

A Chance to thrive

The difference we make
for young people



Executive summary

- This is the first in a series of reports on how the voluntary and community sector (VCS), with or alongside local authorities and statutory services, provides opportunities for young people, and the difference these opportunities make. We fund a lot in this space: **14,600 projects, worth over £1.2 billion** over the past five years. And **1.4 million young people have taken part** through 15 programmes alone.
- This first report, A Chance to Thrive, highlights the role played by youth workers, mentors and key workers from charities and community groups in supporting and protecting young people's wellbeing, helping them to live healthy, fulfilling lives, regardless of their circumstances. It also recognises their efforts to improve wider practice and inform the way young people's services are designed and delivered.

Prevention

- Early experiences can have a lasting impact. That's why we've funded 796 projects, worth £209 million, which focus on prevention: helping to keep young people safe, and to ensure they have a stable and supportive framework.
- There's emerging evidence of the difference these preventive measures can make. A randomised trial showed that BounceBack, a school-based group intervention for 9–11-year olds with emergent mental health difficulties, produced **statistically significant reductions in emotional symptoms** of participants: an overall reduction of 8%, reaching 23% for those who attended 80% or more of the sessions. We've got similar developing evidence of preventive measures **saving money** by helping to keep young people in mainstream education.
- The VCS helps young people, their parents and the wider community to **recognise risk factors**, and work more constructively with young people. Angus Women's Aid's young healthy relationship champions have trained nearly 6,000 peers on the signs and impact of abuse, and helped to inform the work of Police Scotland and the First Minister's National Advisory Council. Community Futures in Walsall has educated 21,800 young people and trained over 1,000 professionals to spot early signs of grooming.
- Eliminating discrimination is key to ensuring all young people have access to opportunities. Some charities do this at an individual level, teaching young people about equality, diversity and inclusion, and celebrating the results that this brings, while others work with authorities and services to improve outcomes. Black Thrive Lambeth works to improve outcomes for members of the Black community by raising awareness of inequalities and **identifying solutions** to shortcomings and gaps in services.

Mental wellbeing

- Young people tell us that **mental wellbeing** is one of their key concerns and something we should be supporting. To respond, we've given out **4,231 grants** to help young people to talk about and manage their mental health. HeadStart is our largest investment in this area, giving **201,880 young people** access to wellbeing support, with 37,400 receiving additional help, such as talking therapies. And the programme has **trained 246,540 professionals and volunteers**.
- This funding is most needed by young people at **specific risk points**, such as bereavement, and those who've experienced trauma. WomenCentre in Yorkshire has worked with young survivors of exploitation and abuse, resulting in a 45% improvement in scores related to ability to cope with challenges.
- Our grantholders explore emerging mental health risks and triggers, such as gaming, and support new ways of delivering services. Like walk and talk counselling in Blackpool, which leads to a **decrease in negative emotions for around three-quarters of participants**.

Safe from harm

- Charities are also there to provide **crisis support**. They help young people experiencing homelessness to find somewhere to live (564 grants); support victims of violence and abuse to build a new life (657); offer pathways out of crime and gangs (234); and support young people experiencing addiction (897).
- Their support makes a difference to young people, their families, and wider society. Like Llamau's award-winning family mediation service, which supports over 500 Welsh families each year. They have a success rate of 71% of young people returning home, saving **the public purse £8 million** on supported accommodation.
- Our funding helps to address gaps in provision. Amy's Place is one of a small number of recovery housing projects in the country **bridging the gap** between women leaving addiction treatment services and finding independent accommodation. Not only do they provide a safe place, they have a high success rate in helping young women to sustain recovery and (re-)engage in learning, work and volunteering.
- Working in a whole system partnership with authorities in Glasgow, Action for Children has achieved **reductions in offending** among 11-18 year olds who are at risk of, or already involved in, serious organised crime. The most recent findings show that four-fifths had reduced the frequency or severity of their offending and they've supported a third (32%) into positive destinations. **One who had committed almost 600 offences hasn't reoffended since taking part**. And the Glasgow city council had saved over £500,000 in costs by diverting just four high risk young people from secure care over a six month period.

Physical health

- Charities and community groups provide **additional support to young people who are affected by ill health**. We've distributed £110 million so that these organisations can help make young patients' lives easier, more comfortable and enjoyable through non-medical support, from information and advice to specialist clothing and equipment. They also **widen access to opportunities to stay fit and healthy** through exercise, diet, and school holiday provision. Like Fit and Fed's holiday programme in Wellingborough, which makes sure young people don't miss out on regular, healthy meals during the holidays, and that they can keep active.