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Evaluation of Young Manchester Youth and Play Fund

2022

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Preferred citation

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Glossary of terms

- **Allied organisation**
Organisations that do not receive funding from Young Manchester, but which collaborate on, or support, aspects of its youth and play provision.
- **Case study projects**
Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects that hosted youth participatory action workshops as part of this evaluation.
- **Partner organisations**
Organisations that received funding from Young Manchester via the Youth and Play fund to deliver provision across the City of Manchester. Also referred to in this report as 'Partners.'
- **Projects**
The point of access for children and young people attending Young Manchester-funded youth and play provision. Partner organisations may run multiple projects, funded by Young Manchester and/or other sources.
- **Social action**
Youth social action refers to activities undertaken by children and young people to make a positive difference to others, to their communities, or to the environment.
- **Young Manchester**
Young Manchester is an independent children and young people's charity, funding the delivery of youth and play provision across the City of Manchester.
- **Youth and Play Fund**
The Youth and Play fund (2018-2020 and 2020-2022) supports direct youth and play services or activities for children and young people across Manchester, along with networking and partnership support activities for city-wide delivery.
- **Youth participatory action research (YPAR)**
An approach to research that centres young people's knowledge and experience, involving them as collaborators in designing, implementing, analysing and identifying actions emerging from research.
- **Youth Social Action Researchers (YSARs)**
A team of young people recruited from Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects, who were trained as researchers and co-developed and delivered the YPAR workshops for this evaluation.

Executive summary

The grants made by the Young Manchester Youth and Play Fund (April 2018 – March 2020 and April 2020 – March 2022) have been highly effective in supporting the delivery of youth and play provision across Manchester that is beneficial, enjoyable, and socially impactful for children and young people.

Particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Young Manchester has served as a crucial source of funding and support for youth and play provision and the children and young people who access it. Young Manchester's commitment to social action principles has been highly successful in promoting social action across all funded projects and amongst the children and young people who attend them. All Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects have provided dedicated opportunities for children and young people to engage in social action activities with a range of personal and social benefits. Young Manchester's innovative approach to working with funded organisations as 'Partners' has supported the development of a strong network of youth and play provision and allied organisations across Manchester. This network has been highly valuable in strengthening delivery, supporting knowledge-sharing, and enhancing the outcomes of youth and play provision. The youth-engaged approach taken for this evaluation reflects Young Manchester's commitment to integrating youth social action and youth leadership in all aspects of the organisation's work. The Youth Social Action Researcher (YSAR) scheme in particular, serves as a model for youth participation and leadership in Young Manchester and the organisations it serves.

Youth experience

- The reach of Young Manchester grants is extensive, with 15 per cent of the City's population of five to 14-year-olds and just over 30 per cent of the City's population of 13-to-19-year-olds recorded as attending Young Manchester-funded youth and play provision.
- Children and young people report overwhelmingly positive experiences of youth and play provision, and projects have clearly acted as critical sites for children and young people to develop their personal capacities and social connections.
- The top five reported reasons that children and young people attend projects are to: have fun, gain confidence, feel safe and supported, hang out with friends, and learn new skills and information. Additional identified benefits include building social connections, gaining confidence, accessing opportunities, and improving health and wellbeing.
- The benefits of attending youth and play provision are 'buildable' for children and young people over a period of consistent or long-term engagement.
- Young Manchester's youth and play provision appeared to serve as a crucial network of support and social interaction for children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Youth social action

- Youth social action is embedded, in varying forms, in youth and play provision across Manchester. All Young Manchester-funded projects engage in social action, and social action principles have been effectively promoted amongst children and young people who attend.
- Children and young people identified a range of personal benefits of participating in social action including: capacity building, improved wellbeing, feeling good about helping others, and meeting new people.
- The most significant community-focused benefits of social action identified by children and young people were: making a positive difference, increasing awareness and empowerment, community building and inclusion, and providing inspiration as role models.
- Projects are actively nurturing the potential of children and young people to take leadership roles and have a voice in their projects.

Networks and partner collaboration

- Partner organisations and project workers are effectively supported by Young Manchester to create and access knowledge sharing and collaboration networks across youth and play projects and allied organisations.
- Young Manchester Partner Days, which bring together workers from funded organisations, are experienced as a valuable resource for inter-organisational network building.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital networks and facilities were viewed as especially valuable by partners for opening up new means of communication and exchange.

Evaluation approach

- The Youth Social Action Researchers (YSARs) scheme reflects and extends Young Manchester's commitment to social action, and the belief that children and young people should have a say in the things that matter to them and affect them.
- Evaluation of YSAR development through the scheme highlighted significant shifts in confidence, knowledge, and skills development among youth researchers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Young Manchester

Young Manchester is an independent children and young people's charity, funding the delivery of child and youth activities across the City of Manchester.

Manchester is a young, vibrant, globally-connected city. Over 40% of the population is under 35. Manchester is booming and yet one in three children live in poverty and austerity measures have impacted heavily on youth and play provision across the city. This has been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young Manchester's goal is to make Manchester a world-class city for children and young people, where they are safe, happy, and healthy and can realise their full potential and prosper from the city's economic growth.

Young Manchester's objective is to support young people aged 5 to 19 (or up to 25 for young people with additional needs) living in Manchester by commissioning programmes of physical, educational, recreational, and other activities. By doing this, Young Manchester aims to help young people:

- to advance in life by helping to develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as independent, mature and responsible individuals;
- to advance their education;
- to relieve youth unemployment;
- to advance their emotional and physical health and wellbeing; and
- to support their personal and social development, with the view to improving conditions of their lives.

1.2 The Young Manchester Youth and Play fund

The Young Manchester Youth and Play fund has received two grants to date. The first was a total grant of £4.5 million for the period April 2018 to March 2020, which was used to support 21 lead partners from voluntary and community sectors in Manchester. The second was a total grant of £3.1 million for the period April 2020 to March 2022, which was used to support 22 lead partners. Funded activities have included: open access youth and play work inclusive of sports, arts, outreach services and detached youth work activities. The projects provide activities and services to a wide range of young people, including those with disabilities, LGBT young people, and young people from diverse ethnic and migrant backgrounds.

1.3 Youth social action (#iwillfund)

The #iwill Fund is an England-wide joint investment that brings together £40 million in funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and The National Lottery Community Fund. The #iwillfund has Youth Social Action at its core. The six principles of Youth Social Action are: youth-led, challenging, embedded, progressive, reflective, and socially impactful.

An exploration of the ways in which children and young people are involved in social action through Young Manchester-funded projects, and the extent to which it is embedded in youth and play provision across the city, is a key focus of this evaluation.

2. Youth and Play fund evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to establish the effectiveness of the grants made by the Young Manchester Youth and Play Fund (April 2018 – March 2020). Following the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns, which disrupted the second wave of data collection in early 2020, this period was extended to Summer 2021, capturing the second round of Youth and Play funding (April 2020 – March 2022).

2.1 The evaluation partner: The Manchester Centre for Youth Studies (MCYS)

MCYS is a world-leading, award-winning research centre, recognised for its ethos of promoting innovative youth-informed and youth-led research methodologies with groups of young people, including for example, justice-involved, refugee background, and looked after children, as well as those with special educational needs, and those excluded from mainstream education. Since its inception in 2014, MCYS has remained committed to an agenda of social justice.

MCYS is unique in that it brings together academics and practitioners from a range of disciplines, including Sociology, History, Criminology, Linguistics, Politics, and English. Using participatory youth-led research methods – such as sport-based activities and creative and digital arts – MCYS works across a range of contemporary and historical issues to bring about real change for young people.

2.2 Research questions

The evaluation explores four key aspects of youth and play provision: delivery, quality, impact, and legacy, with a particular focus on social action.

The four broad research questions around which the report is structured are:

1. Who participates in Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects?
2. What impact are funded youth and play projects having on the lives of children and young people?
3. How is youth social action integrated into funded projects?
4. Has the fund created networks and collaborative working among partners and allied organisations?

The report additionally addresses the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and play provision and the children and young people it serves. This is addressed throughout the following analysis and is taken into account in the key findings.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The evaluation takes an innovative mixed-method, youth-engaged approach to investigate the four key research questions. The approach integrates a range of investigative and analytical methods to enable youth perspectives to be heard and addressed by Young Manchester and funded organisations, to build leadership and research capacity among young people accessing funded projects, and to facilitate the development of tools for the rigorous evaluation of youth experiences and outcomes of participation in youth and play projects. A key aim of the approach was to ensure that the evaluation itself served as an opportunity for youth social action amongst young people involved in Young Manchester-funded projects. With a view to this, a team of Youth Social Action Researchers (YSARs) were trained in research skills and methods and given responsibility for the design and delivery of key aspects of the evaluation process, including participatory workshops (see section 3.4).

3.2 Analysis of Play fund and Youth fund data reports

The MCYS research team were provided with quarterly data reports created by Manchester City Council (MCC) and based on the Office for National Statistics, Manchester City Council Intelligence Hub, and Manchester City Council Play Provision Data Returns. Analysis of these reports was undertaken to provide Young Manchester with an overview of demographic data such as the gender, ethnicity, and age of children and young people attending Young Manchester funded projects. (See section 4).

3.3 Digital surveys

Working with Jump Projects and Reason Digital, a digital survey was developed. The survey consisted of three sections of questions, including: questions closely aligned to the six #iwill youth social action principles (i.e. youth-led, challenging, embedded, progressive, reflective, and socially impactful); questions from existing robust and respected UK datasets, to assess key outcomes in working with young people; and a number of basic demographic questions.

A digital platform was developed by Reason Digital, which enabled young people to complete the survey on any digital device, including for example, a mobile phone or tablet. Each project was assigned a unique URL. This URL was sent to each project by the Young Manchester team and each respective project was responsible for promoting completion of the survey to young people. A two-week completion 'window' was given for each survey phase. Once the surveys were completed, the MCYS research team undertook an analysis of responses using IBM-SPSS (a quantitative data analysis software package).

This report contains findings from two waves of survey research completed in May 2019 and March 2021 respectively. The latter phase of survey research was slightly delayed, to enable the inclusion of a number of questions that focused explicitly on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and play provision.

In terms of respondents, between the 7th May 2019 and the 19th March 2021, 1,136 young people completed the survey. When asked to describe their gender, over half (54 per cent, n=591) of those who answered the question (n=1,104) identified as a boy/man, 43 per cent (n=475) as a girl/women, 3 per cent (n=29) as non-binary, while nine young people preferred not to say. In relation to ethnicity, just under half (n=534) of those who answered the question (n=1,110) classed themselves as 'white', 19 per cent (n=211) as 'black', 18 per cent (n=204) as 'Asian', and just under a tenth (9 per cent, n=101) as 'mixed heritage'.

In terms of which organisations the 1,136 respondents were attending, the following 10 organisations contributed over half (55 per cent, n=628) of survey respondents:

- Power 2 Teens and Toddlers Programme (13 per cent, n=146);
- Whalley Range Youth Opportunities Association (6 per cent, n=73);
- 4CT (6 per cent, n=69);
- The Proud Trust (5 per cent, n=59);
- YPAC (5 per cent, n=56);
- Wythenshawe Forum Trust (5 per cent, n=53);
- Wai Yin Society (4 per cent, n=47);
- Anson Cabin (4 per cent, n=45);
- City in the Community (4 per cent, n=43); and,
- Manchester Young Lives (3 Per cent, n=37).

3.4 The Youth Social Action Research scheme

Following a commitment to youth-centred practice and upholding children and young people's right to have a say in things that matter to them and affect them, the evaluation actively involved young people in its design and delivery as Youth Social Action Researchers (YSARs). This approach was informed by a commitment to youth work, participatory research and the #iwill social action principles

The MCYS research team and Young Manchester promoted the opportunity to become involved in the YSAR scheme across the ten funded partners, and their delivery partners, who were selected to participate in the first round of youth participatory action research (YPAR) case study workshops (see section 3.5). Three recruitment sessions were held during February and March 2019. Eighteen young people attended recruitment sessions, with ten young people from five Young Manchester partners (4CT, HOME, M13, Nacro, The Proud Trust) going on to participate in the scheme. YSARs were aged between thirteen and twenty-three years and came from different parts of Manchester. Eight identified as female, and two as male. Three came from migrant backgrounds.

YSARs worked with the MCYS team to co-develop the participatory tools and research questions used in YPAR workshops and to facilitate the workshop sessions in case study projects. They received training in research methods and skills, as well as mentoring in research and leadership. YSARS had the opportunity to earn two AQA qualifications: "Skills for a young assessor: organisation and planning" and "Introduction to youth leadership" as part of their participation in the scheme. They additionally presented their perspectives on the importance of youth-centred and youth-led evaluation at the 2019 Collaboration, Creativity and Complexities conference based at Manchester Metropolitan University.



Figure 1: YSARS with their AQA certificates

Evaluation of YSAR development through the scheme highlighted significant shifts in confidence, knowledge, and skills developmentⁱ. The particular benefits identified by YSARs of participating in the scheme included:

Doing something important to me, trying to improve youth groups by finding out why people go, gaining contacts. Mentally preparing for my future so I can do even bigger things, and gaining confidence.

We get to travel to different groups. We can be open about everything. We get vouchers and travel reimbursed. [...] Young people own the sessions and we're in charge of it.

Getting to know about other youth projects, teamwork, and having a chance to build knowledge and skills within being a leader and researcher.

I've learnt about different types of research and different ways that you can ask the same question.

ⁱ In February 2020, a second cohort of YSARS were recruited to deliver the next round of YPAR workshops. Thirteen young people were recruited through two partner organisations: Families Against Violence and Greater Manchester Youth Network. They were aged between 13 and 18 years, and included 11 female and two male participants, many of whom were from South Asian backgrounds. YSARs undertook research training, delivered by the first cohort YSARs with support from the research team, and were awarded an AQA qualification in youth leadership. Unfortunately, this team of YSARs were unable to deliver workshops due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns.



Figure 2: Personal development charted by YSARS throughout their engagement in research

3.5 Youth participatory action research workshops

Children and young people from 17 projects participated in youth participatory action research (YPAR) workshops. Projects were selected in dialogue with Young Manchester, with a focus on capturing provision across diverse demographic groups, activity types, and geographic locations. In Year Two, the capacity of projects to host research in the context of the pandemic was also considered, so as not to place an additional burden on organisations already facing considerable challenges.

The 17 YPAR workshops were 60-90 minutes in duration and were implemented within project sessions. They consisted of five participatory activities co-designed by the team of Youth Social Action Researchers (YSARs), addressing the following questions:

- Why do children and young people attend projects?
- What do children and young people perceive as the key benefits of attending projects?
- How do children and young people understand social action?
- How do projects engage in social action and with what perceived benefits?
- What role do children and young people play in their projects?

Through these activities, YPAR workshops addressed research questions Two and Three of the evaluation: What impact are funded youth and play projects having on the lives of children and young people? How is youth social action integrated into funded projects? (See Appendix 1 for further details on research tools).

In Year One of the project, workshops were facilitated by YSARs. In Year Two, it was determined that, due to COVID-19, it was not safe to bring YSARs into youth and play provision, so seven workshops were conducted by MCYS team members. Working within existing provision, four Year Two workshops were delivered in person (socially distanced), and three were delivered online. Online sessions addressed the research questions through adapted activities and group discussion. All of the materials generated from the workshops were analysed using deductive and inductive methods.

3.6 Case studies and participants

Table 1: Case study sites and participant profiles

Partner Organisation ⁱⁱ	Project	No. of participants	Age range (years)
Year 1			
4CT (Active Communities)	Senior Mixed Dance	20	12-18
42nd Street	Peer Ambassadors	8	21-25
Barlow Moor Community Association	Junior Generation	10	10-13
Groundworks	West Gorton Youth Centre	6	9-13
HOME	CYA@HOME	7	15-18
M13	Coverdale Lads	6	14-16
Manchester Young Lives	Junior Play Workers	8	13-20
Nacro	Senior Adventurers	6	12-16
The Proud Trust	LGYM	14	17-23
Wythenshawe Housing Trust	Abilities group	9	17-27
Year 2			
42nd Street*	Peer Ambassadors	5	Not known+
4CT	Senior youth provision, Beswick	8	10-18
Communities on Solid Ground	Youth Club	8	5-13
The Proud Trust*	Mix of funded projects	6	Not known+
Wai Yin*	Define Yourself	6	Not known+
Wythenshawe Community Housing Group	Youth Forum	6	13-17
YPAC	North detached and Friday Group	8	16-18

* Conducted online

+ As a result of being conducted online, it was not possible to collect individual demographic data in these sessions.

As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 141 children and young people were involved in the YPAR workshops. The length of time that YPAR participants had attended their projects ranged from less than 1 month to 10 years, with the average being 2 years, 2 monthsⁱⁱⁱ. There were more female than male participants (51 per cent compared to 39 per cent), and over half of participants classed themselves as 'White' (57 per cent). When compared to all of those who have attended Young-Manchester-funded youth and play projects between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2020, the YPAR participants were broadly representative in terms of gender. The participants were, however, less representative in terms of ethnicity (See section 4 for more details). The youngest YPAR participant was five years old, while the oldest participant was 28 years old. The average age of the participants was fifteen.

3.7 Partner consultation

In Year One, a participatory workshop was conducted with project workers at a Young Manchester Partner Day. Representatives from 10 partner organisations attended the workshop. Activities and discussions were facilitated by MCYS researchers and Youth Social Action Researchers. They focused on:

- exploring the role of social action in projects,
- mapping project networks and collaborative working and,
- identifying children and young people's pathways through and beyond projects.

In Year Two, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from 10 partner organisations, identified in dialogue with Young Manchester. These interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes and addressed the four evaluation research questions, with a particular focus on the impact of the pandemic on young people and projects.

ii In Year 2, the pandemic context limited the number of projects able to support YPAR workshops. This led to several partners participating in both years. However, only one project was included twice (Peer Ambassadors), with only one member participating in both sessions. Two projects that were approached declined due to pandemic pressures on provision.

iii As it was not possible to collect individual demographic data in online sessions, this data excludes the 17 Year Two participants from Wai Yin, The Proud Trust, and 42nd Street.

4. Who participates in Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects?

This section presents a demographic overview of children and young people attending Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects. A demographic overview of participants was obtained from the Youth Fund and Play Fund data reports for the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2020. These reports were produced independently for Young Manchester by Martin Bell (15th September 2020).

It is important to bear in mind that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a full data return was not received from all commissioned organisations/ partnerships for the final quarter (Q4) of 2019/20. For the categories of gender, ethnicity, and age, it was felt that the data provided was not significantly different to the data that would have been provided had the COVID-19 pandemic not occurred, and as such, the data fell within the parameters of acceptance. For the categories of (dis)ability, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities, and faith and belief, however, data supplied was not plentiful enough to allow for meaningful analysis^{iv}.

4.1 Attendance figures

During the 24-month period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2020, 9,920 young people aged five to 14 were recorded as attending Young Manchester-funded play provision. This represents 15.5 per cent of the City's population of five to 14-year-olds. When it comes to youth provision, for the same period, a total of 15,759 young people aged 13 to 19 were recorded as attending Young Manchester-funded youth provision. This represents 30.6 per cent of the City's population of 13- to 19-year-olds.

4.2 Gender

In terms of gender, with the exception of The Proud Trust, most play and youth providers recorded gender data via traditional Male or Female categories, rather than the full range of categories available (gender queer/non-binary/not identifying with assigned gender.) As can be seen in Table 2, based on data recorded, more males than females engaged in youth and play provision. Bearing in mind that the 13 to 19-year-old population of Manchester is around 50:50 male to female, this would appear to indicate that the Young Manchester-funded provision more readily attracts male participation. This trend has been maintained since electronic recording was introduced in 2002.

^{iv} In 2021, the percentage of unknown data for these categories were: Play Fund - (dis)ability (66%), sexual orientation (99%), caring responsibilities (100%), faith and belief (93%); Youth Fund - (dis)ability (82%), sexual orientation (90%), caring responsibilities (98%), faith and belief (92%).

Table 2: Gender

	Play provision	Youth provision
Male	48.9%	53.0%
Female	42.6%	31.7%
Gender Queer/Non-Binary	0	2.2%
Not identifying with assigned gender	0	1.0%
Prefer not to say/Unknown	8.5%	12.1%

4.3 Ethnicity

Moving on to look at ethnicity, Table 3 shows that for the play provision, over two fifths (44 per cent) of children are classed as 'White'. Play provision also engages with a higher proportion, when compared to levels in the City, of young people classed as 'Black' (15 per cent). This disparity could be related to the geographical location of the Young Manchester-funded play provision. The geographical location of provision has a significant impact on those attending relative to local communities and their ethnic breakdown. For example, provision in Wythenshawe and North Manchester show high attendance by those in 'White' categories, whilst those in and around Moss Side show high attendance by those in 'Black' categories.

Table 3: Ethnicity (compared to City populations)

	Play provision	Youth provision
White	44.4% (69.9%)	25.7% (65.7%)
Black	15.1% (4.8%)	14.6% (4.8%)
Asian	8.3% (11.2%)	8.0% (11.2%)
Mixed	-	8.9% (12.3%)
Other	13.3% (14.1%)	2.2% (3.1%)
Unknown	18.9% (N/A)	37.5% (N/A)

When it comes to youth provision, around a quarter (26 per cent) of the young people engaged in youth provision are classed as 'White'. As with play provision, youth provision engages with a higher proportion, when compared to levels in the City, of young people classed as 'Black' (15 per cent). Again, this is most likely a result of where the Young Manchester-funded youth provision is located. Asian background young people appear to be under-represented. However, when it comes to analysing the ethnicity data for the youth provision, the high level of those whose ethnicity is recorded as 'unknown' (37.5 per cent) is concerning.

4.4 Age

As can be seen in Figure 3, when it comes to the Young Manchester-funded play provision, while the majority of children were between eight and 12 years of age, those aged 10 years were the highest proportion of attendees.

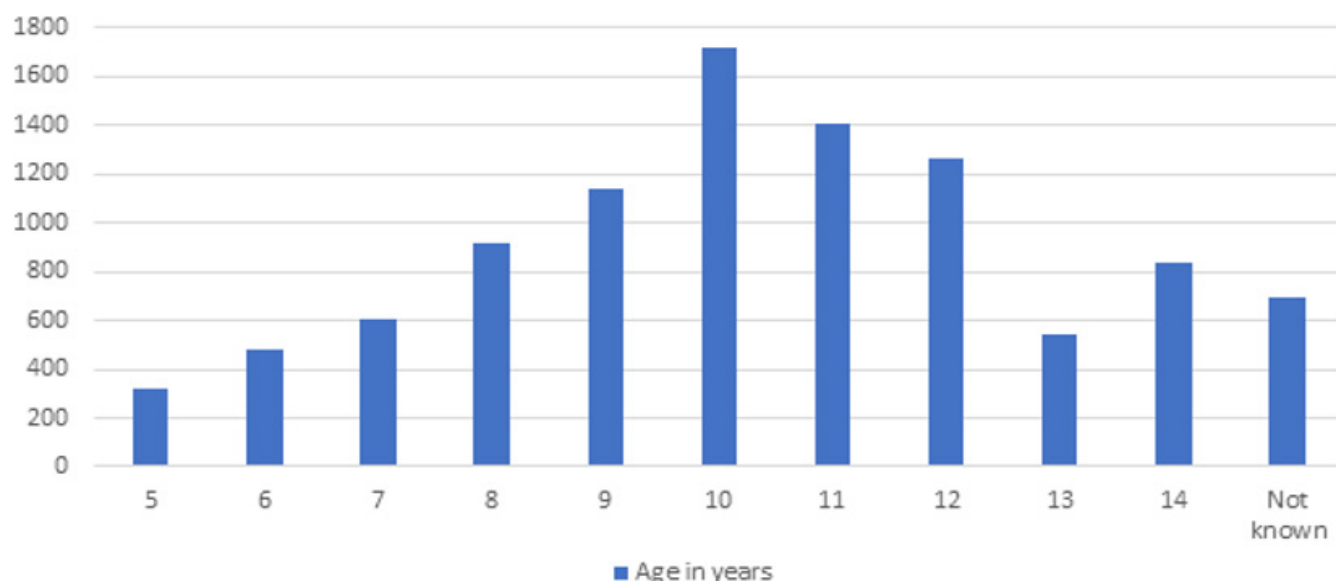


Figure 3: Play provision – age

In youth provision, while the majority of young people were between 13 and 15 years of age, those aged 13 years were the highest proportion of attendees (see Figure 4 overleaf). Those who were recorded as 'Unknown/Not Specified' and 'Prefer not to say' was high enough to preclude any more detailed analysis. As with gender and ethnicity, there would not appear to be a particular reason for not being able to obtain this information. Date of birth, or age, should be (along with gender and ethnicity) one of the main pieces of information acquired during registration.

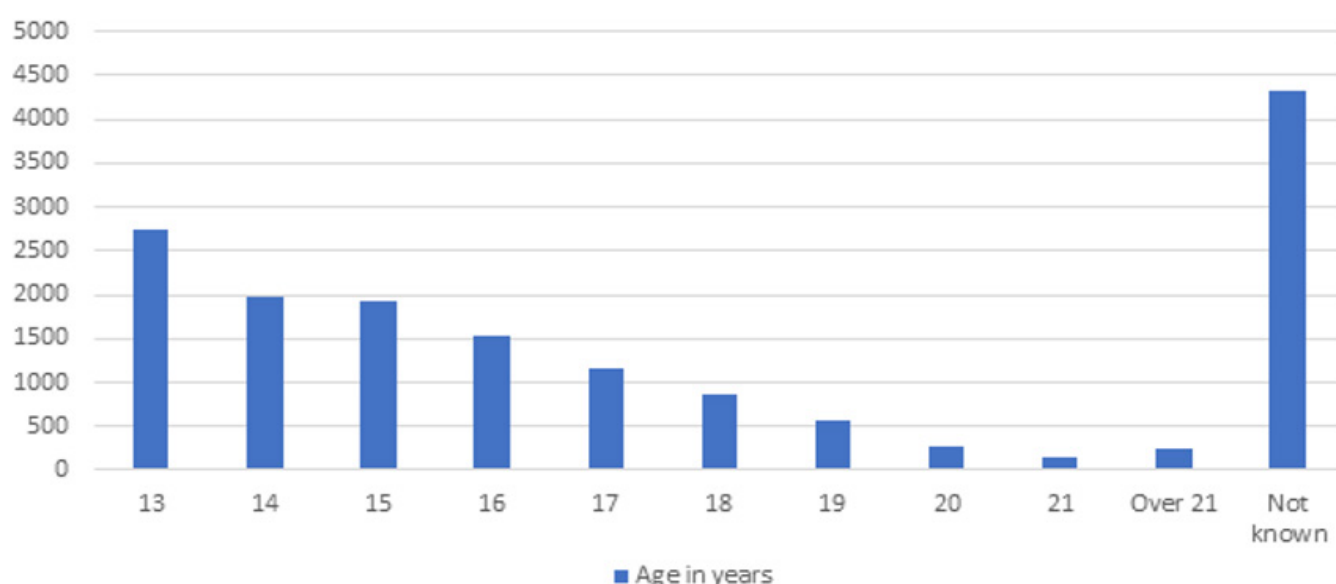


Figure 4: Youth provision – age

5. What impact are funded youth and play projects having on the lives of children and young people?

This section presents the analysis of data drawn from YPAR workshops conducted in 2019 and 2021. It explores children and young people's reasons for attending projects, their perceptions of the key benefits of attendance, and their suggestions for improvement.

5.1 Why do children and young people attend projects?

In all of the YPAR workshops, children and young people were clear about the benefits of attending Young Manchester-funded youth and play provision. They widely reported feeling their projects played an enriching role within their lives and were positive about their individual experiences of provision. Combining responses from 2019 and 2021 YPAR workshops, the top 5 reasons children and young people gave for attending their projects were:

1. Have fun
2. Gain confidence
3. Feel safe and supported
4. Hang out with friends
5. Learn new skills and information

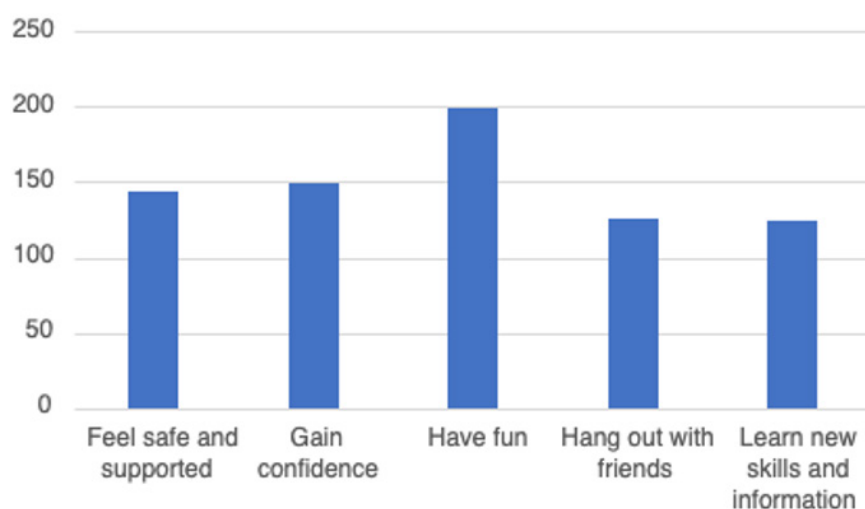


Figure 5: Top 5 ranked reasons for attendance 2019 and 2021 combined

The top reason children and young people gave for attending their projects across both research cohorts was 'to have fun,' with personal, developmental, and social opportunities, such as 'gain confidence,' 'feel safe and supported,' 'hang out with friends,' and 'learn new skills and information' additionally prioritised. Frequently, children and young people discussed their reasons for attending projects as interconnected:

You can have fun whilst doing activities, so it could improve your confidence, and support other young people, so you can help them become more confident and they can hang out with friends.

(Nacro participant, 2019)

Top five, this isn't any particular order, but trying new things, safe and supported, have fun, getting confidence and to get out of the house. Further explanation is caring a lot for family, it's nice to have somewhere I'm not having to be a carer and have a space of my own [...].

(The Proud Trust participant, 2021)

The overall top 5 reasons for attendance were ranked highly by children and young people in both research cohorts. However, when directly comparing responses from 2019 and 2021 YPAR workshops, there were some notable differences:

Top 5 reasons for attendance 2019	Top 5 reasons for attendance 2021
1. Have fun	1. Have fun
2. Gain confidence	2. Get advice or help
3. Feel safe and supported	3. Improve skills and knowledge
4. Improve wellbeing	4. Hang out with friends
5. Support other young people	5. Get out of the house

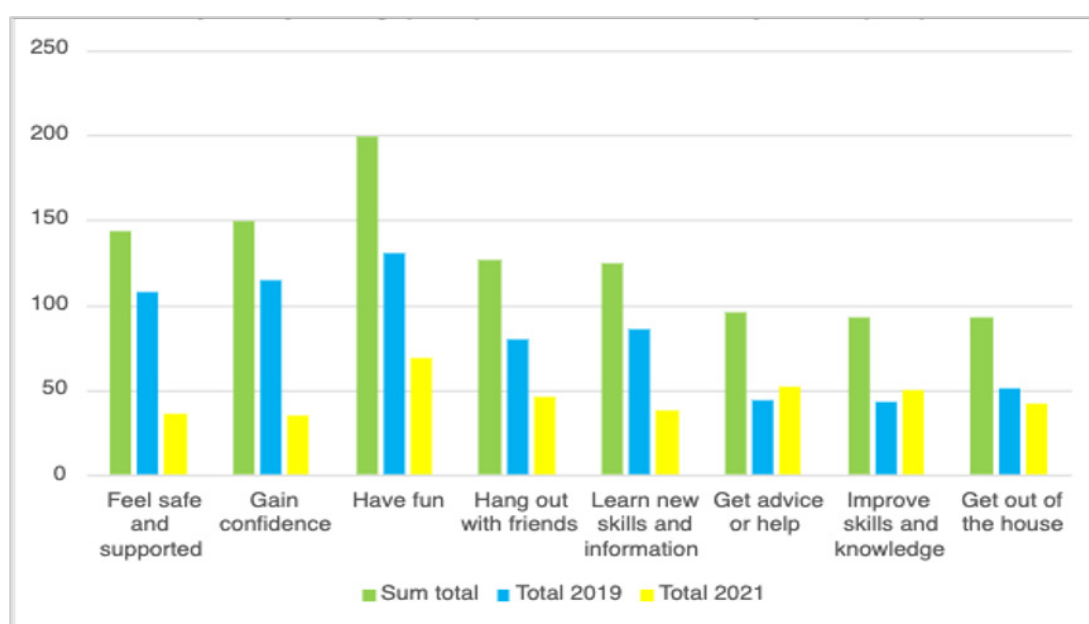


Figure 6: Top 5 ranked reasons for attendance 2019 and 2021 compared

Aside from the top ranked reason 'have fun,' in 2019 children and young people were slightly more likely to prioritise personal development and support in ranking their reasons for project attendance. Their top 5 reasons included 'gain confidence,' 'feel safe and supported,' 'improve wellbeing,' and the social action-aligned goal of 'support other young people.' These reasons provide insights into the personal benefits of participation in youth projects. They also suggest that social action in the form of peer-to-peer support is practiced within projects as part of regular activities.

We put [improve wellbeing] first because we feel like it's important, because when we all come here, whatever problems we might have going on outside or if we're down on a certain day [...] it's an escape where we can feel happier.

(4CT participant, 2019)

"I want to support other young people like myself. [...] I think, to support other young people in similar situations to us, either now or in the past, and for parents and for professionals involved with them as well. Related to a broad range of mental health issues, which also falls under working on an important issue."

(42nd Street participant, 2019)

In 2021, children and young people still prioritised personal development and support, listing 'get advice and help' and 'improve skills and knowledge' amongst their top 5 reasons for attending projects. However, the social opportunities of 'get out of the house' and 'hang out with friends' both entered the top 5.

One explanation for these changes is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. 2021 YPAR workshops were held in the midst of the ongoing pandemic, and at the point of being asked to rank their reasons for project attendance, children and young people had already experienced more than a year of 'lockdowns' and restrictions. The wish to reconnect with others appears to be reflected in response choices, and was often directly described by children and young people in YPAR workshops:

[Going to my project] is also to get out of the house, because we'd gone into quarantine a week after I'd started this group, so it gave me something to do in quarantine. At the time, I was also looking for something to fill time and I really enjoyed it.

(42nd St participant, 2021)

We come here to have fun because usually at home we get bored, and especially with Covid, we've not really got to meet our friends so coming here, at least we can meet our friends.

(Communities on Solid Ground participant, 2021)

This highlights the importance of Young Manchester youth and play provision as a positively experienced support network for children and young people.



Figure 7. Participants engage in ranking reasons for attendance in 2019 YPAR workshops

5.2 What do children and young people perceive to be the key benefits of attending projects?

Individual ‘Journey Maps’ completed during workshops provide further insights into the ‘distance travelled’ by YPAR participants throughout their involvement with their youth and play projects. Children and young people used these maps to highlight the most significant benefits of attendance, as well as to contextualise these benefits in relation to their everyday lives and personal development. ‘Skills and knowledge,’ ‘Social connections,’ ‘Health and wellbeing,’ and ‘Future plans’ were provided on the Maps as prompts to support children and young people’s reflections, but workshop participants were additionally welcome to identify benefits outside of these categories.

Across 2019 and 2021 YPAR workshops, the most frequently mentioned benefit of attending Young Manchester-funded youth and play provision related to the acquisition of skills and knowledge (n=101). Skills and knowledge identified by children and young people included practical skills such as kayaking, acting, dance, art, and filmmaking; personal competencies such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and organisation; and health and wellbeing knowledge, such as learning about consent and relationships, fitness skills, how to cook, and how to breast bind safely.

[I] got to go on trips to see theatre—now I really enjoy acting.

(Home participant, 2019)

I have learned how to make traditional food.

(4CT participant, 2021)

Instructions: Draw a map of your journey in your project from when you started until now. Write or draw three key changes that have happened to you/your life because of the project. The words at the top of the page can help you think about the kinds of changes that have taken place.

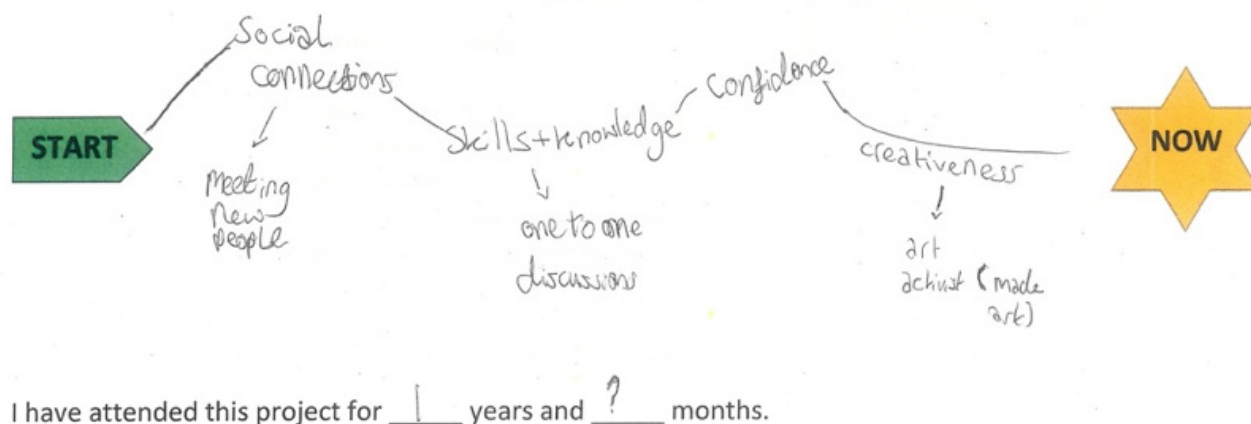


Figure 8. Example of Journey Map (The Proud Trust Participant, 2019)

The other most popular benefits of attendance identified on Journey Maps were 'social connections' (n=84), 'confidence' (n=61), 'opportunities' (n=48), 'health & wellbeing' (n=41), 'fun' (n=25), 'future plans' (n=19), and 'recognition' (n=6). This distribution is represented in Figure 9:

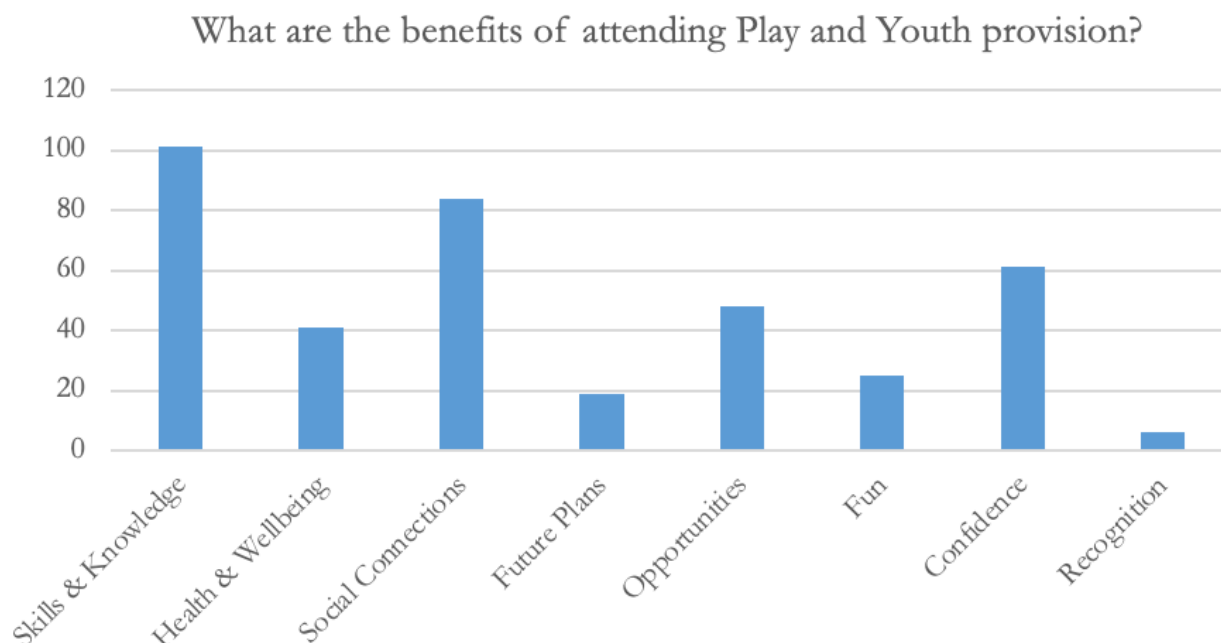


Figure 9. Top ranked reasons for attendance listed on YPAR Journey Maps.

The majority of YPAR workshop participants (62 per cent) identified at least three benefits of involvement in projects, and many were enthusiastic to provide specific examples of how attending their youth and play provision had enhanced their personal lives and/or social experiences:

When I first started, I was quite shy because I was getting to know people, and at first not many of my friends came. I then felt a lot better because I got to know people as well as staff and enjoyed myself. [...]

(Manchester Young Lives participant, 2019)

[I] made new friends from different schools. I'm way more confident and now I'm looking forward to the future.

(4CT participant, 2021)

A key theme that emerged in children and young peoples' reflections on Journey Maps was a sense of the 'buildable' benefits of youth or play provision over a period of consistent or long-term engagement. Indeed, whilst some children and young people in YPAR workshops noted that they were not always able to consistently attend their projects due to external pressures, those who had attended youth or play provision over several years often reported receiving some of the most significant benefits.

In Figure 10, the longest-participating young person to be interviewed in 2019 provides a compelling account of their journey.

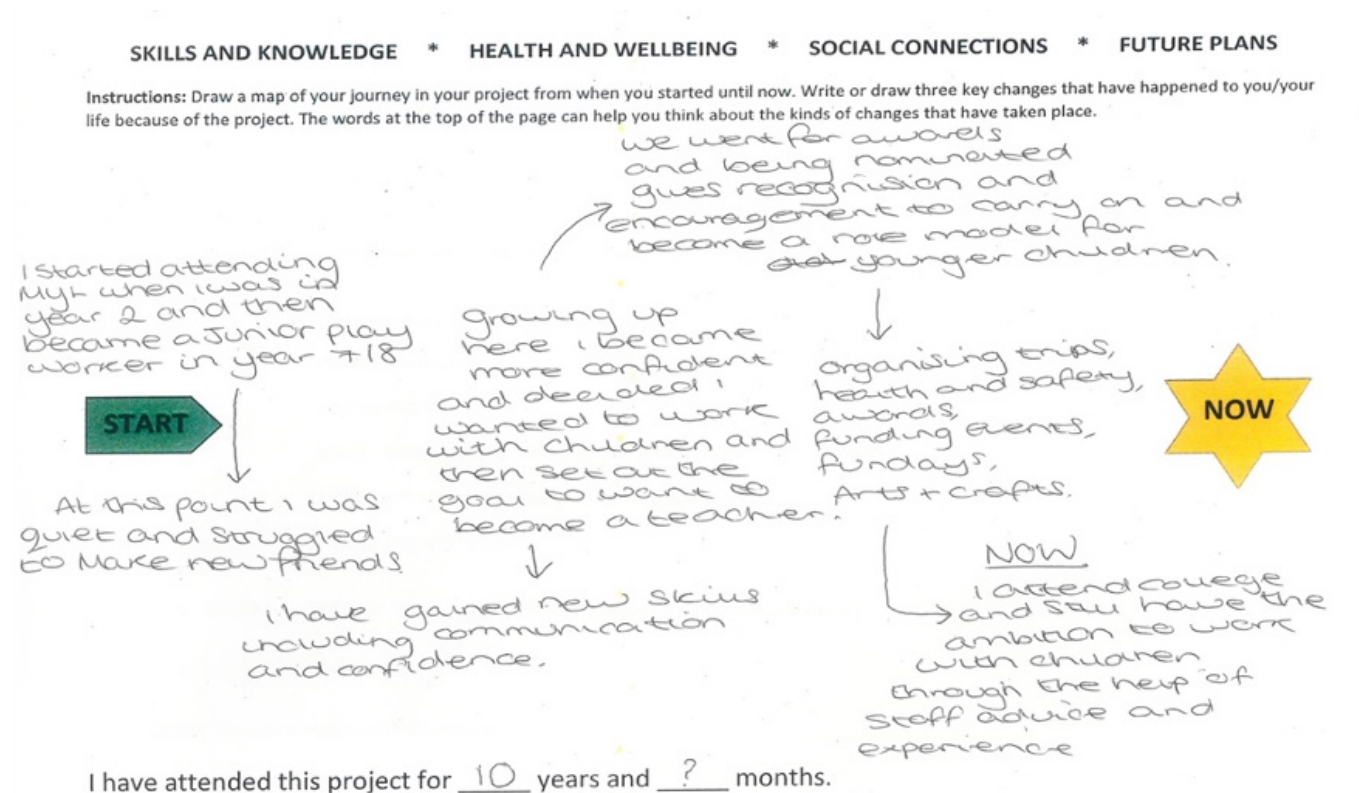


Figure 10. Journey Map (Manchester Young Lives Participant, 2019)

Such examples suggest that consistency of provision can play a crucial role in enhancing the personal, social and developmental opportunities associated with project attendance for children and young people. Certainly, many YPAR workshop participants suggested they were keen to develop the skills and competencies they had gained through their projects, and many also wished to build, or 'scale these up' over a period of future engagement.

In the partner workshop, project workers identified a range of pathways for children and young people to scale up their engagement beyond initial attendance of youth and play groups. These include opportunities within organisations, such as work experience, peer mentoring and young leaders' programmes; support for pathways into education and training, including qualifications and work placements; and connections to other programmes and other organisations including youth councils; and volunteering opportunities. It is clear that, for some children and young people, attending youth and play provision is an important pre-cursor to and facilitator of wider opportunities for both sustained personal development and increased social action.

In 2021 YPAR workshops, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of youth and play provision in mitigating it, was rendered visible. Many children and young people reflected on how projects had supported them through this period on their individual Journey Maps.

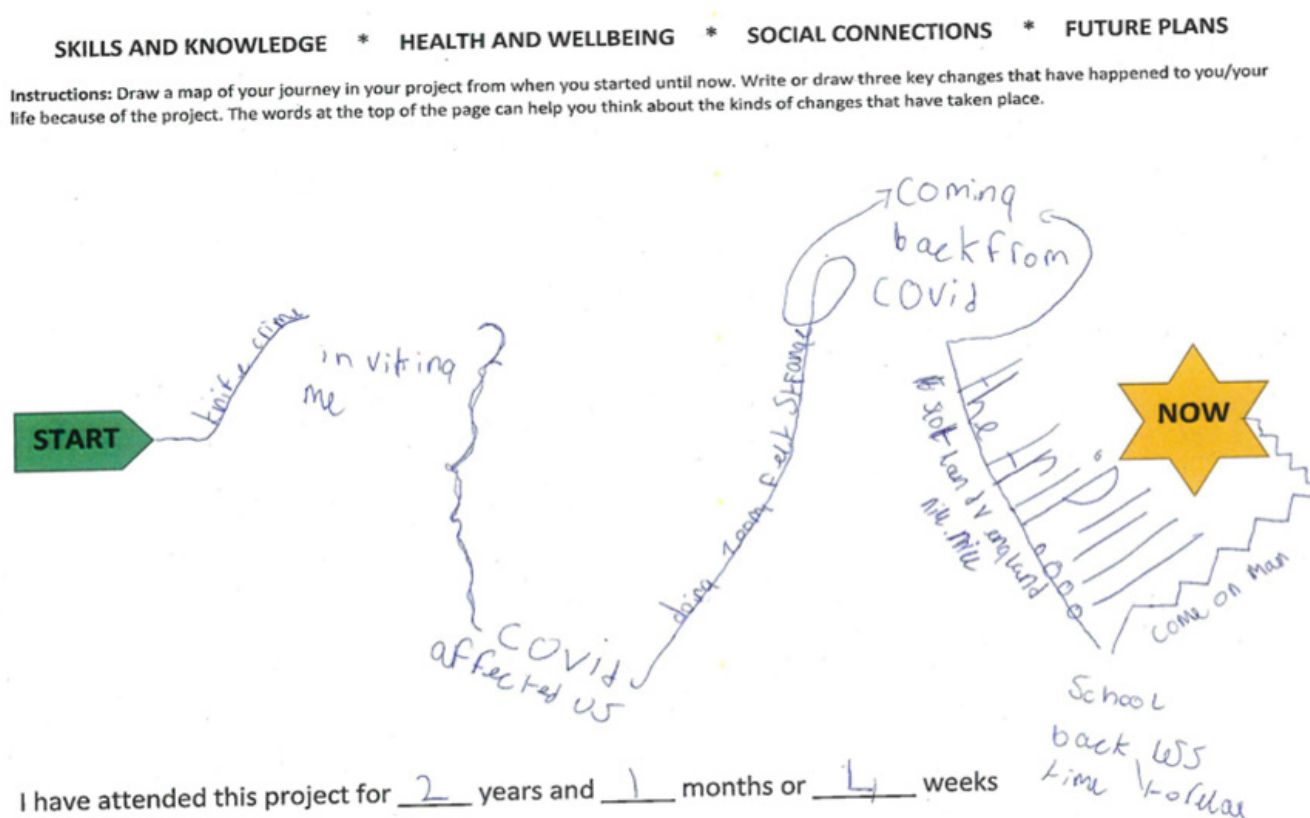


Figure 11. Journey Map (Wythenshawe Community Housing Group Participant, 2021)

Participants' 2021 Journey Maps reflect the efforts – and rewards – of projects continuing to offer some form of provision (often through online sessions) during the period of pandemic restrictions. These efforts at creating and delivering alternative forms of provision were highly valued by workshop participants, who identified the important benefits of this offer (such as social connections, skills building, and increased wellbeing) at a time of increased pressures and/or social isolation.

5.3 What do children and young people think could be done to improve projects?

Overall, workshop participants reported extremely positive experiences of their youth and play projects and offered very few complaints or concerns when asked about improvements that could be made to provision in the future. Indeed, suggestions for improvements raised in YPAR workshops were primarily focused on the extension of existing services and/or resources or on the potential to reach out to and support more children and young people:

[I would like] more activities, and the club happens more than once a week.

(Groundworks participant, 2019)

I think maybe a bigger space to do it in, because there is a lot more people here now, and it would open up more opportunities for more people.

(4CT participant, 2019)

I would say maybe reach out a bit more and maybe go to a few more schools and colleges in order to get people questioning who they are, because I do think that would help a lot.

(The Proud Trust participant, 2019)

The theme of improving connections with young people was also discussed specifically in 2021 workshops in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of YPAR participants highlighted a return to face-to face provision as something they hoped for, and which would improve their experience of youth and play provision:

I mean to be quite honest; I would like to return to in person more often now, I would like to be able to be physically out of the house instead of just online.

(The Proud Trust participant, 2021)

“[I would like] more close-up activities because we can’t really go near anyone.

(Wythenshawe Community Housing Group participant, 2021)

At the same time, the shift in some projects to online provision appears to have opened up new opportunities for remote engagement, especially for those facing barriers to in-person participation:

I just think that the online stuff is a quite helpful tool for people who for one reason can’t come to the in-person sessions and I do think I would still, in some circumstances prefer to come online.

(The Proud Trust participant, 2021)

Several projects thus intend to capitalise on this with hybrid provision going forward, offering both online ‘meet-ups’ and more conventional in-person activities.

The overwhelmingly positive perceptions of youth and play provision reflect the deep appreciation that children and young people feel for their projects, and their strong sense of belonging within them.

6. How is youth social action integrated into funded projects?

This section focuses on how participants in YPAR workshops understand and experience social action. It addresses the kinds of social action undertaken in youth and play projects, what benefits children and young people perceive social action provides for themselves and for others, and how projects embed principles of social action through youth leadership in projects. To reiterate, the six principles of Youth Social Action are: youth-led, challenging, embedded, progressive, reflective, and socially impactful.

6.1 How do children and young people feel about social action?

Across 2019 and 2021 YPAR workshops, children and young people expressed considerable enthusiasm for the social action activities they engaged in as part of Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects. Social action was felt to be an enjoyable dimension of project activities, and children and young people widely expressed understanding of and support for key social action principles.

When asked about their attitudes to social action in the digital survey, over four fifths of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with all of the social action statements. As can be seen in Figure 12, the four statements that over 90 per cent of respondents agreed with were:

- 'The group is fun' (97 per cent, n=1,090);
- 'The group lets me work on things I care about' (95 per cent, n=1,063);
- 'I have a say in the things I want to do in this group' (93 per cent, n=1,048); and
- 'The group helps me to understand how I can help other people' (91 per cent, n=1,027).

These responses suggest that the ethos of social action is widely embedded in youth and play provision. Indeed, according to survey responses, the integration of social action into projects both enhances enjoyment of activities for children and young people and provides the additional benefit of promoting empathy for the needs of others in society.

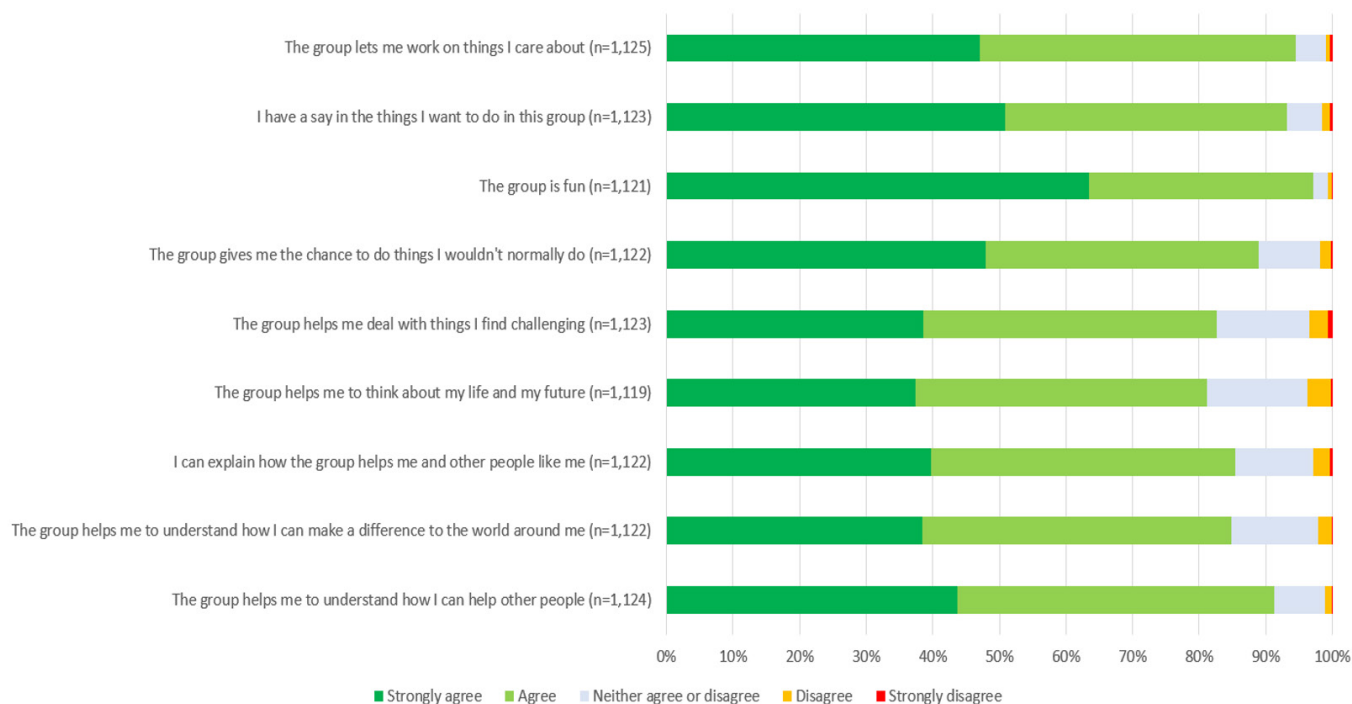


Figure 12: Social Action Measures

6.2 How do projects engage in social action, and with what perceived benefits?

When introduced to #iwill examples of types of social action (fundraising; giving time to a charity or cause; supporting people; tutoring, mentoring or coaching; helping to improve the community; and campaigning or raising awareness) YPAR workshops participants identified a broad range of relevant activities their youth and play projects engaged in.

Key forms of social action identified by children and young people as part of their projects included:

- Volunteering time for local charities and causes (e.g. visiting care homes, volunteering for homelessness projects)
- Holding fundraising events and sponsored activities (e.g. cake sales, sponsored sports, public performances)
- Improving community spaces: (e.g. litter-picking, art activism, community gardening)
- Campaigning/raising awareness around social issues (e.g. climate change, hate crime, mental health)
- Engaging in peer-to-peer support, mentoring and coaching (e.g. young activity leaders, tutoring schemes)

Children and young people were confident in identifying the 'double benefits' of social action across their project activities and indicated that these were important motivations for engaging in social action. The key benefits of engaging in social action were identified in YPAR workshops as follows:

Personal Benefits of Social Action

- Capacity Building (confidence, leadership, communication, teamwork)
- Improved wellbeing
- Feeling good about helping others
- Meeting new people

Community Benefits of Social Action

- Making a positive difference
- Increasing awareness and empowerment
- Community building and inclusion
- Providing inspiration as role models

All projects engaged in some form of social action, though the extent to which it was embedded into regular activities – as well as the nature and reach of social action initiatives – varied both across life stage (youth projects were more likely to regularly engage in social action than play projects) and between different types of provision. Youth projects with an explicit social action focus (such as peer ambassador and youth forum projects) reported the most frequent and extensive engagement with social action activities.

This distinction was heightened during the pandemic, when many projects were unable, at least initially, to deliver social action activities due to both organisational capacity and the increased needs and challenges of the children and young people they serve.

So during the pandemic it definitely became more challenging because our main mode of delivery for social action was doing it sitting down, face to face and doing that structured project work with young people. Also, I think when the pandemic first appeared... I think everybody was focusing on keeping an even keel, maintaining some contact with young people. People weren't sure what the impact was, everyone was panicking about safeguarding and health and wellbeing. I think if I'm to be totally honest, social action went right to the back of everyone's mind. Then as we started to adapt and things started to settle down it was like, oh okay, what does [social action] look like in this context. We then started to do some stuff.

(Project worker, 2021)

At the same time, a number of projects re-focused their energies on social action activities aimed at addressing the pandemic's impact. Two 2021 participants of Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, for instance, describe their efforts to deliver a public hate crime awareness campaign in accordance with social distancing measures:

Participant 1: We'd delivered bags, like obviously within the Corona restriction [...]

Participant 2: So they had like some toys and stuff. They had leaflets about what hate crime is.

Regardless of projects' different approaches to, and capacities for social action, in both 2019 and 2021, children, young people and project workers all demonstrated a strong commitment to social action principles. Indeed, workers in the Partner Workshop highlighted how these principles closely align with the principles of youth work practice. A key way in which projects demonstrated this was through embedding a culture of 'peer-to-peer support, mentoring and coaching' within youth and play provision:

I think we are doing a lot when it comes to supporting each other, because I see a lot of people who came here in a state, and after a while – three to six months – their states have changed and they have made friends, and their friends have helped them a lot.

(The Proud Trust, 2019)

So when we're here we'll support each of them no matter what, whenever we need it, if we need it. It's just a given.

(Wythenshawe Community Housing Group participant, 2021)

Alongside these informal cultures of peer support, some projects operated more formal programmes of peer mentoring and coaching, which encouraged children and young people to take responsibility for helping and assisting others. For example, several projects offer training for children and young people to become senior activity leaders:

We have done dance leadership courses, so some of the younger people who attend can do a course – a Level 1. So, it's the basics of coaching and helping out.

(4CT participant, 2019)

I was asked to be a senior playworker to help children.

(Manchester Young Lives participant, 2019)

These opportunities were widely valued by children and young people, since they combined personal development and skill-building with the benefits of helping others:

You get a qualification. You get a feeling of accomplishment as well and you get better confidence. It also has an impact on others, providing ambitions for younger people that you help, because then they look at you like a role model.

(4CT participant, 2019)

Such accounts exemplify children and young people's understanding and appreciation of social action's double benefits.

6.4 What roles do children and young people play in making decisions about projects?

Beyond explicit social action activities, Young Manchester-funded youth and play projects demonstrate a commitment to a key principle of social action by supporting youth-led, or at least youth-informed, provision. This is intended to enhance children and young people's agency and decision-making skills and to provide a key means of adjusting projects to their needs and priorities.

During YPAR workshops, children and young people reported taking up a wide variety of decision-making roles within their projects. Youth decision-making was widely viewed as a positive aspect of existing provision, and children and young people were often highly enthusiastic about their potential to influence their projects in the present and future.

Case study projects differed in the extent to which participants chose and/or implemented activities, but most projects provided some degree of choice, with decision-making roles usually falling into one or more of the following categories:

- Provision of feedback and opinions to project leaders
- Involvement in occasional or ongoing decisions about session activities
- Participation in project delivery
- Involvement in project design or direction

Children and young people offered a wide range of examples of contributing to or influencing their projects. For some participants—and particularly for those involved in play-focused projects—these tended to revolve around taking up opportunities to provide feedback on project activities:

You give suggestions about the lines and inspire the directors in some way.

(HOME participant, 2019)

We can pick whatever we want... If it helps others and helps us and it's still fun, we all do it.

(M13 participant 2019)

For children and young people engaged in more social-action focused groups, however, decision-making roles could be considerably more expansive. Examples of decision-making activities reported by YPAR workshop participants included: running or co-running project sessions, designing and contributing ideas for new events and activities, participating in interview panels for new members of staff, and providing opinions on the overarching nature of provision:

We have to make decisions on... Like if we're going to funding and stuff, we have to think about which way we want to do it. Like getting the young people involved. So you kind of have that authority [...] The staff give you the opportunity to let the younger ones have a say [...].

(Manchester Young Lives participant, 2019)

Well, I'm meant to be going to the thing on Saturday of the interviews for possible candidates for the new CEO and a lot of in groups and we [...] discuss and suggest future plans for different things that we could be doing. We're all really building the sessions together ourselves [...] I did a reading of an extract from my book in one session. Another person did makeup tutorials as their session, sometimes we help to run it as well.

(The Proud Trust participant, 2021)

Across both 2019 and 2021 research cohorts, children and young people involved in these more expansive forms of decision-making felt that this was a highly valuable aspect of their experience in their projects. YPAR participants identified the key benefits of decision-making as:

- enhancing group inclusion and cohesion,
- developing teamwork and leadership skills, and
- building a sense of personal confidence or empowerment.

Indeed, several children and young people offered specific examples of the ways in which they felt their involvement in decision-making had contributed to their personal development:

I [make decisions] myself as a young leader; we're in charge of some of the activities, like, we'll take the lead and see how we go – get leadership skills from it.

(Nacro participant, 2019)

If we say, "We want this," they will make it happen, if it's possible obviously. Or if we say, "We have a problem with this," or if we give feedback, if it's reasonable they'll make sure they make the changes that are necessary. It's quite empowering I think, because as young people in school, you're literally just told, "You have to do this, you have to do that," you're not really empowered.

(42nd Street participant, 2021)

Significantly, youth decision-making enhanced a sense of youth ownership of projects:

I think one thing that has come up for us a lot recently is that we've really valued being more in the behind-the-scenes or in the boardroom kind of level of this field of work [...] It was really nice to be involved at that level and really interesting to get a peep behind the curtain. When you're just a service user, it really is like the great powerful Oz, throwing down commandments and it really is great to just be behind the curtain.

(42nd Street participant, 2021)

Such experiences suggest that the inclusion of children and young people in decision making is currently an important dimension of Young Manchester-funded youth and play provision and one which, if implemented extensively, can enhance the positive outcomes of attendance at projects for children and young people. Youth-led practice and decision making also enhances the overall ability of children and young people to engage in meaningful forms of social action.

7. Has the fund created networks and collaborative working among partners and allied organisations?

This section discusses the networks and collaborative partnerships that have been actively created and supported by the Young Manchester Youth and Play fund both among partners and beyond. It addresses how partners have experienced the networking opportunities provided by the fund and how these could be sustained. The data is drawn from the 2019 partner workshop with project workers, and a series of worker interviews conducted in 2021.

7.1 How do partner organisations collaborate with each other and allied organisations?

Young Manchester's partners are deeply embedded in collaborative relations with each other and across the wider Manchester landscape. Bespoke 'Collaboration and Network Maps' completed by project workers during the Partner Workshop offer crucial insights into the depth and breadth of the collaborative networks project workers draw upon in the planning and delivery of youth and play provision. Project workers used these maps to identify the key partners and allied organisations they have built connections with, as well as to explore how this had strengthened different aspects of their projects.

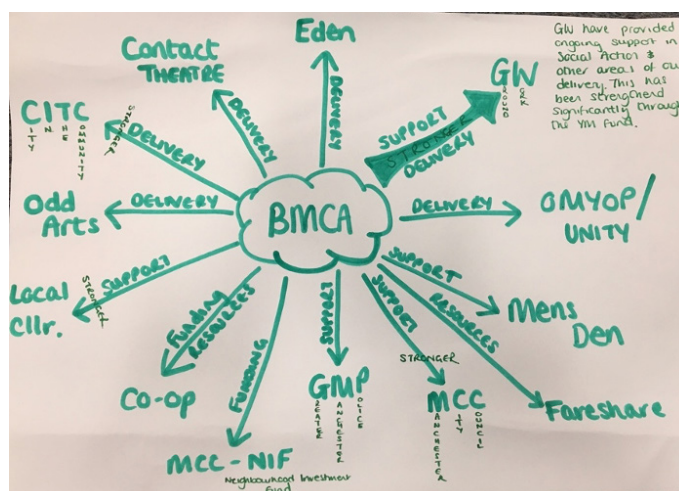


Figure 13: Example of Collaboration and Network Map (BMCA Project Worker, 2019)

As can be seen in Figure 13, projects often identified a significant range of collaborative partners and allied organisations. These included other Young Manchester-funded organisations, local community groups, corporate organisations and governmental institutions. All project workers reported routinely engaging with at least five partner organisations and/or allied organisations in the course of delivering their provision. Some projects reported engaging with as many as 33 partners and allied organisations.

The key aspects of provision these networks helped to strengthen were:

- delivery
- support
- resources
- funding

All partners highlighted that Young Manchester as a funder had been highly supportive of these collaborative networks and had helped to provide dedicated opportunities for their enhancement.

7.2 How does Young Manchester enhance collaborative opportunities and with what perceived benefits?

In interviews conducted in 2021, project workers were positive about their collaborations with other funded organisations. Young Manchester was widely seen as a funding body which supports the creation of cross-project networks, and which assists in strengthening connections between partners and allied organisations:

I mean, the guys at Young Manchester [...] they have been great at kind of pulling the sector together and strengthening it. That's been a real positive. And they're really approachable.

(Project worker, 2021)

Project workers provided a wide range of examples of collaborative dimensions of their youth and play projects which they felt had been supported by Young Manchester, many of which emerged out of the lead partner/delivery partner model. Young Manchester networks were particularly valued as a means of sharing much-needed skills and resources across organisations:

I think with Manchester Youth Zone, our north partnership, we do have a lot of emails exchanged and we do have a lot of resource sharing.

(Project worker, 2021)

Our Young Manchester [funding was] in collaboration with another local organisation, so it helped having the skills, sharing resources across both organisations. We can support them in what they may be lacking, it might be staff, lack of skills from staff and they can support us on what we're lacking, and it allows more to be done where you are.

(Project worker, 2021)

The sharing of resources and expertise was widely felt to assist project workers in strengthening aspects of existing project delivery. For a number of youth and play workers, this also helped to extend existing provision in ways that diversified the nature of activities and offered further opportunities for children and young people:

Well as a voluntary centre, we always depend on partnerships. I mean that is our normal practice anyway. But for Young Manchester [...] it's concentrating on supporting the partners. My experience with them is they try to seek other funding that we can do something that we cannot normally do.

(Project worker, 2021)

Several project workers identified Young Manchester Partner Days as particularly useful for exploring and building connections between organisations. Indeed, whilst some partners noted that they had found established or long-held networks of collaboration in the sector difficult to 'break into', they were positive about the potential of Partner Days to start new conversations about enhancing delivery across their organisations:

I mean, we were part of the Young Manchester partner days which were great because you got to find out who else was doing whatever across the city and you could create new partnerships and friendships and that kind of thing.

(Project worker, 2021)

These moments of exploring collaboration were felt to be especially important in the context of the pandemic. Indeed, many project workers noted that they had only been able to navigate the challenges of lockdowns and restrictions with the help of Young Manchester partnerships. A number of project workers, for instance, noted that whilst face-to-face collaboration had not always been possible during the pandemic, Young Manchester-funded organisations had been able to open up new digital modes of communication with other each other.

Further, there was an acute awareness that collaboration and dialogue among and beyond funded partners was going to be crucial to rebuilding the sector:

I'd say [after COVID] that more organisations have been open to working with us, or even kind of sharing information and ideas. I'd say we work in partnership quite a lot anyway, but the door's been left slightly more open with some organisations. And I think that door's going to stay open. [...] I think for all services when everything resumes that will be a big part of our work. Where are the gaps? What are you delivering? Where are you delivering? What evening are you delivering? And looking at how we can fill gaps where provision isn't or where it needs something a little bit different. That will be the way forward for the partners.

(Project worker, 2021)

Overall, these experiences suggest that Young Manchester has successfully promoted frameworks for collaboration that are robust, have the potential to be long-lasting, and which allow youth and play projects to strengthen and extend delivery to better serve children and young people.

9. Recommendations

- All youth and play provision projects should create opportunities for sharing power with children and young people. This should include informal and formal spaces, providing opportunities for the development of skills.
- Youth-led evaluation should be integrated even further into project practice, and be embedded into information gathering, feedback activities, and decision making wherever possible. Opportunities for youth-decision making and evaluation were felt to enhance the outcomes of youth and play provision by both young people and project workers.
- Investment in future youth and play provision should be as consistent as possible, to allow children and young people to make most of the 'buildable benefits' of attending local youth and play projects. Long-term engagement with local youth and play provision can offer the greatest opportunities for personal development and longer-term educational and employment progression.
- The commissioners of youth and play provision should be flexible and responsive to the needs of local communities. Projects should reflect the distinctiveness of the communities they serve.
- Projects should consider integrating some of the flexibility of hybrid and digital delivery formats developed during the Covid-19 pandemic into ongoing provision. These formats were valued by young people as increasing accessibility and by partners as increasing opportunities for collaboration.
- Youth social action is inherently a valuable component of youth and play provision. Opportunities for social action should continue to be embedded in provision.
- Investment to support the development of an infra-structure and associated resources to maintain networks for partner collaboration is needed to enable Young Manchester to strengthen the collective action of its partners.
- Young Manchester should build on the existing strengths of their networks for partner collaboration, with a view to creating more dedicated opportunities for knowledge sharing around effective forms of social action. Projects can greatly benefit from sharing expertise regarding the design, delivery and ongoing evaluation of social action projects.

Appendix 1. YPAR evaluation tools

The following evaluation tools were co-developed by MCYS researchers and Youth Social Action Researchers to address key research questions.

Washing line

What do children and young people do in their projects?

Using paper in the shape of items of clothing, participants write the activities that they do in their project and rate their enjoyment of each activity using one to three stars. This activity provides descriptive information on the types of activities conducted in projects and how they are valued by participants. It additionally serves as a prompt for a subsequent activity in which social action activities are identified and discussed.



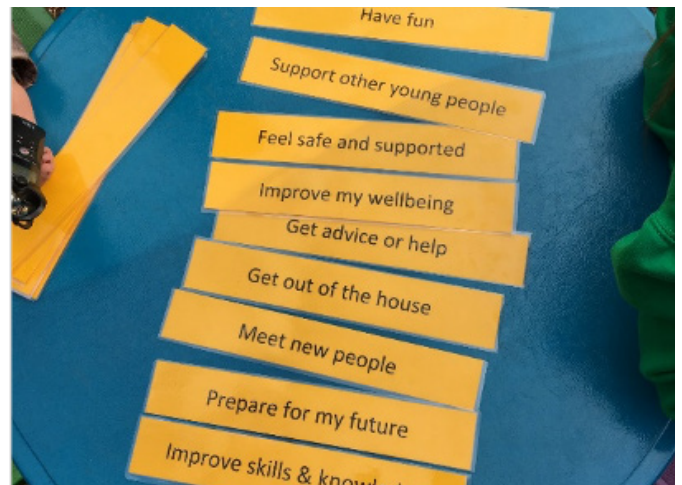
Ranking exercise

Why do children and young people attend projects?

In groups, participants are provided with twenty cards identifying reasons why people attend youth and play projects. The reasons provided on the cards are as follows:

'Feel safe and supported, Gain confidence, Improve my wellbeing, Have fun, Support other young people, Hang out with friends, Do an activity I like, Improve my health, Try new things, Learn new skills, Meet new people, Prepare for my future, Get advice, Leadership opportunities, Help the community, Improve skills and knowledge, Get out of the house, Improve my local area, Work on an important issue, Nothing else to do.'

Participants are then asked to identify the ten most important reasons and to rank them in order of importance. Their rationales are captured in audio-recorded discussions. This activity supports understanding of the drivers for participation and perceived benefits of projects, as well as whether or not social action opportunities motivate participation.



Journey map

What are the key benefits of participation in youth and play projects experienced by children and young people over time?

Participants individually draw and write their journey in their project from commencement to the present, indicating the three most significant changes they have experienced through participation. In line with Young Manchester's specified areas of interest, 'skills and knowledge', 'health and wellbeing', 'social connections' and 'future plans' are provided as prompts for the kinds of changes that might have occurred. This activity captures the perceived benefits of youth and play participation over time. A brief questionnaire on the back of the map additionally captures key demographic data.



Filling in the reflective journey map

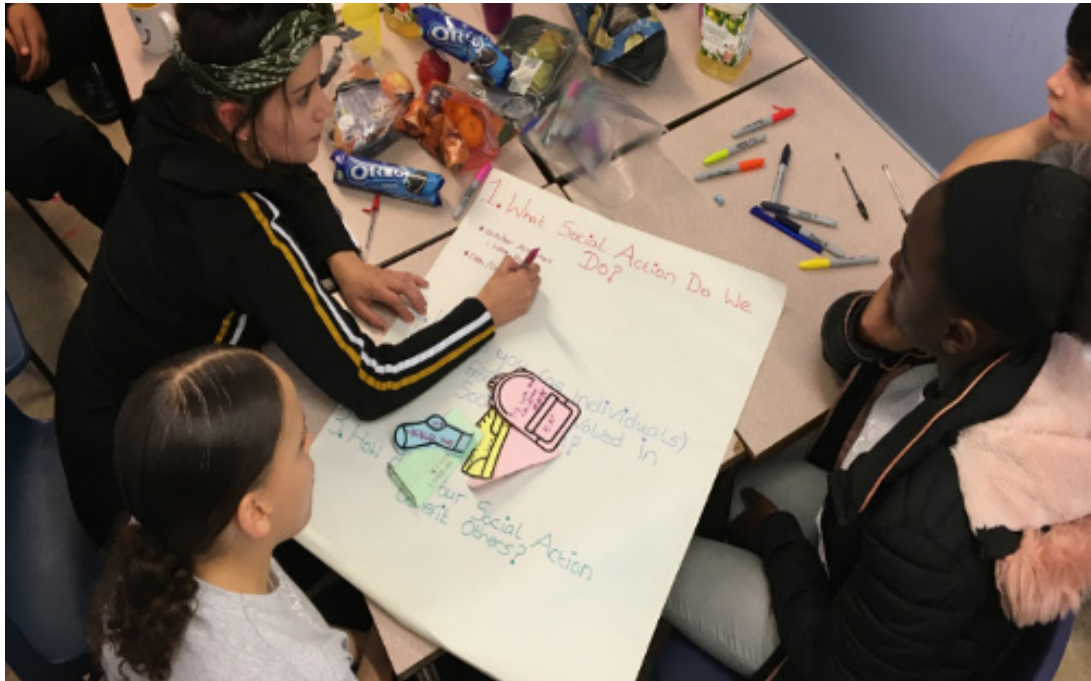


Supporting participants to complete their maps

Social action brainstorm

How do children and young people understand social action? How do your projects engage in social action, and with what perceived benefits?

Participants brainstorm what they think social action is. After being informed of the kinds of activities #iwill identify as social action, they brainstorm the kinds of social action they participate in in their project, and how this benefits themselves and others. This is explored further in audio-recorded discussion. This activity enables us to evaluate youth and play participants' understanding of social action, as well as the extent to which social action is embedded in project activities.



Thinking about what social action we do

Vox Pop

How do children and young people experience their project overall? What role do children and young people play in their projects?

Children and young people volunteered to participate in short one-to-one recorded interviews addressing three questions: What is the best thing about your project? What could be done to make your project even better? What roles do young people play in making decisions about and running your project? These interviews (or written responses for those who don't want to be recorded) provide an opportunity to gather general positive and more critical feedback.

**For further information about the project, please contact,
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The Manchester
Centre for
Youth Studies

