

**Shephard &
Moyes Ltd**

**PLAN
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REVIEW**

Active Partnerships Network

Young People Forward

Final Report September 2021

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Introduction

Shephard & Moyes Ltd were commissioned in March 2021 to evaluate the Young People Forward project. Young People Forward works through Active Partnerships and Street Soccer Scotland to support young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Funding for the work was provided by the London Marathon Charitable Trust with funds from Virgin Money.

The project has the following objectives:

- Provide young people with opportunities to be active in a safe and supportive environment
- Support local community organisations working with the target group to embed sport and physical activity into their programmes
- Improve health, wellbeing and resilience of the young people
- Provide bespoke support to help the young people address the challenges they face
- Help young people reduce their risk of homelessness and embark on a journey out of homelessness

Young People Forward is delivered by the following Active Partnerships and partners:

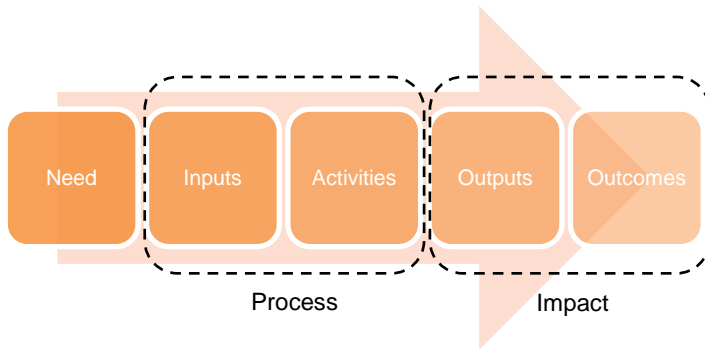
- Greater Sport (Manchester)
- MSP (Merseyside)
- Yorkshire Sport Foundation (West and South Yorkshire)
- Active Humber (Humber)
- Rise (Tyne and Wear and Northumberland)
- Active Lancashire (Lancashire)
- Street Soccer Scotland (Scotland)

The Active Partnerships and Street Soccer Scotland were selected to be part of Young People Forward using a number of different criteria. This included experience and capacity to deliver. But a major driver for selecting the organisations to be involved was geography. Young People Forward is funded by the London Marathon Charitable Trust with funds from Virgin Money. Virgin Money operates predominantly in the north of England and Scotland and they wanted the charitable work to also take place here.

This report contains the findings of the final evaluation of the funding. It is accompanied by a shorter report aimed at the Active Partnership Network that showcases the learning from this work and what it means for future delivery.

Evaluation approach

We use Theory of Change to underpin all our evaluation work. A simplified Theory of Change is shown below.



We will use Theory of Change throughout our work to understand the interplay between what the work does (process) and what it changes (impact). This encourages us to think not just about what changes but whether there are conditions where more change could have been achieved if a different process had been used. It also means the focus of our evaluation is on learning that can be shared more widely across the network. This approach encourages us to consider not just ‘what’ changed but ‘how’ and ‘why’ a change occurred.

Our approach to the evaluation is shown below. We worked alongside the Project Management group for Young People Forward who were responsible for the quantitative data collection via the delivery partner organisations. We include the data that was collected in this report.

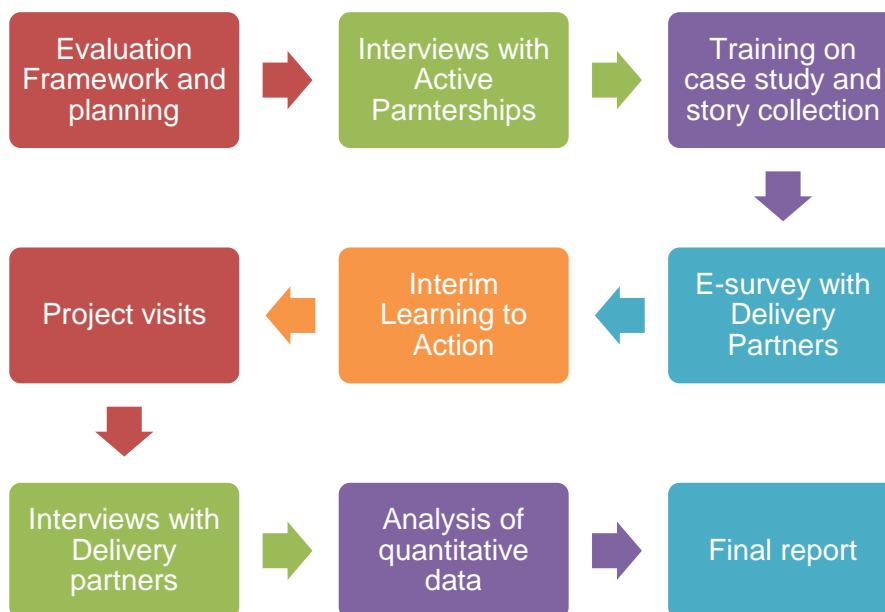


Figure 1 - Evaluation approach

The remainder of the report contains the findings from the delivery of Young People Forward. It starts with some background information about the sector and the role of sport and physical activity. It then goes on to explain the different models of delivery used and insights from this work before highlighting the reach and outcomes Young People Forward achieved. It finishes with some key learning points and looks forward to options for future delivery.

Context and background

In this section provide some of the context and background for Young People Forward. It highlights the role of the Active Partnership Network and explains the breadth of the sector Young People Forward was looking to engage with. It also sets out the existing insights from partners around the role sport and physical activity can play when working with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Active Partnership Network

The Active Partnership Network brings together the 43 Active Partnerships that operate across England. For Young People Forward they also partnered with Street Soccer Scotland to provide a reach for the project into Scotland.

Active Partnerships are locally based organisations that have developed and evolved to meet the specific needs of their local community. But all Active Partnerships have the same goal of *'creating the conditions for an active nation'* and making being active a social norm.

The 43 Active Partnerships are all different and are different sizes and have a different scope and focus. Some Active Partnerships have a substantial amount of direct delivery. For example Active Lancashire has been delivering the Challenge Through Sport Initiative for 7 years. This provides people who are in recovery or have a range of vulnerabilities with access to sport and physical activity but also a wider range of wrap around support. Other Active Partnerships have a strong focus on partnership building and organisational support. For example, Greater Sport employ an Equality Lead for Young People as part of a push to engage more non-sporty young people in sport, providing a range of support to organisations to help make that happen.

This variation inevitably means there is variation in the level of experience the Active Partnerships had around working with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

'It [working on Young People Forward] has been a massive learning curve' Stakeholder

Although for some of the Active Partnerships working with this particular target group was new to them, several of the Active Partnerships involved in Young People Forward have been working to reach the most inactive. This inevitably means they have been working in communities that experience a similar range of barriers and complexities to those targeted by Young People Forward.

The resource available through Young People Forward allowed those Active Partnerships (and Street Soccer Scotland) that already had direct delivery to continue or expand this work. It allowed Active Partnerships with existing relationships with the sector in place to strengthen these links and allowed the remaining Active Partnerships to use the funding to pump prime new activity and new partnerships.

This variety has, inevitably, meant different Active Partnerships approached the delivery in different ways and we provide more information about this in the following chapter.

Homelessness sector

Young People Forward focused on those young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. This meant a wide range of potential delivery partners could be involved. The broad types of organisations that had the potential for involvement in Young People Forward included:

- Educational settings – targeting young people, particularly in Pupil Referral Units who had instability in their home lives
- Youth Groups – targeting young people with a range of vulnerabilities and complexities who are being engaged in positive activities
- Supported accommodation – targeting young people living in supported accommodation and receiving housing support
- Homelessness charities – organisations specifically working with young people who are homeless, this includes those that are street homeless as well as those sofa surfing
- Refugee and asylum seeker charities – organisations working with young people who are in accommodation while waiting for home office approval or those in receipt of approval but in need of additional support

The sector is well used to working in partnership, as different organisations have different contracts with the Local Authority to provide different types of housing and support. But it is important to recognise those organisations with a specific focus on supporting homeless young people do so under often rigid local authority contracts. This can often mean resources are limited and are focused on the specific support needs of the young person. Although all the people we spoke to as part of this evaluation recognised the value of positive activities and did as much as they could, they were often constrained by the availability of funding.

‘Our contracts are tight and very specific’ Stakeholder

The young people who are engaged through these organisations will have variety of challenges and be at different stages and so what often characterises the work in this sector is the person centred and caring approach taken by workers.

‘All of the young people that come to us are here for very different reasons’ Stakeholder

‘We meet young people where they are now, they could be in crisis or they could know what is happening next’ Stakeholder

‘We love the young people and that’s why we do the job that we do. You don’t walk away’ Stakeholder

This often recognises that building trust will take time and consistency.

‘If they already have distrust with an adult you have got to work out how to build their trust’ Stakeholder

This allows them to work in a way that recognises the instability they have faced and the mental health issues they are coping with. There was also a recognition the needs young people are presenting are getting more substantial.

'There is an array of mental health, a lot of sadness and rejection'

'We're making them become adults long before we would normally expect them' Stakeholder

'Ten years ago when I started working in the sector the needs of the young people were much less than they are now' Stakeholder

Supporting young people who have housing instability was a common feature of several of the organisations involved in Young People Forward. But for asylum seekers this instability can be even worse as they can be frequently moved at short notice around the country, making it difficult to create any roots or stability in their lives.

'You are in a constant state of uncertainty about where you are going to move...they can be playing here today and next week he's gone' Stakeholder

Sport and physical activity

The many and varied benefits of sport and physical activity are being increasingly well documented. Sport England has collated much of this evidence into an easy to use and research directory¹. The academic literature on the specific role that sport and physical activity can play in people with more complex needs is more limited. What is often unclear when understanding this research is how much is down to the sport and physical activity and how much is down to the mentoring and wrap around support that can take place while sport or physical activity is taking place.

100% of the delivery partners involved in our evaluation already had an understanding of the potential of sport and physical activity when working with their clients.

'We know it [sport and physical activity] is something that is beneficial, but the time hasn't been there' Stakeholder

Delivery partners identified that sport was a tool they could use that allowed a range of conversations to then take place around it.

'I see sport as being a universal multi-faceted tool they can engage with regardless of what they are facing' Stakeholder

'With sport it is all the conversations that go on around it' Stakeholder

'In individual case work being able to do that with a racket removes the barriers they put up' Stakeholder

'Something we know is that we can provide housing but that won't solve their problems. Often through positive activities we can help them get to the bottom of it' Stakeholder

¹ <https://indd.adobe.com/view/6309558a-46a6-43f2-bd6f-8f70b8c47ce1>

'Find with physical activity they start taking an interest in their eating, how they are sleeping. It seems like a gateway to talk about so many other things' Stakeholder

'There tends to be a high level of anger management issues and this [physical activity] is a way of connecting with people' Stakeholder

Others identified how it can be the first step in helping people make purposeful use of their time and the opportunity to be active was a good way of supporting this step.

'Focus is on engaging them in purposeful use of their time and sport and physical activity is one way of doing that' Stakeholder

'It gives them something so they can use their time more meaningfully' Stakeholder

For others they recognised the opportunity to be active with others who have a similar experience was a way of creating a sense of belonging but also a sense of security and safety.

'It is the connection with people that is the biggest hook, the sense of belonging' Stakeholder

'They feel safe, even going to a very straight looking gym is scary for non-conforming' Stakeholder

'it's not just the physical place of being safe it is feeling emotionally safe' Stakeholder

Delivery models

In this section we provide some detail on the different models used by Active Partnerships and Street Soccer Scotland. It also provides some insights and learning from the practical aspects of delivery.

Approaches and models used

As we set out in the previous section the seven partners involved in Young People Forward all had different levels of experience and expertise working with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The approach taken by each of the partners is illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2 - Partner approaches to Young People Forward

We specifically discuss the impact of the January 2021 Covid-19 lockdown later in this section. But it is important to highlight the challenge this lockdown had on the delivery models the partners in Young People Forward could use.

For those Active Partnerships that had less experience working with partners in this sector, the timing of the funding made the initial start up phase a challenge. Active Partnerships found those organisations directly supporting homeless young people through supported accommodation or wrap around services were, rightly, focused on maintaining the safety of staff and young people against the backdrop of Covid-19. This meant they did not have the time to work with Active Partnerships to develop new projects. Although the time frame for Young People Forward was extended it was still a short funding stream with all delivery due to be complete by August 2021. For organisations in the depth of Covid-19 uncertainty taking on new projects and new partnerships in this time was a challenge.

All Active Partnerships succeeded in reaching a wide range of partners who could support delivery. A full list of the organisations engaged by each of the partners is provided in Appendix 1. But they included:

- National organisations with local delivery (e.g. Crisis, Refugee Council, Centrepoin, Albert Kennedy Trust)
- Local organisations with a national affiliation (e.g. Emmaus, YMCA)
- Local charities supporting homeless young people (e.g. Liverpool Homelss FC, Nightsafe, We are with You)
- Supported accommodation providers (e.g. Stepping Stone, South Tyneside Churches Key Project)
- Local authorities supporting Looked After Children (e.g Wigan Social Care, Gateshead Council, Sefton Council)

In total, 49 different delivery partners worked on Young People Forward alongside the seven lead organisations. This helps shows the excellent reach of the work into a wide variety of different organisations offering support to a wide range of different young people.

As we have set out already, the short time scales for the project did influence the organisations Young People Forward could work with. 100% of the delivery partners involved in this evaluation already recognised the value of sport and physical activity for their client group and often had an existing approach that could be expanded.

Figure 3 provides some examples of the types of projects that were supported through Young People Forward.

Crisis used the funding to support an existing sport and physical activity officer provided with a resource to specifically focus on young people. They consulted the young people about what they would like to do and were able to offer group adventure activities alongside 1:1 sessions with an opportunity to be active

Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme worked with the Refugee Council to provide resistance bands and other sports equipment. They provided small group sessions in the car park when restrictions allowed before progressing to a regular football session

Askins Lodge received funding to improve their outdoor space and to purchase gym equipment for the supported accommodation. They also received funding so they could train their Progression Coaches as Personal Trainers

Wigan Athletic Community Trust worked with Looked After Children to offer a summer programme of activities and opportunities to be active including Go Karting and Laser Quest. They also worked to get young people taking part in the wider range of activities offered by the Trust

Women's Force Vision received funding to continue a successful football project offering regular opportunities to be active and a women's project providing opportunities for gardening and growing. The project also provided kit and equipment to allow the football to take place

The Running Charity was able to use funding from Young People Forward to support a full time post for a year to establish the work in Leeds. They use running to work with young people experiencing homelessness or with complex needs and offer one to one and group opportunities to be active

Figure 3 - Examples of the projects supported by Young People Forward

Types of sport and physical activity undertaken

All the people involved in the delivery of Young People Forward regularly spoke to young people about what they would like to get involved in around sports and physical activity. Some delivery organisations including Street Soccer Scotland and those projects working with refugees and asylum seekers offer football based sessions as a hook. But the staff and coaches at these sessions regularly have discussions with people attending to explore what else they might want to be involved in.

The types of sport and physical activity that have been made available through Young People Forward include:

- Personal training and circuits based work
- Adventure type activities including woodland trips and Go Karting
- Functional activities including walking to the shops
- Walking including longer walks in more mountainous terrain
- Gardening and nature based opportunities

- Football
- Horse Riding
- Tennis

In addition, some delivery organisations used the funding for pieces of equipment that could be kept in their supported accommodation after the delivery period of Young People Forward came to an end.

There were some interesting insights provided by delivery partners about helping young people identify what sport or physical activity opportunity they wanted to be involved in. In some cases too much choice was as difficult as too little. Helping young people identify what they would like to get involved with often involved a conversation with their key worker to help them think it through.

‘It’s difficult to ask for what you have never had’ Young Person

‘One of the biggest challenges was getting young people to want to do something’ Stakeholder

‘we had some who tried to sign up for everything but then lost confidence...it took time to focus on what they wanted to do. The key worker took on the role of chatting about what was right for them’ Stakeholder

Overall, despite the disruption created by Covid-19, close to 300 physical activity sessions took place as a result of the funding and support. The breakdown by Young People Forward partner is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Physical activity sessions delivery by Young People Forward partner

Partner	Number of physical activity session delivered
Active Merseyside	29
Active Lancashire	48
Greater Sport	50
Active Humber	50
Yorkshire Sport Foundation	40
Rise	61
Street Soccer Scotland	16
Total	294

Delivery focused insights

Working with young people

Respecting the young people’s situation

The young people involved in Young People Forward are in a difficult period of their lives. They are either currently experiencing homelessness or are going through a period of their lives that makes that a possibility. It is not unexpected that young people engaged in the project are often chaotic.

What this translates to for many of the projects delivered under Young People Forward was being understanding about this. Young people would often cancel at the last minute, fail to attend or forget they had agreed to attend. Delivery partners told us about the importance of not taking this personally and recognising this simply reflected where the young people are.

It is also important to recognise young people will often be coming to the session because it gives them an escape. It is the opportunity to do sport or physical activity that is drawing them in. This means although conversations about wider issues will often take place, these happen at the pace of the young person and when they want to share. We found it was important for deliverers to be sensitive to this.

'What goes on in my head never leaves' Young Person

'It's really relaxed it is not poking at the emotional' Stakeholder

'Everyone is not the same, so you have to be open minded with everything' Stakeholder

This approach is also reflected in the way the sessions are run where young people are encouraged to just join in and take part.

'It's positive psychology...stop listening to those negative voices in your head and think yeah I can do that' Stakeholder

'I was welcomed at the first session, I had to fill in a form but then after that I was just ready to just jump straight on when I got here' Young Person

There was also a clear recognition that some young people would not be ready to join in, take part or make the changes needed to move forward with their lives. The introduction to the sessions was sometimes about raising awareness of the possibilities, recognising that change may not happen straight away and they may not yet be willing to engage.

'People have to be at a stage when they are ready to receive it. You can drop seeds in people but at that moment it is not the right thing, but 6 months down the line it might resonate' Stakeholder

'If they are not ready for it they are not ready for it but you will find they will come back again when they are' Stakeholder

'Each person is at a different point in their process, it's not what we want or how quickly we are trying to achieve something it is the process for that young person' Stakeholder

'It worked really well in some areas and with some young people in other areas felt just like a walk' Stakeholder

Creating an inclusive sporting environment

A hugely striking feature of the group sessions we attended through Young People Forward was how inclusive they were. They included people of different abilities but it was striking how diverse the group often was and how welcomed everybody was at these sessions.

'Yeah there are some people who are not so good, some people that are too good and then there's people like me that just shouldn't be here because we're too bad' Young Person

'Basically if you want to have fun come along and join in, don't worry about your ability, what you look like what you sound like, what race you are what nationally you are' Young Person

'If I go to a 'normal gym' I will be judged, people feel different because of their experiences' Young Person

'It's the socialisation but it is different to playing with a team. Teams are more strict' Young Person

All the people we spoke to in the evaluation about this inclusive environment identified how everyone who was at the session was there to play and take part, but they all knew there was a story and a reason for them being there. This made the sessions welcoming and powerfully inclusive.

One further element of this inclusive environment was created by bringing older and younger members together. Street Soccer Scotland, Active Lancashire and the projects working with refugee and asylum seekers had approaches that allow any person to take part in a session. Nobody is turned away. Other projects developed this approach as the delivery progressed. Crisis in the North East had planned to run activity days in a local wood for young people only but they opened it up to all members. They reflected this opportunity improved the experience for the young people. The bringing together of older and younger members created a different dynamic of people supporting each other.

Type of delivery

Group versus one to one

One of the interesting features of some of the delivery around Young People Forward is there is a substantial amount of group work that takes place. Where group activity is happening successfully this tends to be because of a limited number of reasons:

- The organisation and session is well established and referral partners are continuously and actively promoting the opportunities to a wide range of people
- The sessions are inclusive to ages and abilities. This helps create a critical mass of people at the sessions so there are always enough people for a 'good game' and encourages people to come along
- The group is taking place with a closed group of people. For example young people who are resident at a particular accommodation or asylum seekers from the same accommodation

Across Young People Forward organisations, including hugely well established organisations, struggled to form new groups. This was in part due to the type of work young people had but was also because of anxieties about being part of a group the young people had.

'It was more difficult than imagined to get people to come along to a group session. Young Peoples schedules aren't very fixed. They are often in work but it can be zero hour contracts or flexible work so in reality ended up being one to one' Stakeholder

'We thought people would just sign up, but it took a couple of weeks to get started and given the nature of the young people they can disengage and the young people can change' Stakeholder

'Based on some of the feedback we have found that young people don't want to engage with group work. There is anxiety, fear of Covid-19 so they need to engage one to one with the young people first before the group' Stakeholder

Several projects offered young people the opportunity to do 1 to 1 sessions before progressing onto the group activities. This was used successfully by Active Lancashire as a way of building relationships prior to introducing people to the group sessions.

Organisations also told us it was important to have realistic expectations and when a new group was starting they would judge success to be 2 or 3 young people attending.

Offering different opportunities and settings

Young People Forward provided a wide range of young people to try different activities. This included opportunities for Horse Riding and activity days. Wigan Athletic provided young people with the opportunity to do Go Karting (which they all loved) as well as other outdoor activities.

Crisis found when they consulted with young people there was a strong desire to do outdoor adventure type activities including paddle boarding. This led to them arranging an outdoor adventure day that included Archery.

They also found being in a different setting was hugely beneficial to the young people. It created a different environment in which conversations could take place. Perhaps more importantly they were also fun and gave young people something enjoyable to take part in and to create some positive memories.

Approach to funding

Funding flexibility

One of the key strengths of Young People Forward was its flexibility. The funding wasn't prescriptive so it could do a wide range of different things depending on what the organisation wanted to focus and it could be tailored to young peoples needs.

For example, refugees and asylum seekers are often a transient population. Asylum Seekers, in particular, can be transferred from their accommodation at any point. They also often have many different needs including injuries from their travels, poor mental health and lack of suitable clothing and equipment.

Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme were able to purchase resistance bands for the asylum seekers to use in their own rooms during lockdown. Womens Force Vision were able to provide boots and some clothing to allow young people to play football.

This flexible funding allowed equipment to be provided alongside activities. As we discuss later, the provision of training and equipment ensured some of the resource will have a long lasting legacy.

Partnerships

As we have already referenced for some of the partners involved in Young People Forward, working with this particular group of young people was new. This, in many ways, is a huge positive. The work allowed Active Partnerships to reach out to a new network of potential

partners. Young People Forward provided people with a relatively small project they could work together on.

However, due to the timescales on Young People Forward it meant some of the delivery was focused on those organisations already with a sport and physical activity offer that could be strengthened with this funding.

'It worked perfectly for us because we already had the structure' Stakeholder

There were some notable examples of where the sport offer and the partnerships between the Active Partnerships and the homelessness sector were new. These stand out as fantastic examples of the potential of this partnership. This included Roundabout and Askins Lodge. In both cases the organisations recognised the potential of positive activities but lacked the resources to be able to do more. Funding through Young People Forward allowed Roundabout to provide young people with a variety of different sporting opportunities. Askins Lodge were able to provide new gym equipment.

What was notable about both these organisations is, is they are part of large organisations with fundraising and tender writing teams. However, Young People Forward funding needed to filter through to the particular manager or team leader who could organise the opportunity for the young people they worked with.

All the Active Partnerships who were new to this type of delivery were able to fund a combination of different partnerships. Some were newer to sport and physical activity delivery and others were well established and could use the funding to do more. This was a pragmatic and sensible approach to ensuring the funding was allocated and the resource was used wisely.

Length of delivery

The biggest challenge for Young People Forward was the time scale for its delivery. Although this was well managed by the Active Partnerships it was clear from speaking to a wide range of partners the same money available over a longer time frame would have been more beneficial. This problem was exacerbated by the Covid-19 lockdown at the end of 2020 and the start of 2021.

The reason for the length of delivery being a challenge centres around trust and relationships.

Young people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are experiencing a wide range of challenges and difficulties. This complexity means it can take time to build relationships and foster trust. Even where there were experienced delivery teams like Roundabout and Crisis, they found it took longer than they thought it would to get young people to engage and take part. A longer period in which the activity could take place would have helped with the time it takes to engage.

Equally important is the trust and relationships between partners. Forming new partnerships between organisations without a track record of working together takes time. It takes time to understand the processes and values of each organisation. Active Partnerships found that, because of Covid-19, some organisations working with the target group did not have the time to form these new relationships.

Staff skills

There is huge variety in the Young People Forward projects but in broad terms there were staff and workers involved who:

- Combined the skills with delivering sport and physical activity with the mentoring and wrap around support. This was at Street Soccer Scotland and Active Lancashire and in some of the projects including Askins Lodge and The Running Charity
- Focused on the physical activity provision and worked with wider partners to provide the wrap around support to young people
- Focused on the wrap around support for young and worked with a specialist physical activity provider (e.g. Horse Riding Instructor) to provide the physical activity or sporting opportunity

The relationship between the worker and the young people in any of these three different settings is critical. The staff we met were hugely empathetic and patient. Some organisations including Active Lancashire and Street Soccer Scotland employ people with lived experience. But workers from across the different organisations were well respected by the young people.

Workers identified the need to have patience and understanding as young people would often cancel. They also needed a good understanding of barriers and mental health issues. Crucially they also identified the importance of having good risk assessments, particularly for any group settings.

'Understanding of the barriers...potential understanding of mental health issues and understanding how to deal with that' Stakeholder

'Need to have robust risk assessments in place as anything can happen at a session' Stakeholder

Speaking to the young people and observing the sessions highlighted the key skill staff had during the sport and physical activity sessions. This was the ability to find the balance between being interested in someone but also knowing when to leave someone to it and to just let them play or get their frustrations out.

'They realise if you were having a bad day or someone else was having a bad day, its that kind of vibe that surrounds you, they will give you the opportunity to talk but also keep your head down, supportive but not intrusive' Young Person

'If I am having a bad day they can see me having an off day and that just say and do stuff to keep me happy' Young Person

'Our coach is so nice, he helps us to play good, he got us some shoes, t-shirts and was trying to make our trips to Liverpool...that was my dream place' Young Person

'He is a good man' Young Person

'They are really good guys, really supportive, they are not going to lie to you and they are like properly nice' Young Person

'They were so friendly like I had been going all the time...because of that relaxed feeling it helped me move on and join in' Young Person

The relationship between the worker and participants was also key. This meant they could spot potential trigger points that represented flashes of anger or frustration. This ability to spot issues and intervene before they became problems was a skill developed from the long term relationship they often had with the participants.

Staff were also passionate about their work and role and how they could support the lives of the young people they worked with.

'I think because of how passionate I am about mental health, I think its one of the most important things we can do, that it is not really directed for them bit it's gonna be an improvement without them kind of trying...a lot of them have come in and don't have that type of self care of know how to improve their mental health' Stakeholder

Impact of Covid-19

At the time of the final phase of the Young People Forward evaluation the final Covid-19 restrictions in England and Scotland had been eased. But for much of the time of the Young People Forward delivery restrictions were in place.

Delivering any kind of project during Covid-19 has been a challenge and this was also the case for Young People Forward. All organisations that offered support to homeless young people managed the restrictions differently and placed different requirements on them. For some this meant treating and supported accommodation as one household. For asylum seekers each room was counted as a household meaning they were unable to spend any time indoors with anyone.

'In the football sessions in particular, a lot of the attendees are quite isolated where they are staying in the hotel. There was a point during COVID where they weren't even allowed to have meals together...playing football provided that space and that network' Stakeholder

For the Active Partnerships building new relationships with new partners this introduced a whole set of new challenges. This included the fact in some organisations staff were placed on furlough, meaning it was difficult to find people to have the initial conversation with. It also included the challenge of different Covid-19 requirements for different organisations.

Covid-19 also had an impact on the Active Partnerships to build strong relationships with the organisations and young people. Active Partnerships identified how they would have liked to see more and get to know the young people directly.

In reality, much of the Young People Forward delivery happened once restrictions had eased and people were able to meet face to face.

For those Young People Forward partners working directly with young people during the early parts of the lockdown restrictions easing they would start with one to one sessions and small group walks. Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme was able to run some sessions in car parks. For some young people these smaller sessions ended up being beneficial as it provided a smaller group for them to return to and allowed an easy route into the group work.

Partners identified how the lack of socialising was an issue for young people as the protective factors that come from being connected to other people had been removed.

'Covid-19 has meant a lot of the usual protective factors got stripped away' Stakeholder

Street Soccer Scotland noticed the substantial impact of the lockdown on their participants and this led to them writing to the Civil Service to get permission for small groups to be able to meet and support each other.

Digital element

During late 2020 and early 2021 the partners involved through Young People Forward the option of delivering some digital sessions. In common with many other organisations they found 'new' digital sessions were really challenging to get started. By this point in Covid-19 homelessness organisations had been exploring different options for utilising digital work and most organisations engaged through this evaluation felt unable to progress with a digital offer and preferred to wait until restrictions eased. It is important to remember in January 2021 there were the first tentative signs that easing of restrictions was going to be possible and some degree of normality would return. Most organisations were keen to wait for this to happen.

There were also practical challenges associated with delivering digital content. The first was the lack of regular connectivity. Young people were often swapping phones and numbers and so regular contact details were difficult to maintain. In addition, there was the challenge of credit being available to use the phones.

Liverpool Homeless Football Club also reported it was much more difficult to motivate and engage participants using digital tools. Overall, those partners involved in this evaluation identified the challenge of building relationships with online delivery.

Role of Active Partnerships

As we have already set out the Active Partnerships all took a slightly different approach to delivering Young People Forward. Street Soccer Scotland and Active Lancashire were involved in the direct delivery of sessions and were more involved in the lives of young people.

The remaining Active Partnerships worked through the delivery partners. The feedback from those delivery partners about the role of the Active Partnerships was very positive. All the people involved in this evaluation highlighted how approachable, friendly and flexible the people they worked with had been.

'They were fantastic, always there and were even supportive of the bidding process' Stakeholder

'They were so helpful which made it really easy for me' Stakeholder

The Active Partnerships also ensured they utilised their strengths. They connected projects together where this was appropriate to do. For example, Merseyside Sports Partnership had a Community Centre apply for funding. They identified how the project could be

strengthened by linking them to an Education Provider. This led to a project that could offer a wider range of opportunities for young people.

Although there were informal opportunities to connect organisations together the delivery partners we spoke to identified how they would have liked to connect with the other delivery partners involved in their area.

'One of the opportunities missed was the opportunity to meet and communicate with the other projects' Stakeholder

There was also an opportunity for more training to take place between the different partners involved in Young People Forward. In particular for Active Partnerships to learn from homelessness organisations and for those organisations to learning more about sport and physical activity opportunities. This links to the time it takes to build relationships with partners. As the relationship progresses there is more trust and more willingness to take on training opportunities. As Young People Forward comes to an end, several of the Active Partnerships are looking at this as a way of keeping the relationships going.

Capacity issues

One issue that became apparent as Young People Forward progressed was the competing priorities in the different Active Partnerships. During Winter 2020 and 2021 there was considerable pressure on organisations to prioritise their Covid-19 response.

During spring and summer 2021 the Active Partnerships were re-looking at their priorities and their relationship with Sport England. In practical terms this meant there was a freeze on filling any posts that became vacant whilst the strategic direction of the organisation was clarified.

For the young people and the delivery partners this stretched capacity was not an issue as Active Partnerships worked hard to ensure the funding was allocated and the grant recipients received what was expected from them. It was in the wider work, in particular around the evaluation the lack of capacity in some Active Partnerships was clear. Some Active Partnerships felt unable to engage with the evaluation and there was considerable delay in providing contact details for delivery partners or helping to arrange visits.

Supporting and sharing

Young People Forward ran weekly meetings for the Active Partnerships and Street Soccer Scotland. These weekly meetings created a forum where good practice good be shared between the different delivery organisations. The sessions were also used for guest speakers who could share lived experience or delivery partners who were happy to share what they were doing with the resource that was provided.

Reach and Impact

In this section we help highlight who Young People Forward reached and the impact the opportunity to be active or take part in sport had on those young people.

The data presented here is based on 271 baseline questionnaires and 41 follow up questionnaires collected by delivery organisations and Active Partnerships from the young people involved in the delivery. This is supplemented by 30 interviews with young people who were part of the project.

Reach

Overall, 722 young people were involved in a Young People Forward project. The number of participants is relatively evenly split across the 7 partners, shown in Table 1, but with Street Soccer Scotland reaching nearly double of any other partner. This reflects the open access nature of their sessions and the fact they are a long standing, well respected partner with a wide range of referral partners.

Table 1 - Number of participants by Active Partnership

Partner	Number of beneficiaries engaged in a physical activity session
Active Merseyside	103
Active Lancashire	102
Greater Sport	94
Active Humber	60
Yorkshire Sport Foundation	65
Rise	99
Street Soccer Scotland	199
Total	722

Table 2 and Table 3 show the age range and gender of participants. It helps show the project reached a diverse range of young people with 57% of participants 19 and under and 43% 20 and over. The project reached more males than females with 68% of participants male. This perhaps reflects the way sport and physical activity is used as a tool to engage participants and reflects their existing interest in being active.

'I used to do a lot of boxing. It was just something to do I was always in the house doing nothing playing on the computer so I thought I would get out and actually do something'
Young Person

Table 2 - Age range of participants

Age	Number	Percentage
16	17	6%
17	40	15%
18	51	19%
19	46	17%
20	25	9%

Age	Number	Percentage
21	16	6%
22	24	9%
23	25	9%
24	15	6%
25	8	3%
Blank	4	1%
Total	271	

Table 3 - Gender of participants

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	77	29%
Male	181	68%
Other	2	0.5%
Prefer not to say	4	1%
Transgender	4	1%
Total	268	

Table 4 shows the ethnicity of participants. This highlights some of the limitations of the data collection for this project. Of those providing data, 85% are white. But we know Young People Forward reached a variety of ethnically diverse communities, particularly asylum seekers. These are potentially under-represented in the data as English is often limited and there can be a fear of form filling due to concerns it could impact on their asylum application. This is unfounded but highlights one of the key challenges in collecting data from this group.

Table 4 - Ethnicity of participants

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	2	1%
Black or Black British	15	6%
Mixed	11	4%
Other Ethnic Group	12	4%
White	230	85%
Total	270	

Table 5 and Table 6 help show the health of young people this project reached. It helps show that over a third have a physical or mental health condition that will last 12 months or longer and only 8% of young people rate their health as excellent. 29% rate their health as poor or fair. This illustrates some of the particular challenges young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness face. It also illustrates the potential benefits of increasing the amount of physical activity this group engage with.

Table 5 - Number and percentage with a physical or mental health condition

Physical or mental health condition	Number	Percentage
Yes	92	34%
No	126	47%

Prefer not to say	51	19%
Total	269	

Table 6 - Number and percentage rating their health

Health	Number	Percentage
Excellent	22	8%
Very Good	74	28%
Good	95	35%
Fair	61	23%
Poor	16	6%
Total	268	

Table 7 and Figure 5 help show the varying levels of personal wellbeing experienced by participants in Young People Forward. Figure 5 helps show the distribution across all indicators is reasonably even across each of the levels. When the data is grouped as shown in Table 7 it helps show around a quarter of young people have low levels of personal wellbeing and over half have medium to low levels of personal wellbeing.

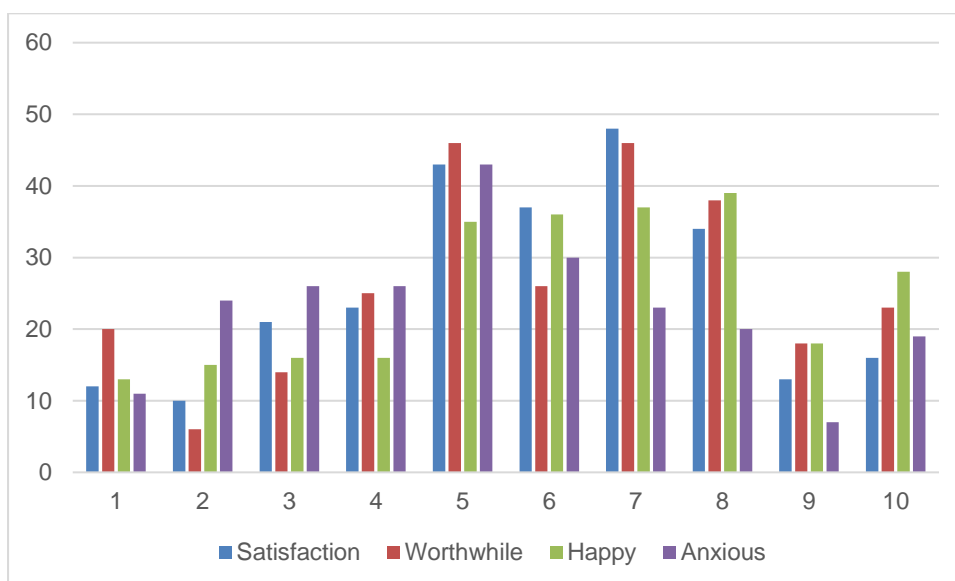


Figure 5 - Distribution of personal wellbeing indicators

Table 7 - Personal wellbeing indicators

Personal Wellbeing	Life Satisfaction		Worthwhile		Happiness	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Low	66	26%	65	25%	60	24%
Medium	80	31%	72	27%	71	28%
High	82	32%	84	32%	76	30%
Very High	29	11%	41	16%	46	18%
Total	257		262		253	

These relatively low levels of personal wellbeing are even more clearly shown by the levels of anxiety they experience shown in Table 8. This helps show that 43% of participants have high levels of anxiety and 73% have medium to high levels of anxiety.

Table 8 - Personal wellbeing indicator anxiety

Personal Wellbeing	Anxiety	
	Number	%
Very Low	11	5%
Low	50	22%
Medium	69	30%
High	99	43%
Total	229	

Table 9 helps show some indicators of resilience among the young people involved in Young People Forward. It is perhaps unsurprising that young people involved in the project have relatively good levels of resilience. They have often had to go through a significant amount of hardship and periods where they have had to look after themselves. 75% feel able to solve their own problems and 81% recognise they have a number of good qualities. It is also worth reflecting that the time frame of Young People Forward means it has primarily reached those young people who are already engaged with support services. These relatively high levels of resilience may reflect some of the work that has already taken place to support them in their lives.

Table 9 - Resilience levels

Resilience	If I find something difficult I keep trying		I can usually solve my own problems		I feel have a number of good qualities		I am able to do things as well as most other people	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Strongly Agree	58	21%	68	25%	69	26%	153	57%
Agree	160	59%	144	53%	147	55%	56	21%
Disagree	45	17%	50	19%	42	16%	54	20%
Strongly Disagree	8	3%	8	3%	9	3%	7	3%
Total	271		270		267		270	

Table 10 and Table 11 help show attitudes towards physical activity among the young people involved in Young People Forward. Two thirds exercise for 30 minutes a day on 3 or more days and just 19% are only active for 1 day or less. This suggests that young people are reasonably physically active when they join the project and are active on days away from just when they are active at the project. Attitudes towards physical activity are also strong at the baseline starting position with 80% feeling they have the opportunity to be active, 84% feeling they have the ability to be active and 75% finding sport enjoyable or satisfying.

As we discuss later in this section this illustrates how sport and physical activity is being used in Young People Forward as a tool to motivate and engage young people. Although

there are some examples where young people become more active, at least two thirds of those involved in Young People Forward have an existing positive attitude towards sport and physical activity.

Table 10 - Attitudes towards physical activity

Activity	Opportunity to be active		Ability to be active		Find sport/exercise enjoyable and satisfying	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Strongly Agree	79	29%	89	33%	109	40%
Agree	139	51%	132	49%	94	35%
Neither agree nor Disagree	26	10%	39	14%	50	18%
Disagree	24	9%	7	3%	12	4%
Strongly Disagree	3	1%	1	0%	3	1%
Can't say	2	1%	2	1%	3	1%
Total	273		270		271	

Table 11 - Total number of days done more than 30 minutes of exercise

Exercise	Total days when done over 30 mins		Days of sport or physical activity done with the project or organisation	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	48	19%	82	38%
2	39	15%	52	24%
3	48	19%	29	14%
4	37	14%	20	9%
5	30	12%	14	7%
6	18	7%	8	4%
7	36	14%	8	4%
Total	268		213	

Impact

We can explore the impact of Young People Forward through the 41 young people who provided a baseline and follow up. We explored through the data whether this was a representative sample of the young people involved in the delivery, as determined by the Reach data. Overall:

- Gender in the follow ups is similar to the overall profile with 29% female and 64% male
- A much greater proportion of people identifying white as their ethnicity completed a follow up with 93% of people completing a follow up identifying as white
- The profile of baseline health including whether they had a physical or mental health condition expecting to last 12 months or more broadly in line with the overall profile with 43% without a condition and 33% with

This suggests we can draw some insights from this follow up data that are potentially more widely applicable.

Personal wellbeing

Table 12 and Table 13 help show the changes in personal wellbeing indicators experienced by young people taking part in Young People Forward. It is important to remember young people were part of a wider programme of wrap around support with sport and physical activity being one of the tools used to support them. However, overall we found over half had improved happiness and close to 60% had an improvement in their self-reported anxiety.

Table 12 - Changes in personal wellbeing

Personal Wellbeing	Life Satisfaction		Worthwhile		Happiness	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Improvement	19	48%	12	29%	21	51%
No Change	9	23%	20	49%	9	22%
Negative	12	30%	9	22%	11	27%
Total	40		41		41	

Table 13 - Changes in anxiety

Personal Wellbeing	Anxiety	
	Number	%
Improvement	23	58%
No Change	7	18%
Negative	10	25%
Total	40	

Although it is important to recognise how Young People Forward was part of a much wider programme of support, through our evaluation we explored with the young people the specific role that being active was playing in helping their overall wellbeing.

They highlighted how the opportunity to be active was hugely important to their mental health as it provided a distraction from their thoughts and a way to destress.

'It just takes your mind off everything else and it uses your energy, I could miss it out but I'll always come and play football' Young Person

'It takes my mind off all the stuff I am dealing with it helps me something instead of feeling numb' Young Person

'When you are on the football pitch you forget about everything...When you are on the pitch you are not thinking about anything else you are just concentrating and you are forgetting about everything else' Young Person

'Benefits of keeping active are endless I can find myself, my mental health is not great, if I sit about the house and let myself dwell into that not really doing anything instead of coming out and being active I find my confidence and my positivity and my general levels of depression are much worse. If I come along to a session and feel good, get sweaty it makes you feel good for the rest of the day' Young Person

'Great – I feel much better both mentally and physically....It makes me feel calm and takes away all of the bad thoughts' Young Person

'It helps take your mind of things, if you have issues or problems going on at home, you know you get a break from it kicking the ball about' Young Person

'I get all sorts of personal benefits, your mental state as well as your physical state – makes you think much better about life' Young Person

'If I am having a bad day...they always send me home laughing, yeah I forget about all the shit that's happened. There's a bit of fellowship. There's a lot of shit on my mind right now and this helps you forget' Young Person

'It is the only place they want to be to just get rid of their stresses, sometimes they have tantrums but it is not about football, it is way beyond football it is about what they are facing and afterwards they'll open up' Stakeholder

They also identified how it impacted on their personal mental health, in particular on days when they were feeling bad, it provided a positive focus.

'When I'm having a bad day it really helps..I was saying this to you last week, I think I was feeling really sad..it was really nice to go out and not feel rubbish' Young Person

'It definitely improves my mental health for sure, when I go home I feel positive about my day, I feel better for coming out in general you don't feel so grim, so it it's something that I need for my mental health you know' Young Person

'It's massively impacted on my personal mental health, it's really really important for all aspects like physical health' Young Person

'Its positive and keeps you positive, if I didn't go to the football and get sweaty I find it really hard to keep myself motivated for the other essential stuff I have to do' Young Person

For others the long term nature of the provision meant the session could be an anchor in their life, when the traditional anchors like family were missing.

'I don't have much family or anybody as I come from care background, come here everybody is really open, they make you feel welcome it is really good place to come' Young Person

Resilience

Table 14 shows the changes in resilience that have taken place to the young people involved in Young People Forward. As we set out at baseline the young people already had relatively high levels across the indicators of resilience. But close to 30% of people increased their perceptions of being able to do things as well as other people and nearly a quarter showed an improvement in thinking they had a number of good qualities.

Table 14 - Changes in resilience

Resilience	Keep trying	Solve my own problems	Number of good qualities	Able to do things as well as
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							most other people	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Improvement	8	20%	5	12%	10	24%	12	29%
No Change	29	70%	26	63%	22	54%	23	56%
Negative	4	10%	10	24%	9	22%	6	15%
Total	41		41		41		41	

Young people also identified how the opportunity to socialise and to attend a session provided them a focus and purpose to their day. It got them out of their house and meant they had something to commit to and a schedule to keep. The opportunity to do something they otherwise would not be able to do was the draw. This helped them connect to different people.

'I get to meet new people so there is the social aspect and its also something I've had a big passion for since I was young so it is something I've always enjoyed..exercise is also good for the mental health as well' Young Person

'I usually tend to stay in and hibernate..this is a different change of scenery' Young Person

'I was in a bad place and anything would have helped at the time it saved me really because I wasn't getting up in the morning I was really in a bad place' Young Person

'It is just something to do I was always in the house doing nothing playing on the computer so I thought I would get out and actually do something' Young Person

'For one of the young people it has expanded her social circle massively' Stakeholder

'There aren't many places you can go on an artificial pitch with decent nets. Better than a local cage. So it just gets me out of the house and keeps me busy' Young Person

'I now have a busy schedule because I do football' Young Person

'Even when I'm not feeling good it is worth the effort to come down' Young Person

'I would say we are talking a lot more [in the accommodation] because of the kit' Young Person

'I get out of the house, rather than looking at the same four walls, staying on the phone all of the time. I can just go out, every week is something different, we are doing the same thing but it is done in a different way, the teams are different, So yeah, it just gets me out of the house' Young Person

'a lot of it was focusing on interpersonal skills and how they can improve in other avenues of their lives' Stakeholder

'Getting to this group helped me to reconnect with people' Young Person

'At the end of it you can sit down and have a chat, tell me what is going on, and it helps with the confidence...doing stuff that helps you feel better about yourself, pushing yourself to feel more confident, suitable for jobs and stuff' Stakeholder

Getting active

Table 15 and Table 16 show how the amount of physical activity and the attitude towards physical activity has changed. 12% have shown a change in their enjoyment of sport or exercise but 39% have increased the total number of days on which they are active.

Table 15 - Changes in attitudes towards physical activity

	Opportunity to be physically active		Ability to be physically active		I find sport/ exercise enjoyable and satisfying	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Improvement	10	24%	7	17%	5	12%
No Change	23	56%	25	61%	27	66%
Negative	8	20%	9	22%	9	22%
Total	41		41		41	

Table 16 - Changes in amount of physical activity

	How many days have you done a total of 30 mins	
	Number	%
Improvement	16	39%
No Change	16	39%
Negative	9	22%
Total	41	

The young people we spoke to identified how the sport and physical activity they did was fun and they enjoyed the opportunities that were created to be active. This is a hugely important aspect to remember when thinking about sport and physical activity is the opportunity to have fun.

'I've always played football, so for me just jumping around and getting myself out there, having a bit of fun, practicing and doing this every week I will get a little bit better' Young Person

'It's really good to come along and have a blast' Young Person

'Exercise is much better for mental health than sticking your head under with drugs, which that would be an escapism but it is not a good healthy escapism' Stakeholder

'I feel entertained when I play it is a good way to use my time' Young Person

'I feel happy to win, because it is good, when you finish you go to sleep well' Young Person

'Encourages the other people to get out in fitness something to do and keeps you out of trouble' Young Person

For some young people it also allowed them to try something new and to have access to equipment they otherwise would not have had.

'To be honest I was the biggest distruster of runners out there....but when I stated doing it with these guys I was actually really into it. We did a few charity 5k's' Young Person

It was brilliant I was putting it all together it was like Christmas. It has definitely made a change in the house..everyone is more active..everyone was just sleeping in and like but they are now getting up much earlier and eating healthier and doing stuff' Young Person

Sport as tool

As we set out in an earlier chapter partners who had previously used sport and physical activity when working with young people had experienced its value as a tool to engage young people. This was echoed in the feedback we received from people delivering on Young People Forward. They highlighted how the opportunity to be active to get them to engage.

'For some of those young people physical activity is just the carrot' Stakeholder

'Using sport as one of the many tools to engage them in the first place' Stakeholder

'For me it has been a really good way to connect with them' Stakeholder

'It's about having a place to go, you know get time to speak to them, it gives us that smile and actually connects with the different countries and different cultures' Stakeholder

They also identified how being active together helped develop their relationship. It then helped them find their own self-care and self-management tools.

'You are just a person [when playing sport], you can build a much better relationship with them' Stakeholder

'Its about finding the importance in it, for instance, like boxing, it's a massive like release for them. And then I'm hoping they they'll find what they really like doing and would like to have a go on' Stakeholder

'Its about finding them their own little toolkit, that's what you do to enjoy, and that makes us feel bad and helping them tune into that' Stakeholder

Young people also told us how this environment helped them open up and face their own challenges.

'The trust and help they give you I was struggling when I came down here at first and now I am like different I can talk to folk a lot now so it is a big change for me' Young Person

'They have done enough already, they gave me clothes, they gave me a place to release my feelings and all that I couldn't ask for any more to be honest' Young Person

Those organisations making use of tools like football also identified how it was a universal language. It allowed people to engage regardless of their language or other abilities. They highlighted the universal language of sport to help people connect.

‘For me I see it as a the language itself, because like, you know some of them don’t understand when I’m speaking English but when the football bounces and we start kicking a ball you know everything is forgotten, you know they speak the language of football and the language of a good tackle’

‘Why football? It’s community – the community of football. You can go and play football anywhere in the world there is no language barrier in football – you have guys coming along to street soccer Scotland from all different countries, all different language barriers, some people speak some don’t. that is why football is so great, the passing is the same, the aiming towards the goals is the same – it is one of the most transferable skills anywhere – I feel most at home and settled in my head when I am playing football and that is the benefit of football’ Young Person

For some the session itself, often being outside and part of a supportive environment was part of the benefit.

‘It gives people an opportunity to come along and do something and try something out and to have some fun in a supportive environment with other people, you know that’s always going to be therapeutic in itself’ Stakeholder

‘They often feel better for just getting outside. They’ll notice nature will comment a lot they will observe and notice things like dragonflies or birds’ Stakeholder

Progression in young people

For many of the organisations receiving funding, their day job is supporting young people in this position and providing progression opportunities for young people was a natural part of what they have to offer.

Table 17 shows the number of beneficiaries who were engaged in further support. It highlights how close to 60% of participants on the project had some form of progression as part of this project. It is worth noting though this only includes those young people who had a ‘progression’ that was funded through Young People Forward and it is likely the number who were offered further support through other structures is much higher.

Table 17 - Number of beneficiaries engaged in further support

Partner	Number of beneficiaries engaged in further support
Active Merseyside	103
Active Lancashire	102
Greater Sport	94
Active Humber	20
Yorkshire Sport Foundation	17
Rise	58
Street Soccer Scotland	48
Total	442

All of the young people we consulted through this evaluation had regular discussions with people about what they wanted to do next. Some of these discussions were informal, some were more formal.

'I think it was the third or fourth time I was here and I was talking about getting a job and they helped me with getting a job and they said I know someone and I'll see if I can get you a job at this warehouse and since then I have been working there' Young Person

As we have set out the workers involved in this work are skilled and know how to have conversations with young people that help them open up. They are able to harness the passion and enthusiasm young people have and help them work towards the goals they have.

What is striking about many of the young people we spoke to was their positivity and desire to help others. There was, of course, anger and frustration at the challenges they face in their lives but the projects supported by Young People Forward were helping to harness their positivity and help them to support others.

'I've been doing it [working with young people] as soon as I turned 18 and I wanted to give something back to what I grew up in, hopefully when I am 21 I can get into supporting residential care' Young Person

'I wanted to help people as they had helped me' Young People

It is however important to recognise that one of the traits with more complex people is a tendency to self-sabotage when things are going well. Some of the projects supported through Young People Forward have longevity, they have been around for years and will continue to be. This is hugely important as it provides a base for young people to return to, so they can get support when they are ready and as many times as they need.

Sustaining the delivery

Much of the work supported by Young People Forward is continuing because it supported projects and organisations that were already offering some form of sport or physical activity opportunity and this funding allowed them to do more.

As we set out in an earlier chapter most organisations involved in Young People Forward recognise the value of offering positive activities but are often restricted by the funding that is available to them. However there are three different mechanisms by which the work is being maintained.

First is through the ongoing delivery of the project work. Street Soccer Scotland and Active Lancashire are long standing and established projects that will continue to support young people directly using sport and physical activity as a tool. Active Lancashire also provided training direct to young people so they are qualified to deliver some sports, allowing them to continue to support delivery or lead delivery themselves.

Other projects including Crisis and the refugee and asylum seeker projects will also be continuing. The amount and extend of the work they do will be dependent on funding. However, Crisis are planning to continue monthly trips to offer adventure activities as a direct result of the success they saw from the Young People Forward funding.

Second is through the partnerships that have developed with the Active Partnerships. There are ongoing discussions happening between the Active Partnerships and local partners

about what other projects and support could be developed over the coming months. For those Active Partnerships that are new to this area of work these links with new organisations are a starting point for future work.

Third, is through the ethos that is embedded in the organisation. Roundabout had a time limited project providing sport and physical activity opportunities. But the team involved in delivery are active and encouraging positive activities is part of their ethos. As with others, they will do more when funding allows but it is part of their ethos. Askins Lodge have used the funding to train their staff so they can continue to offer sport and physical activity opportunities to all the young people as they progress through the project.

Key learning and looking forward

Young People Forward has been a successful project. It has reached a large number of young people and offered them opportunities to take part in sport and physical activity.

As already set out we use Theory of Change as the underpinning model for our evaluation work. In this section we draw together some of the strengths and weaknesses of Young People Forward to identify the key learning points for funders, Active Partnerships and those delivering to homeless young people or those at risk of homelessness.

Learning for organisations

Some of the debate that centres around the role of sport and physical activity in providing positive benefits lies in the role of the sport itself or the mentoring and support that is provided by a good coach or member of staff. Young People Forward is adding to the evidence base that suggests it can be both. It can provide people with a mental break, a positive means of escape and a positive activity. But it can also be used as a tool to open up conversations.

We recognise that for many organisations working with homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness, resources can be incredibly tight and focused on progression outcomes. However, there is considerable potential for sport and physical activity to be used as a tool by organisations and considerable potential for people in front line facing roles to receive training so they feel confident integrating sport and physical activity into their delivery.

One of the key roles that sport and physical activity plans is providing fun and escapism. The opportunity to let off steam to concentrate on something other than what is going on in their head and to feel something should not be underestimated. This includes fun and adventure activities that gently push people outside their comfort zone.

Our learning from Young People Forward is that group work is often challenging. Young People can lack confidence to join groups and their lives can make it difficult to pin down a particular time that works for them. Where groups work well they are inclusive and open to anyone. The focus is on the activity not the type of person who can attend. This allows groups to gain a critical mass that means people are then more likely to come. Organisations should find what works for them but to also recognise engaging one or two young people at a time is more normal than engaging large groups.

We would encourage organisations to:

- Recognise the value of sport and physical activity and provide training to staff so they can incorporate the work into their role and use sport and physical activity as a tool
- Source funding opportunities to offer fun activity days that provide young people with the opportunity to try new things and have new experiences
- Be realistic when expecting young people to join groups and recognise new groups will likely attract very small numbers

Learning for Active Partnerships

Each Active Partnership involved in Young People Forward took a different approach to reaching homeless young people or those at risk. This means each organisation will take something different from their experience of Young People Forward.

The geographical coverage of Young People Forward was driven by the funder, rather than the expertise each Active Partnership had. In many ways this is positive, as it allowed new organisations to get involved in the homelessness sector and expand their networks of partners. However, for some Active Partnerships starting the project during the second Covid-19 peak, followed by a period of strategic development in many Active Partnerships meant capacity was stretched. Although this did not impact on the distribution of the funding it did impact on the way information could be collected and on the added value the Active Partnership could bring to the project.

Active Partnerships are also the experts in sport and physical activity. We would encourage all Active Partnerships to work proactively to identify ways they can help organisations develop their skills around sport and physical activity and also how this can support organisations in their wider roles.

In 5 of the 7 areas involved in Young People Forward the Active Partnerships distributed funding to a wider network of organisations. We would encourage Active Partnerships to continually review and challenge where their funding is being distributed to. This is to ensure the added value of the Active Partnerships, their local connections, is fully utilised.

Active Partnerships have the potential to raise awareness of the potential for sport and physical activity. This is particularly important to do in those organisations that have yet to see the value. The timing of Young People Forward meant that most of the resource was directed at organisations who already recognised the value of sport and physical activity. There were some notable exceptions but we would encourage Active Partnerships to challenge themselves and to reach new and different partners who have yet to see the value of sport and physical activity.

We would encourage Active Partnerships to:

- Be clear on capacity when engaging with projects like Young People Forward
- Develop more opportunities to transfer sport and physical activity skills to homeless organisations and support them to understand the different ways sport and physical activity can support their wider strategic objectives
- Review and challenge to make sure the local value that Active Partnerships bring is utilised
- Broaden the reach of projects to include those organisations who have yet to see the value of sport and physical activity

Learning for Funders

Young People Forward has been successful and it has achieved what it set out to do. But the length of the funding opportunity was too short. This combined with Covid-19 limited what the Active Partnerships could do and who they could work with.

For some Active Partnerships this was a new area of work and it takes time to build new partnerships. This was made particularly difficult because Covid-19 meant some organisations had staff on furlough or were focused on managing the Covid-19 situation they were facing.

Working with young people who have complexity and with organisations who work with them, all takes time, consistency and longevity. The funding from Young People Forward needed longer or more flexibility to allow those new to this area of work longer to form the initial partnerships.

Long term funding to organisations and organisations with longevity like Street Soccer Scotland provide young people with a base they can return to. This can be hugely valuable to those young people who have a limited direct family network. We would advocate for funding existing activity, not always new. Organisations like Street Soccer Scotland are continuously innovating and finding new ways to reach their target audience. Ongoing support means they in turn can provide ongoing support to people who otherwise do not have it.

The work at Askins Lodge shows the potential of this type of work. In this setting the funding provided equipment and training for staff so they can work with young people long term. But there is work to do across the sector getting more organisations to recognise the value of sport and physical activity. Because of the time scales the Active Partnerships were limited to those organisations who had an active interest. More time would have meant more opportunity to raise awareness of the opportunities sport and physical activity presents when working with complex young people.

We would encourage funders to:

- Support projects that raise awareness about the role of sport and physical activity among more complex young people
- Provide long term funding so more long term projects can be established that in turn provide a long term base for young people
- Recognise existing housing contracts are focused and tight and opportunities for positive activities are limited so provide additional funding to allow these positive activities to happen with a particular focus on opportunities to be active
- Support opportunities for young people to have fun. Young people across Young People Forward told us how these opportunities helped their mental health, they distracted them and helped them forget. These opportunities also help young people move out of their comfort zone and help them develop. These soft outcomes can be more hugely valuable alongside traditional progression focused outcomes.