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WORTH MY WELLBEING



CHANGING THE CONVERSATION TOGETHER



Worth My Wellbeing (WMW)
Evaluation Report
2020-2023

Worth My Wellbeing (WMW) Evaluation Report

Introduction:

The Worth My Wellbeing (WMW) programme continues the Rio Ferdinand Foundation's work with marginalised young people, providing high-quality initiatives organised under four strategic pillars: Safe Spaces, Health & Wellbeing, Inclusive Communities and Progression Pathways. The practices and approach developed in WMW are evident in previous Foundation projects, such as the Inspiring Youth Leaders (IYL) programme that drew together a range of local stakeholders to inspire and support young people to take social action in the communities. Indeed, the idea for WMW came from a young person on the IYL programme. As part of her social action project, she developed a model for working with young people, and this became the inspiration for the Foundation, its partners and young people to come together to co-design the WMW programme.

The Foundation's Approach:

The Foundation has co-designed five core values with young people that underpin all the work they do. These core values are:

- Youth-led: Young people are the heart of everything 'we do,' inspiring us to evolve and adapt, so we can support them to realise their full potential.
- Empowering: Enabling young people to recognise their skills, giving them ownership to achieve their individual goals.
- A Connector: Bringing young people, their communities and our partnership network together; valuing diversity and creating a shared sense of belonging.
- Resilient: Bouncing back with enthusiasm and fresh solutions, continually learning and taking the time to actively 'listen' and respond to the world in which we work.
- Courageous: With a 'can-do', open, supportive and honest approach – 'we' are not afraid to do things differently.

Although WMW programme reflects the continuous development of a growing base of practice, any discussion of the initiative must include the profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and 'lockdown,' the social, emotional and mental health issues experienced by young people and the challenges imposed on practitioners and organisations working in the youth sector.

Worth My Wellbeing was facilitated during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic which disproportionately affected young people's mental health (Holmes et al., 2020). Childhood and adolescence are a period of immense social, cognitive and emotional transitions, with social identity and connectedness being greatly impacted by social distancing and lockdowns, resulting in increased negative psychosocial consequences.

Young Minds (2020) found that 83% of young people with mental health needs reported COVID-19 having a poor impact on their mental health. The restrictions, coupled with periods of

uncertainty surrounding young people's futures contributed greatly to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and anxiety (Lisitsa et al., 2020), with 46% of young people reporting loneliness, and 58% reported feelings of isolation in the first 100 days of lockdown (El-Osta et al., 2021). Such experiences were exacerbated by an apparent loss of social support and coping mechanisms outside the family unit (Orben et al., 2020).

Youth workers are often the first to identify and respond to the needs of young people, and often play central roles in young people's lives, providing support and trust. As such, youth work had to adapt quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure ongoing support was offered, provided and tailored to the 'new normal' (Khoury et al., 2023). There was a loss of in-person provision as a result of the stay-at-home orders, which resulted in services having to adapt to technology-based activities and methods of delivery. The importance of space, and the development of a supportive 'third space' beyond home and school has been stressed repeatedly in regard to young people finding somewhere they belong (de St Croix and Doherty, 2023). However, as a result of the pandemic, this 'third space' instead was people's own homes, and as a result the youth workers played an increasing role in providing a safe and welcoming environment via technology. The ambition for Worth My Wellbeing was to develop youth-led community-based approaches to enable young people to improve their emotional health and wellbeing, feel more connected, understand their emotional wellbeing, develop a healthy peer-support network, and be more resilient to cope with adverse life experiences. A central part of the project's approach was to develop young people's skills for life and readiness for work, making them feel more empowered and so more likely to try new things and move into further training, employment and enterprise opportunities.

The Rio Ferdinand Foundation's approach to building and working with and through networks of well-established and locally-embedded organisations led to the creation of a partnership to develop and deliver Worth My Wellbeing. Led by Rio Ferdinand Foundation, Worth My Wellbeing brings together 42nd Street, Odd Arts, Reform Radio, and Salford Youth Alliance. Each partner provides a wealth of expertise on emotional health and wellbeing. The young people who engage with partner services have had life experiences that have been incredibly impactful to their lives and are seeking holistic and positive support and guidance. The partnership has experience in planning, conducting, and evaluating a range of youth focused activities, including the creative arts, sports, and media addressing young people's emotional health and wellbeing.

- Odd Arts uses theatre to challenge inequalities and increase opportunities for people facing the greatest level of discrimination and disadvantage.
- Salford Youth Alliance uses creative outlets including sports, activities, and arts to support young people's mental health across Salford.
- Reform Radio is an online radio station and arts organisation working with local creatives, DJs and young people to develop and showcase new work via their online platforms.
- 42nd Street is an innovative Greater Manchester young people's mental health charity providing free and confidential services to young people.

In addition to working across the partnership to develop Worth My Wellbeing, the team also worked collaboratively with over 45 young people and consulted an even wider range of stakeholders including Fight for Change Council (looked after children and young people), Salford Mental Health Forum, BAME Mental Health Champions, and integrated services teams.

To clearly address young people's needs for their emotional health and wellbeing, the partnership collated feedback from over 1,700 young people during the transition from primary to secondary school. This resulted in the four-stage cycle of change that is Worth My Wellbeing.

Young people are not a homogeneous group and youth is not an undifferentiated phase of life. The programme was designed therefore to work in different and appropriate ways with young people at key transition points in their lives:

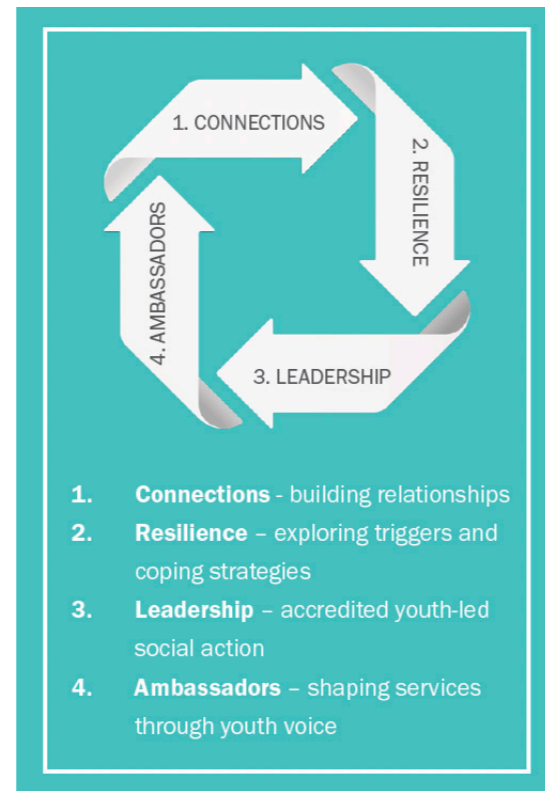
- Young people transitioning from primary to secondary school (age 11);
- Adolescents (aged 12-15);
- Young people leaving education and transitioning into the working world (aged 16-25).

The Worth My Wellbeing programme enables young people to develop skills and foster an awareness of mental health, transforming the mental health conversation for young people in Salford. The programme involved four stages that young people engaged with. The stages were scaffolded through four interrelated stages;

1. Connections: building relationships
2. Resilience: exploring triggers and coping strategies
3. Leadership: accredited youth-led social action
4. Ambassadors: shaping services through youth voice

Each stage included activities focused on mental health and were delivered by different partners with different creative expertise. The aim of Worth my Wellbeing was to support children and young people in Salford with their mental health and wellbeing, who were experiencing change or going through transitional periods.

This report is going to evaluate Worth my Wellbeing from listening to the perspectives of young people from all 3 cohorts, listening to the perspectives of change ambassadors from 42nd Street (young people who had facilitated Worth my Wellbeing alongside staff from Odd Arts, Rio Ferdinand Foundation, Salford Youth Alliance and Reform Radio) and from listening to the partner organisations to establish the perspectives of the delivery team.



Our Approach to Evaluation:

A commitment for the WMW programme was that it would be 'youth designed, youth led, youth evaluated,' and so our approach was to work collaboratively with young people in the design, delivery and analysis of the evaluation. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) was commissioned by 42nd Street and Rio Ferdinand Foundation (RFF) to carry out a co-produced evaluation.

Prior to this arrangement, 42nd Street and RFF had commissioned another evaluation team to work on the project. The MMU team began working on the evaluation part way through the implementation of the WMW programme. However, youth evaluation took place from the beginning, despite changes with the evaluation team. There were a number of implications as to how the evaluation was conducted, with the need for sensitive consultation of the previous evaluation team's data and an attempt to meaningfully incorporate the views of young people from each of the three-year cohorts.

The evaluation team was Dr James Duggan (Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Met University), Bethany Jay (PhD student, Manchester Met University) and Zarah Eve (PhD student, Manchester Met University).

The team were working within MMU's robust research ethics and governance framework, which includes, for example, the requirement for staff to engage in continuous training for ethics, safeguarding, and data management; the rigorous and constructive peer-review of research plans; and the design and implementation of data management plans that are compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018. All data was stored on a secure server and destroyed upon submission of this report.

The evaluation team were committed to taking a co-produced approach and working collaboratively. We were supported through the early stages of the research by James Walklate (42nd Street) who helped recruit our four youth evaluation co-producers: Cariad, Daniel, Stone, and Fabian. These young people were involved in the design and delivery of sessions in the early phases of Worth My Wellbeing and were Change Ambassadors at 42nd Street. The change ambassadors had 'insider knowledge', best suited to supporting the evaluation team at MMU to understand the programme and provide advice on how best to work with the young people who had taken part in the programme. Therefore, the change ambassadors enacted the principles of Worth my Wellbeing by both leading and facilitating the programme and by evaluating the programme also, alongside the team members at MMU.

Research Questions:

To orientate the evaluation, we developed four research questions, in dialogue with the youth evaluators and the evaluation commissioners:

- How did young people experience Worth my Wellbeing? What did they like/dislike?
- What skills and capacities did young people develop?
- How did the youth work practice adapt to the change in ways of working?
- What were the drivers and benefits of collaboration between the partner organisations?

Data Collection Methods with Young People:

Remote and in-person semi-structured interviews, and creative evaluation workshops were used to collect qualitative data with young people who took part in Worth My Wellbeing.

Interviews were conducted in-person and online to make participation in the evaluation as accessible as possible to young people and the delivery team. Young people from the first cohorts had since gone to the workplace or had moved on educationally. Therefore, conducting the interviews online meant that the evaluation team could adhere to young people's work and educational schedules. Discussions were centred around young people's experiences of the programme.

There were challenges experienced with recruiting young people for participation, despite all efforts to make participation flexible and accessible. This was due to young people's backgrounds, changes in circumstances, comfort with speaking to unknown professionals and difficulties with ethical paperwork. Nonetheless, the methods ensured young people's voices from all 3 cohorts were heard throughout the evaluation. Secondary data analysis was also conducted using previous evaluation data, collected internally by partner organisations. This included Worth my Wellbeing monitoring data and statistics, case studies collected for yearly progress reports and reflective focus groups collected by the previous evaluation team.

Data Collection Methods with Delivery Partnership:

Remote and in-person focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data with individuals who delivered Worth My Wellbeing.

Participant Sampling:

Participant sampling for primary data collection was conducted through self-selection, organised with the help of Rio Ferdinand and 42nd Street. The participating group consisted of:

- Young people (10 - 21 years) 17
- Change Ambassadors: 3
- Partners: 7

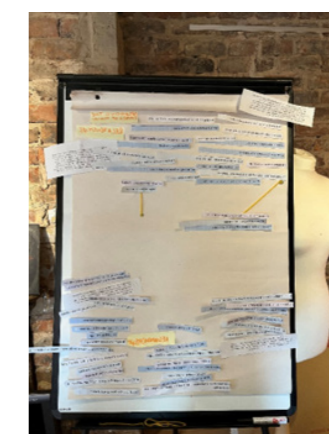
Data Analysis – Primary Data Analysis:

The analysis of primary data was youth-led and co-produced in workshops with 42nd Street's change ambassadors and postgraduate researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University. The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to establish themes about the experience, impact, and legacy of Worth My Wellbeing. Transcripts were compared to the primary data to ensure accuracy. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages were followed which are 1) data familiarisation, 2) code generation, 3) initial theme generation, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining/naming themes, and 6) production of this report.

Data Analysis – Secondary Data Analysis:

In order to get a bird's eye view of the Worth My Wellbeing project as a whole, secondary data was also collected and analysed. Due to the expansive nature of the project, it was not possible for the research team to attend all sessions, so key stakeholders who already had project-based relationships with young people were able to reflect with specific groups of young people for this report. Information included yearly progress reports, ongoing monitoring data, pre-collected case studies, and reflective focus groups that stakeholders organised and conducted.

The final themes found from the evaluation were: the journey of young people's mental health; the journey of relationships; the effectiveness of the model; opportunity; and reflections on best practice.



Key Statistics:

Engagement with Worth my Wellbeing:

Target	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	Total	Target Reached
Engage 40 young people per year of WMW as core beneficiaries	52	86	45	183	152%
Have a wider impact on 600 young people by the end of WMW	200	200	200	600	100%
Engage 50 professionals by the end of WMW	10	20	35	65	130%
Engage 25 young people as ambassadors by the end of WMW	6	9	10	25	100%

The continued engagement across stakeholders and partners has demonstrated the importance of the programme, and the need for programmes such as Worth My Wellbeing to reach greater numbers of young people.

Positively, key beneficiaries, both those that directly engaged with the programme and those who felt wider impacts of the project were reached, with the target being exceeded. During the pandemic time Salford City Council underwent major changes in regard to delivery of services and staffing structures. This impacted the ability to conduct the accredited training that was going to be facilitated by the council. In spite of this barrier, the Rio Ferdinand Foundation facilitated a Level 1 Developing Leadership Skills via the Open College Network. Additionally, one of the delivery partners, Odd Arts, facilitated Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards within Expressive Arts and Leadership. These recognised awards can help to up-skill young people interested in taking a social action lead in their communities and facilitate their own mental health projects using passions within sports, arts and media activities/performances.

Furthermore, training was delivered to 45 young people over the 3-year programme period, exceeding the target, and building on the initial plan which was to deliver Youth Mental Health First Aid courses. The importance of the Youth Mental Health First Aid course is substantial for both young people and delivery partners, thus the Rio Ferdinand Foundation has trained its National Training and Progressions Manager to facilitate Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, ensuring lasting impact and engagement. The regional staff team have facilitated a range of opportunities for young people moving forward, including:

- Level 1 Award in Awareness of Health & Wellbeing
- Level 1 Award in Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Level 1 Award in Developing Personal Confidence and Self – Awareness
- Level 1 Award in Stress & Stress Management Techniques

The legacy of Worth My Wellbeing is important to all delivery partners, and staff are continuing to work alongside Salford City Council to explore the redesign of the mental health service directory with the 25 Ambassadors from Worth My Wellbeing. Additionally, partners are collaborating to facilitate bespoke 6-week gender specific Worth My Wellbeing projects within targeted schools experiencing wellbeing challenges and complex behavioural needs. These projects are commissioned opportunities via the Council due to the benefits and impact of Worth My Wellbeing which the Council recognise as hugely beneficial to young people around Salford and beyond.



Impact of Worth My Wellbeing on young people:

Headline statistics from Worth My Wellbeing's monitoring data and yearly progress reports are presented below and signify the positive impact the programme made to all young people taking part:

- 100% young people felt happier in their own emotional health and wellbeing following WMW
- 80% young people reported increased knowledge about where to find, and how to access mental health support
- 80% young people are more comfortable talking about their wellbeing since the start of WMW
- 87% young people increased their knowledge about different coping strategies to help them in times of distress or low mood
- 75% young people felt they have more of a say about the mental health support provided in Salford

These statistics demonstrate that Worth My Wellbeing improved young people's knowledge of local, available mental health and wellbeing services in Salford, helped young people cope with mental health struggles on a personal and individual level, taught young people about various wellbeing tools they could use, helped improve young peoples' overall wellbeing and decreased the potential stigma young people face around talking about their mental health. Thus, the programme had a significant, genuine, and lasting impact on young people's mental health. This is important and extremely relevant. 10.8% of children and young people in 2017 were found likely to experience challenges with their mental health, and this has raised to 16% in 2020 (Garratt et al., 2022: 10). This shows how pertinent mental health challenges can be for a large percent of young people, reiterated by a recent government agenda prioritising support for children's mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges, as well as educational and academic support (Department for Education, 2021). The Worth My Wellbeing programme is a prime example of good practice to be replicated to meet government agenda and for schools to meet increasing demands for wellbeing support, and most importantly to help young people better cope with mental health challenges they may experience.

Theme 1: The Journey of Young People's Mental Health:

WMW youth participants spoke positively about their experiences, what our youth evaluators described as the 'WMW journey.' To understand this journey, more young people were encountering issues with mental health, isolation, anxiety and a loss of confidence during and in the aftermath of the pandemic and lockdown. This uptick in young people experiencing such issues, all too frequently unfortunately without access to appropriate mental health support. For instance, waiting lists for youth mental health services during the pandemic were over 18 months long and thresholds for NHS intervention services had increased resulting in help and support provided but only at crisis point. This meant that many young people were struggling to make sense of their experience by themselves.

Therefore, in relation to this lack of mental health awareness, the need for WMW was exaggerated, young people needed to learn strategies for resilience, and have opportunities to talk about mental health with people they knew, more than ever before. The quotes below evidence the ways in which the WMW programme, with its creative approaches and high-quality relationships enabled young people to talk to others about their mental health, feelings or emotions, and broader wellbeing:

"Being more open about talking about your mental health and wellbeing and finding creative ways to have the conversation. Rather than 'tell me how you feel' and sitting down trying to get people to talk about their feelings. It's done in a creative way." – YP Cohort 1

"I definitely 100% know more about knowing [my] emotions... at the time I wasn't really sure about talking in front of other people but by the end I felt better. I think it helped me cope better at school." – YP Cohort 1

The excerpts show how young people developed more self-awareness around their own mental health and wellbeing, with one young person attributing this to better coping in education. This is significant for young people going through transitional periods in education, suggesting Worth My Wellbeing improved and strengthened young peoples' resilience and wellbeing during school transitions. Young people from cohorts 1 and 3 also discussed the innovative ways Worth My Wellbeing empowered them to share their feelings and emotions, incorporating creative expression into the mental health conversation through a variation of activities in different stages.

"Listening to music and had to draw how we were feeling!" – YP Cohort 3

*"The drama made me feel happy because we talked all mental health, and it was so good!"
YP Cohort 3*

The change ambassadors also discussed how helping facilitate the sessions improved their confidence talking about mental health. Worth My Wellbeing was not only focused on changing the mental health conversation of those progressing through the model but changing and improving the mental health conversation for young people delivering the programme.

*"It's helped with my mental health as well, with confidence, makes me feel happier and generally better about myself. So, both internal and external impacts for me."
YP Change Ambassador*

This shows how change ambassadors felt more resilient after being a part of the Worth My Wellbeing delivery team. Worth My Wellbeing provided a positive mental health journey for change ambassadors and young people taking part, illustrating the positive mental health impact for young people between the ages of 11-25 years old. Increasing young people's resilience is a significant outcome from the programme and echoes earlier arguments that Worth My Wellbeing is a prime example of good practice of wellbeing support and should be implemented in the future to effectively support young people's mental health and to help nurture resilience in Salford youth and beyond.



Theme 2: The Journey of Relationships:

All the organisations working as part of the WMW partnership have significant commitments to youth work practice, and as part of this it is no surprise that the young people reported positive experiences of developing new, positive and supportive relationships. It is important to remember that during lockdown many young people experienced loneliness and isolation, which has a tendency to make people feel more awkward or hyper-vigilant around other people and this has the effect of further isolation and loneliness. Young people might want to reconnect with others but struggle with various social, emotional and psychological barriers to social encounters. This is not an insignificant obstacle for the young people to navigate themselves and is a profound challenge for the practice of the adults working with and for them. These additional challenges of working in the pandemic context only work to increase those of working with groups of young people that do not know each other and might be experiencing social and emotional issues or other forms of trauma and marginalisation. The importance of the quality of the relationships amongst the young people and with the adults working on the programme was a commitment of all of the WMW partners and part of their broader engagement with youth work practice.

“I don’t think you can put enough emphasis on ... the relationship side of it. We’d worked with a lot of cohorts this year that had never met each other, so they were brand new to each other and Worth My Wellbeing was a great space for them to explore what was going on... the ability to connect with each other and start to build friendships and relationships that went way beyond our time there is something that I’ve seen now consistently becoming one of the most common forms of impact.” – Partner

This attention to young people’s relational attachment to the project was evidenced in young people’s feelings about the WMW programme, those delivering it and, significantly, that these relationships were necessary support during difficult times:

[The best thing about the programme were] “The people that I met!” – YP Cohort 2

[WMW Facilitator has] “been my favourite thing about Worth My Wellbeing!” – YP, Cohort 3

“... Can go to staff here when sad” – YP, Cohort 3

Worth My Wellbeing provided young people the space and connections to develop relationships with peers and adults while gaining new knowledge about their mental health and practices that could help build resilience. From the focus groups conducted with cohort 2 of WMW, many young people said they knew where to go for support when they feel sad, demonstrating that Worth my Wellbeing had a significant positive impact on young people’s knowledge of local mental health and wellbeing support. However, a couple of young people taking part in the focus groups were still unsure where to get support when they feel sad, and felt they still lacked mental health support or remained unaware of support networks. This is in-line with the baseline data of all cohorts as 20% of young people said they still felt that they lacked mental health support or remained unaware of support networks. Thus, young people felt the need for more mental health support, suggesting an exaggerated need for more longitudinal WMW support and participation.

Nonetheless, many young people felt that they had information on mental health support, suggesting that we can be confident in the direction of travel and that more investment in developing WMW and research is required to further improve arrangements so that all young people know about, and can access, support available to them. RFF is committed to providing 1-2-1 support to any of the young people that accessed WMW by including them in the Foundation’s ongoing programmes and activities.

Another benefit of the WMW programme was that it brought interesting adult practitioners and other (older) young people into schools and other settings to meet and work with the youth participants. An important part of the WMW programme was enabling young people to work with adults from partner organisations with established, exciting ways of working and the opportunity to engage in creative, arts-based activities. Through allowing young people to engage with their peers and a range of staff members, young people were able to foster a range of positive relationships and develop a greater sense of safe spaces to discuss their mental health journey. By bringing in different perspectives from project workers, greater understanding was gained about the variance in mental health support, coping strategies, and ways to talk about their own experiences. The quotes below show the excitement youth participants felt taking part in WMW. However, they also exhibit how important it is that youth mental health work is enjoyable and something young people are motivated to take part in voluntarily:

“I liked having different teachers, staff, youth workers coming in and doing different things – I think it gave us the opportunity to learn more from different people and in different ways.”
YP, Cohort 3

“Talking about mental health and wellbeing can be really hard but this programme was delivered in a fun way, schools lessons are boring, but WMW helped us to learn and have fun.”
YP, Cohort 3

Understandably, some young people discussed feeling more comfortable sharing their personal experiences of mental health challenges with groups of peers as they would define them, as opposed to year group cohorts. This enabled greater engagement in sessions. Examples of this included young men opening up more around other young men, than when in mixed gender groups.

“I want it to be all males or all female – I don’t want to mix genders” – YP, Cohort 3



Theme 3: The Effectiveness of the Model:

One of the strongest findings about WMW was the importance of adapting the programme as it was developing in the changing context of the pandemic and post-pandemic response while ensuring the diversity and creativity of the offer to the young people. As described in the previous theme on relationships, the youth participants in all three cohorts but in particular the first two cohorts were working their way through the pandemic and lockdowns. Considering the young people's needs and the challenges of working with young people during the pandemic, the WMW partnership made a decision to adapt the model. Instead of delivering all four of the WMW model's components equally (connections, resilience, leadership and ambassadors), the focus was placed on the first two stages (connections and resilience). The flexible nature of the programme allowed sessions to be tailored to young people's needs at the time, which was viewed positively by young people and partners alike. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was also impactful to the first stages of the programme, creating barriers to creative, face-to-face sessions in the initial Worth My Wellbeing sessions.

"We kind of had to pivot cause of lockdown and the pandemic to look at delivering online resilience session and not necessarily working [on one stage] because that [activity] wouldn't work, online or via teams ... as soon as we could go back to face-to-face delivery, we could really start the work how we planned to do it in earnest." – Partner

"So, leadership and ambassador stages are about progressing young people forward and we've struggled to do that in the height of the pandemic... I think two of the stages out of the four that we've not been able to dive deeply into are leadership and ambassadors and that's because, well from our point of view as facilitators, the impact of COVID has meant that young people need wellbeing support" – Partner

The pandemic posed considerable challenges for the youth work sector, especially for practitioners and organisations working with marginalised young people. It is understandable, therefore, that there were some teething issues as the newly formed partnership sought to deliver this multiphase and multi-stakeholder programme. Partners reported the apparent lack of connectedness from a delivery standpoint. As each delivery partner often worked solely on their own stage, they were not always aware of the other groups, and how each fed into another, and the programme.

"Getting to be a bit more connected across different phases would have been helpful. While we were really connected in my phase, and we got to design half the activities, we were less familiar with what happened in other sections. A birds-eye perspective would have been helpful to have a bit more context." – Partner

This evaluation also found ways Worth My Wellbeing could develop further with regards to programme delivery. Partners identified future work could be improved by closer working relationships between frontline staff. By securing specific funding to cover expenses of frontline staff, opportunities to observe and join other partners workshops during the delivery of Worth My Wellbeing could aid understanding of each other's work. This will in turn create more seamless transitions between the stages of Worth My Wellbeing, benefiting both delivery partners and young people.

"What might be nice is more kind of in the room collaboration with the other organisations. You know when we had partner meetings I'd be like "oh hi" ... Never met you in person, I've never seen what their workshops look like ... it'd be really nice to see what their delivering and maybe if there's some sort of partnership we can do in the room. ... I think it would be really nice to sort of meld the two a little bit even if it's just sort of you know they deliver the first week we deliver the second but at the end of their last days we come in and maybe at the beginning of our first day they come in and just sort of smooth the transition..." – Partner

As the programme develops and the partnerships continue to establish and formalise, there is a case for further aligning different partners' sessions to smooth young people's journeys through the WMW programme. It would be a good idea if practitioners from the different organisations have the opportunity to visit their partner organisations to familiarise themselves with the initiative, reflect and share practice. Therefore, a budget needs to be included in WMW dedicated to partnership building that could build opportunities for reflective evaluation and learning. Continued and enhanced collaboration between all members of the delivery teams is highlighted as a key area for development moving forward. While heads of service regularly connected to ensure flow and consistency amongst the stages of the programme, due to limited staff availability and differing schedules, frontline staff often were unable to collaborate. To ensure that Worth My Wellbeing's aims and ethos are fully met throughout all sessions, it would be vital for future facilitators (including covering staff) to receive training as to the model. While this will require specific, ring fenced funding, the additional awareness across delivery teams will aid awareness and transparency across teams. The additional training and involvement of all staff in cross-partnership meetings will ensure frontline staff are not reliant on cascading information from senior management teams.

Acknowledging the challenging context of the programme's delivery, there was considerable evidence that the young people responded well to WMW and in particular liked the different phases of interesting and creative activities.

"We really enjoyed the variety, doing different things like radio, podcasting, drama. We were set challenges and tasks to do as a team, so we were moving around, and the different stages kept it interesting." – YP, Cohort 3

We can also see that young people respected the ways in which the WMW programme was personalised by the youth workers on the projects to ensure it met what the young people wanted to do, were able to do, and helped them progress towards personal goals.

"I remember delivering a workshop. [They] sat down with me and asked what topic I was interested in and what my goals were... The great thing is that they provided me with a mentor within the industry... It gave me the knowledge that delivering a workshop is not impossible and not a long-term goal" – YP, Cohort 1

Despite the focus not being on the final 2 stages, the leadership and ambassador stages were positively reported on by a young person who had engaged with them, which resulted in paid employment opportunities.

Theme 4: Opportunity for progression:

The commitment for providing youth participants opportunities for progression was most clearly found in the roles Change Ambassadors had in the WMW programme. The ambassadors explained that being part of the delivery team built their confidence, brought them in closer contact with good practice for mental health and youth work, and improved their employment prospects. Learning from staff who are experienced in delivering mental health programmes was also considered a significant educational opportunity for Change Ambassadors. Young people were able to learn and replicate best practice in mental health support.

“I think that was one of the good things about working with [WMW Facilitator] particularly though. Like it was genuinely impressive to watch them work. You can definitely tell they are very good at their job and bouncing people off each other.” – YP, Change Ambassador

There was a plan for the young people to engage more in mental health practice and training, through the partnership with Salford City Council. However, due to the complexities and challenges imposed by the pandemic it was not possible to implement these plans. As the relationship remains between the council and partners, future cohorts may be afforded additional opportunities. Future planned opportunities include young people working with Salford City Council to develop their mental health service delivery directory, and opportunities to cascade learning to future cohorts through developed roles as Mental Health or Peer Ambassadors.

The evaluation was an example of this process of moving young people through the programme and giving them opportunities with more responsibility or access to skills they would like to develop. The youth evaluators began the project as Change Ambassadors attached to 42nd Street, and they designed and delivered sessions and project activities. They were then recruited to work on the evaluation, collaborating with the academic team from Manchester Met University to design and deliver the evaluation.

The evaluation aimed to work with the young people’s strengths and interests to provide opportunities to develop and demonstrate skills for future employment. Cariad is interested in creative arts practice and youth work. She documented the sessions with an arts-based approach and created the animation that accompanies the report. Cariad has gone on to secure paid employment as a sessional youth worker with 42nd Street. Daniel was more interested in the research and evaluation side of the project. Through the project he was able to learn the skills and demonstrate his experience in research to gain a place on another youth co-produced project.

“It shot my confidence up a lot. I think I’ve taken on roles I wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise, and done other things in roles I already had. I feel more able to go into a group full of kids and run a session without as much anxiety, and as much planning as I thought I needed beforehand. I feel like it’s put more rungs on the ladder to get to where I am now.” -
YP, Change Ambassador



Theme 5: Reflections on Best Practice:

Across each of the cohorts, young people talked at length about how they would like to see the Worth My Wellbeing programme be developed further. Positively, young people highlighted their wishes to be involved again in future cohorts, highlighting the lasting impact of the programme:

“I wish I could do it again next year.” – Young Person, Cohort 2

As discussed in Theme 1, young people spoke positively about the creative activities in which they could express their feelings and emotions. Therefore, the Worth My Wellbeing programme created the foundations for young people to engage with their mental health and wellbeing in innovative ways. However, young people recommended that, moving forward, Worth My Wellbeing should incorporate more creative avenues for mental health expression. While some young people discussed wanting to take part in sports activities such as rugby and football, however, others noted that they would not want it to feel like,

“... another PE/training session [where] we would've lost the mental health / wellbeing side ...”
– YP, Cohort 3

The Rio Ferdinand Foundation might bring its work in sports activities and expand this into the WMW programme, merging the creative and sports-based programming to provide young people with options of creative and/or sports-based pathways. Indeed, there is ample evidence that sport is productive for mental health and wellbeing. However, this quote reminds us that not everyone enjoys playing football and rugby. It seems sensible that careful considerations should be taken to develop activities that young people would engage with, while ensuring the focus on mental health and wellbeing remains central to any sessions. Furthermore, it is important to continue the WMW programme's commitment to understanding and working with the diversity of young people, and offering creative opportunities that expand on what individual young people want to do.

The importance of maintaining a flexible approach to delivering sessions, and being able to tailor to specific cohort groups, and specific challenges that arose within groups, was identified by one of the Change Ambassadors:

“Rather than just sticking to the plan, [we] changed some of the activities to talk about this issue that the young people were going through...it's not just about ticking boxes on the planning sheet.”
– Change Ambassador

As such, consideration should be taken in regard to how future cohort groups are developed, through discussion with schools, partners, and young people themselves. By developing spaces that young people feel comfortable, safe, and exploratory, greater engagement is likely to occur, and the programme will have an even greater reach and impact.

By having increased understanding and involvement, school staff can help facilitate positive behaviours across the cohorts, ensuring all students get the most out of the sessions. In line with this, young people talked at length about how they wished the programme was longer and involved a greater number of sessions.

“When you deliver the programme you should do it longer, it needs to be ingrained into the curriculum from start to end, so every week, once a week we should do Worth My Wellbeing.” – YP, Cohort 3

The benefits of greater engagement and integration with education and schools was also evidenced in the ways in which the WMW programme provided practitioners and those working in the settings where it was delivered an incentive and opportunity to increase their mental health literacy, enabling them to support both themselves and the young people they work with during a very challenging time.

“I think it's made me learn about what mental health and wellbeing issues are like for your age, because when I think about mental health, I think about it from my age, my point of view and it's not the same as me, so I think I've learnt more how to support you all.” – Teacher, Cohort 3

The importance of collaborating with schools is vital to the ongoing development and engagement of programmes such as Worth My Wellbeing across Salford and beyond. Continuing positive relationships with schools will mean staff members are knowledgeable about the programme and motivated to support young people throughout. Therefore, young people as a whole will feel more positive about engaging and understand the importance of improving mental health awareness and support.

“There's some real power in different organisations going into schools for the schools and the pupils to get the benefit of it, but also for those young people to be aware that services exist and there are things outside of school and there's different ways to express yourself and it's, you know, you can use many different means. You can use music, you can use art, creativity, you can use theatre. Erm, and you can also translate those experiences into skills for you to help yourself...” – Partner



Case Study 1 of WMW's impact

Fabio, aged 13:

Fabio engaged with the Worth My Wellbeing programme when he was in year 8. He really struggled to establish a friendship group in high school, and this was made worse by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Fabio was part of an all-boys group on Worth My Wellbeing. He seemed nervous by the other young people's presence. His anxiety affected his ability to contribute, volunteer for roles, and speak publicly about his ideas in the workshops. Delivery partners built the workshops around what young people were passionate about. It was decided to add time to the end of each session so the boys could play sport. They asked to play football and basketball. This proved to be a huge turning point for Fabio who was very sporty and skilled. He was also super confident whilst playing, which was noticed by staff and peers alike.

Fabio's confidence began to transfer through into the main workshops and he took a lead on scripting and contributing ideas for his group's radio show. Fabio volunteered and was chosen by his peers to be the presenter of the radio show. Fabio's contributions were amazing; When the group spoke around mental health and wellbeing, Fabio spoke with great compassion and understanding. He was understanding of other boys in the room who spoke of their negative experiences around mental health, and he championed being supportive within the group.

Fabio became a great example of how a programme like this can positively impact a young person's life. How it can connect you socially, emotionally, and educationally to other young people and like-minded services that want to support with improving people's opportunities in life.

Fabio also taught us the importance of being flexible and allowing our young people to have a say on how projects should continuously involve their input moving forward and for us to listen to that feedback and shape things around what young people feel they need at that time.



Case Study 2 of WMW's impact

Matthew, aged 15:

Matthew is a young person that engaged with Worth My Wellbeing when he was in year 10. He suffers from social anxiety, which has impacted his education, social life, and opportunities greatly.

Matthew is naturally quite reserved and was initially very quiet and would only speak when spoken to. He rarely raised his hand or contributed feedback voluntarily for at least the first 3 workshops. In these early stages staff didn't know much about Matthew beyond his issues around anxiety and being new to the school.

It wasn't until around week 4 or 5 when they began to create a podcast that Matthew really started to be a visible and active member of the group. Matthew seemed excitable and engrossed in the creation of a podcast and was one of the main people in the group to contribute both ideas and vocal input to the podcast itself. He recorded a poem and presented large chunks of the group's podcast. He carried this energy and enthusiasm into the second stage which was all around forum theatre and drama.

Speaking, acting, improvising, and answering questions in front of the group demonstrated his courage and growing confidence. He started to raise his hand more frequently in sessions, and he quickly became one of the more active leaders within the group. His contribution was huge. He was very knowledgeable and respectful to others and his ideas always helped the group move forward.

As a result of the second lockdown, Matthew's mental health worsened. He was not attending school and so not able to attend the leadership stage of the programme. Matthew's mum contacted the Worth My Wellbeing staff, and they agreed to offer one-to-one support to him. That Matthew's mum and Matthew turned to WMW is testament that they saw the programme and its staff as a safe and supportive space.

Matthew has been engaging on a one-to-one basis, and he experiences ups and downs. However, Matthew and those around him have recognised that Matthew is able to manage his mental health much better and has developed into a more mature and confident young man who is looking forward to the next stage in his life.



Recommendations & Policy Considerations:

We offer here a series of recommendations which aim to inform the work of Worth My Wellbeing as it develops in Salford and across the United Kingdom:

As a basic principle the future of Worth My Wellbeing should continue to be youth designed, youth led, and youth evaluated. The evaluation provides an example of the ways in which previous cohorts of empowered young people can inform, inspire and lead new strands of activity. RFF should utilise its growing group of WMW youth leaders and change ambassadors to scope new directions. There are a number of concerns for the change ambassadors to explore: How the WMW programme can continue to be tailored to specific youth demographics and identities? How to develop lasting skills, education, and employability pathways for young people, with a particular emphasis on the leadership phase within the current programme? How the programme might be adapted into different lengths and formats, from shorter to longer time-frames? Once these decisions have been taken the change ambassadors could continue to present to funders and commissioners to resource new or refund programmes, participate in the training of new practitioners and youth leaders, and organise a network for ongoing peer and practitioner support around delivery and participatory evaluation of future programmes. Ultimately, a crucial role for the young people will be living the programme's values for youth-led change.

The pandemic has intensified the concerns about youth mental health and wellbeing, lack of resilience and confidence, as issues that prevent young people thriving in personal, educational and vocational areas. The UK Government and leading funding and philanthropic organisations are committed to supporting innovative practice. Rio Ferdinand Foundation can confidently propose its community-based, youth-led programme as an integral part of interventions across the UK and Northern Ireland. The Foundation has a track record of bringing together funding from public, corporate and philanthropic sources while working sensitively and strategically to work with and across cross-sector networks of local organisations. This capability to leverage finance with community and practice expertise is vitally important in contexts defined by a lack of funding and underinvestment in the youth work and mental health sectors in particular.

A challenge for any programme is progressing from standalone projects, with the recurrent challenges of refunding and relocation etc., to work towards changing the policy and practice landscape so that it is an established and integrated part of youth provision. As the Foundation works towards a more sustainable footing for WMW, it is important to acknowledge that there are no silver bullets for advocacy for policy change. We recommend the Foundation remains true to its existing approach for youth-led change, and the WMW programme's engagement in creative and media activities. Two recent projects developed by researchers at Manchester Met University and the University of Birmingham draw on legislative theatre and practices of participatory scrutiny to work with young people to create a play on their lived experience of, for example, mental health issues. The play is then performed in front of people with the power to make changes, such as local commissioners, who make commitments for change to improve young people's lives by funding new programmes, leading cultural change etc. Promises are easy, however, and so the young people hold the decision makers accountable by scrutinising the processes of change until they are achieved.

The day-to-day activities provide opportunities for young people to take part in a range of creative activities, from training as legislative theatre facilitators to producing media to document and share the

process. As an integral part or additional stream of the WMW programme, it would provide a scalable, community-based, youth-led model for inspiring, informing and cohering decisions to improve youth mental health and wellbeing.

A strength of the WMW programme was the way in which the youth work practice enabled the personalisation of the provision to the young people's diverse preferences and needs. This could mean engaging with young people in different spaces and times, including one-to-one support at home if someone is struggling. It could involve providing a range of activities to further adapt the programme to the specific young people taking part, balancing the arts and media practice with opportunities to play sports and participate in a wider youth culture offer. Rio Ferdinand Foundation has considerable experience in these practices, and so this is a straightforward proposition. Obviously, the focus must remain on supporting young people's mental health and developing mental health knowledge and awareness but the Foundation has many tools and media through which to do this.

Engaging with schools is a recurrent challenge to inter-organisational collaboration, due to a range of entrenched institutional and cultural factors. As we move away from the specific barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WMW programme could continue to build relationships with mental health teams in schools through the newly funded 'senior mental health leads' and 'mental health support teams' (Department for Education, 2022).

The youth and mental health sectors are underfunded, with staff and organisations working towards a series of precarious and short-term contracts, meaning there can be fragmentation and a high turnover of personnel. The evaluation found that although all delivery partners and senior managers and lead partners met on a monthly basis, frontline staff were not as well informed about the broader programme and aware of what other parts of the project were delivering. We recommend the Foundation commits to resourcing the time and opportunities for everyone working on WMW to participate in the processes of professional reflective practice and be empowered to co-deliver the programme. Youth work practice was found to be a definite strength of WMW and investing in the conditions for professional development will build ever stronger foundations to grow the work.



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With thanks to all of our partners involved in WMW



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