicated they were feeling overwhelmed with the number of surveys they were being asked to administer. Furthermore, at that stage, few young people had been able to complete a pre-participation survey. As a result the July monitoring survey was withdrawn. The January monitoring survey was also withdrawn as organisations were focussing on competing post-participation surveys at that time.

A further review of the questionnaires was conducted by Youth United and FK&Y in October 2014, where it was decided that the NCS pre and post surveys would also be discontinued, further reducing the load upon organisations and the level of survey fatigue they were experiencing.

Regular contact with the organisations was employed, including emails, bi-weekly newsletters, telephone calls and attendance of the FK&Y research team at some of the senior project team Senior User Group meetings, in an attempt to ensure clarity of process and to increase motivation and engagement. However despite this it was still difficult to control the level of interest and motivation amongst Unit Leaders and young people on the ground to complete the surveys.

7.2 Survey approach

Initially, it was proposed that surveys were to be administered online using young people's email addresses. Although FK&Y is a Company Partner of the Market Research Society (MRS) and as such must legally ensure data privacy and abide by the MRS Code of Conduct in relation to research with children and young people, as well as having an established safeguarding policy in place, due to confidentiality and security concerns organisations felt uncomfortable releasing these details. The organisations were also concerned that not all young people would have access to a computer to complete the surveys. Instead, it was agreed that a paper-based survey approach would be adopted, resulting in more budget being spent on this than had been anticipated in the original proposal.

For these same reasons, it would not be feasible for young people to be individually tracked as part of the pre and post-participation survey process for the evaluation. Due to the adoption of a paper-based survey approach, this would have involved each organisation allocating an ID number to individual young people at the pre survey stage and then ensuring that they were accurately allocating the same ID number to the young people at the post survey stage. It was feared that this

would add considerable resource and time pressure to the organisations, and would not have been conducive to maximising the number of survey responses.

7.3 Survey length and language

When surveys were sent for approval, some organisations highlighted that the length and language was not child appropriate, especially for the younger children and those with poor literacy. This was a particular issue for St John Ambulance, as the majority of their members were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The questionnaire was predetermined by the Cabinet Office²¹ and as a result minimal changes to the wording of the questions could be made. Organisations were informed that Unit Leaders were allowed to help young people to complete surveys by reading and explaining the questions. However, this is a time-intensive process and Unit Leaders may not have had the capacity to do this for all young people.

7.4 Organisation structure and timescales

Each organisation had a different structure and time schedule for opening units and recruiting young people. Some units were planned to open in June/July 2014 and others not until November 2014 and as a result it had taken time for staff to be active in their posts. This caused difficulties for the evaluation process in terms of the timescales for survey approval from organisations. This led to a delay in the expected schedule for print and dispatch of surveys and organisations had a limited amount of time to administer surveys to young people before the sessions closed for the summer holidays. All but one organisation (Sea Cadets) closed their units over the summer period, and as a result, a restricted number of surveys were received back for analysis during this time.

For some organisations, the timings for opening units meant that the recruitment of young people to the Youth United and NCS projects would fall outside of the timings for the evaluation. An extension would be required for these organisations in order to evaluate them effectively.

7.5 Identifying Project Young People

When arranging the case study visits, organisations highlighted that the unit Leaders were unable to identify Youth United Project individuals against other new unit members, and had little or no knowledge of the Youth United Project. This led to concerns that Unit Leaders would not be able to distinguish which young people to include in the research. It was decided that organisations would be asked to survey any young people who joined the organisation since January 2014, when the Youth United Project started.

²¹ See note on this Page 7 Research Approach

Section 8: Conclusions

8.1 Impact on young people

- Most young people joined their organisation to learn new skills, help others in the community, make new friends and increase their confidence.
- Interest in the work of the organisation or in pursuing a career within the organisation was also a driver for some young people.
- Significant changes were seen amongst Youth United Project young people pre-participation to post-participation for communication, creativity, empathy, resilience and agency, although communication remained an area for which young people had the least confidence overall.
- It was clear that the process of becoming part of the Project was a clear motivator, even at the beginning, and this appeared to add to young people's confidence and sense of wanting to be involved in the community.
- Project young people were already fairly confident at the outset in the areas of community, relationships and leadership and showed little change over time.
- Project young people were significantly more positive than Control young people about their planning, resilience and confidence and this difference was strengthened through participation. Project young people also reported greater empathy than Control young people at the post stage.
- The young people clearly enjoyed their experiences with the organisations and had learned a wide range of new practical and soft skills.
- 'Fun' was an important aspect of participation for the young people.
- Young people felt a sense of belonging which they described as 'being part of a family'.
- Improvements in behaviour were reported by staff and the young people themselves.
- Young people felt that participation had benefits for their future employment prospects, their CV and many had clear aspirations for their future.
- Volunteering amongst Project young people increased significantly and young people felt they were more likely to volunteer or become involved with similar organisations in the future.

8.2 Organisation and evaluation challenges

- More time was required at the beginning to administer the programme before evaluation began.
- Time was required to set up and implement the project and this varied by organisation.
- Various recruitment strategies were utilised with differing degrees of success. Organisations often needed to adapt their recruitment strategies; strategies that worked well for younger children (e.g. 5-12 year olds) were often found to be less successful for recruiting older young people (13-18 year olds).
- Variations in the level of interest expressed in joining organisations and volunteer staff skill levels caused challenges in effectively resourcing the project.
- Recruitment of young people began slowly but built in momentum over time.
- Differences in timescales of the organisations caused delays in the start of the evaluation.
- The evaluation does not include all young people recruited for the project as recruitment continues until the end of May 2015.

- Young people will continue to be involved with organisations after the project has completed, therefore the potential impact of the project will continue, although not evaluated.
- Communication with NCS providers was challenging; services and courses were extremely variable between suppliers and some staff were reluctant to promote NCS within their units.
- Organisations experienced confusion due to a lack of clarity in what NCS courses were offered in each area.
- Peer to peer recommendation was found to be particularly important for NCS recruitment.
- A link between NCS Graduates and fulfilment of the volunteering part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme was seen.

Section 9: Recommendations

- Consideration should be given to extending similar projects in the future to be more than 1 year in duration.
- The inclusion of a planning period at the start of the project is essential and would be extremely beneficial to the programme.
- Particular consideration should be given to extending the length of projects targeting older young people (13-18 year olds).
- Key learnings for recruiting older young people: the window of opportunity to respond to those who express an interest is short and organisations should aim to reply within a maximum of 2 weeks; direct verbal communication (e.g. a telephone call) is more effective than indirect communication (e.g. emailing); peer to peer recommendation is an important recruitment channel, particularly for NCS.
- To ensure projects can effectively target a range of young people including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, careful consideration should be given to the location of units/sessions.
- Increased clarity of the NCS courses and suppliers offered in individual areas would be extremely beneficial.
- Future projects could benefit from making a direct link with DofE in order to recruit Young Leaders.

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Appendix 2 – Sample, Methodology and Analysis

In its original proposal FK&Y recommended the use of a Matched Pairs design:

We propose to use a matched pairs design. This means that matched pairs with similar characteristics (e.g. age, gender, social class, geographic location, membership or affiliation to one of the organisations taking part in the programme – criteria to be agreed) are randomly assigned to those taking part in the programme (control group) and those not taking part in the programme. All will be invited to become part of the panel. Each pair will be sent the same questionnaire at each stage of the evaluation. Comparisons will be made at each stage of the evaluation.

However, during the set-up of the project three important obstacles became apparent:

1. The 8 participating organisations did not operate their units in this way. All young people recruited to the units automatically became part of the Journey Fund Project.
2. Organisations were entirely responsible for recruitment so no intervention was possible either by Youth United or its evaluator.
3. Most of the participating organisations were unable to allow an online methodology since the units were based in church halls etc with little or no access to the internet and although FK&Y adheres to the Code of Conduct and ethical guidelines of BERA, BPS and MRS, participating organisations were either unable or unwilling to share personal email addresses. A paper-based methodology had to be used therefore for these participants.

After discussion with Youth United it was agreed that an alternative method would need to be used to demonstrate causality using a control or comparison group. FK&Y took as its model the Pretest-posttest control and experimental group design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Kerlinger, 1986; Kerlinger, 1991²²) used by FK&Y previously including research with young people in areas of deprivation with mental health problems and receiving counselling (BACP).

The proposal therefore was to match the criteria as agreed with Youth United as closely as possible with those young people being recruited to the units for the Journey Fund Project:

- Must live in an area of high deprivation in the UK (parameters to be agreed with Youth United)
- Must not be taking part in the programme.

The initial comparison group size was agreed to be 100. Ideally FK&Y would have preferred a larger sample size but budget did not allow this.

²² Campbell, D.T. & Stanley, J. (1963) *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research on Teaching*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1986) *Foundations of Behavioural Research* (third edition). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1991) *Science and behavioural research*. In D.S. Anderson and B.J. Biddle (eds) *Knowledge for Policy: Improving Education through Research*. London: Fulmer.

Working with its panel provider FK&Y over-recruited to 201 11-17 year olds in three cities with high levels of childhood poverty and deprivation: London, Manchester and Birmingham. The participants were recruited based on their socio-demographic SEG C2 and D groupings. This was assessed through household income. Participants were recruited primarily from the panel provider's Eduvoice scheme (more details can be found at <http://www.eduvoice.co.uk/>) based on their profiling and on their location. Participants were sent the same questions as the intervention group at the pre and post-participation stage.

Having decided with Youth United to focus on specific inner-cities (London, Manchester, Birmingham), it was the case that the target for the control group was a significantly very small proportion of the general population. This inevitably means that the control group, a target of young people in specific and defined deprived areas, would inevitably be small. Asking this age group to respond once, and then 9 months later, was clearly going to be challenging.

It is important to emphasise therefore that the research was looking for 0.62% of the population. Having a response from such a small proportion of the population at both stages of the control group (pre and post) could therefore be argued to be a significant finding. It is also important to note that this was not based on the general population, and a response rate of 66 at each stage (from an overall target of 201) is an important and worthwhile finding.

Based on 2013 population estimates from the Office of National Statistics²³ and NRS 2014 social grade classification population estimates²⁴, our target for the control group comprises approximately 0.62% of the UK population (c. 395,112 people out of a UK population of 64,105,654). Table 6 details the calculations made using data from these sources.

²³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-322718>: Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2013 (ZIP 9178Kb)

²⁴ <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

Table 5: Population and social grade data used to estimate the control group target proportion of the UK population

	Data
UK population	64,105,654
Number of 11-17 year olds in Manchester, Birmingham and London	1,039,768
Proportion of population estimated to be C2 or D social grade	38%
Estimated number of 11-17 year olds in Manchester, Birmingham and London and in C2 or D social grade (control group target)	395,112
Proportion of UK population in control group target	0.62%

Analysis and Significance Testing

Analysis includes statistical testing to identify significant differences between pre-participation and post participation data and between difference sub-groups such as girls versus boys. Z-tests were used to identify significant differences between proportions and t-tests were used to identify significant differences between mean scores. Differences identified within the report as significant are based on these results of these tests at the 95% confidence level.

Top3/Bottom 3 and Mean Scores

Analysis of the 1-10 scale outcomes measures statements (Section 3) was conducted based on the netted proportion who gave a top 3 score (i.e. a rating of 8, 9 or 10) or who gave a bottom 3 score (i.e. at rating of 1, 2 or 3) as the audiences for this research are wide ranging and proportions are very clear and easy for non-researchers to understand. Analysis was also conducted on the mean scores for the statements and in most cases significant differences were seen in both the top 3/bottom 3 scores and the means. Unless otherwise specified, any measures with pre- and post-participation top 3/bottom 3 score significant differences are also significantly different when comparing the pre- and post-participation mean scores.

Difference in Difference Analysis

Analysis was conducted to estimate the effect of participation in a Youth United group by comparing the pre- and post-participation differences in mean scores to the control group at the total base level. This analysis involved calculating the difference in the pre- and post- mean scores for the control group and adding this figure to the pre-participation mean score of the Youth United Project group. Significance testing using t-tests was conducted to establish if the difference between the

new pre-participation and post-participation Youth United Project group mean scores is significant at the 95% confidence level. Unless otherwise specified, any measures with pre- and post-participation significant differences are also significantly different when comparing the new pre- and post-participation mean scores using this difference in difference analysis.