

## Project Evaluation



## Report

In partnership with:



# Fruit-full Communities Project

## Final evaluation

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## Introduction

### About the project

The Fruit-full Communities Project has brought together partners from the environmental and youth sectors to support young people in Housing Schemes and Supported Lodgings (and associated youth groups) across England and Wales to develop community orchards with residents for residents and the wider community.

Over three years the Partnership has aimed to improve the skills, confidence and health of young people living in YMCA Housing Schemes, Supported Lodgings and/or attending YMCA Youth Groups. Through the project it was expected that young people would have gained new horticultural/arboricultural skills and demonstrated a heightened awareness of the role of trees and forests in relation to climate change, livelihoods, biodiversity and sustainable global development.

As a result of the project we hoped that they would report feeling more engaged with and accepted by the local community; with up to 500 local community members more engaged in the work of the local YMCA Housing Scheme and/or Supporting Lodgings

The Fruit-full Communities project started in January 2016 and continue through until the end of March 2019 – the total cost of this intervention was planned to be £857K.

The project Partnership has been led by the Learning through Landscapes Trust (LtL) in collaboration with YMCA England (YMCA), International Tree Foundation (ITF) and the Urban Orchard Project (UOP) - now known at The Orchard Project (TOP).

Additionally, project delivery was supported by LtL's network of accredited professionals (including representatives from Wildlife Trusts, Groundwork Trusts, Local Authorities and independent landscape architects and environmental consultants) and Global Learning Programme.

### The role of project partners

Learning through Landscapes was the lead organisation on the project and as such had responsibility for;

- Project and financial management including liaising with partners and OBF including regular and final reporting
- Co-ordinating and reporting to the board and attending board meetings
- Providing facilitators for delivery of the project with particular responsibility for supporting young people in the design of the project orchards
- Training facilitators working on the project
- Project administration

The International Tree Foundation had responsibility for:

- Development of the global aspects of the project ie development of resources about global environmental impact, making links with overseas groups and developing and delivering training around this topic, both to facilitators and in settings

- Providing facilitators for the delivery of the project
- Being an active member of the project board

#### The Orchard Project

- Expert advice, resource development and training on the creation and aftercare of fruit trees and orchards
- Being an active member of the project board

#### YMCA

- Board member advisor on the project's target audience
- Promotion of the project to YMCA settings

The project also ran a young-people's panel that was made up of representative young people from across the settings. This group met on an annual basis and fed into the development of the project, providing feedback and developing the judging criteria for the annual orchard competition.

## Section 1: Meeting the project outcomes

### Review methods used and comments gathered

a) Residents and users feedback was collected in a number of ways:

Young people's attendance at workshops has been quite unpredictable and inconsistent. This has meant it has not always been possible to collect sufficient baseline data and then match it with attendees' feedback at the end of the project. Having reviewed data collected at the beginning of the project and the feedback from trainers and support staff, we have revised our evaluation methods and focused on observational evaluation that has shown to be more effective with this group of young people.

To demonstrate how we have worked towards meeting Outcome 1 (6,000 young people learning new skills) and Outcome 2 (6,000 young people report feeling more connected to the local community), we can show:

- The number of people attending the project activities at any point (whether attended just one or more workshops and if they stayed for the entire session or just 30 min);
- A list of skills and themes covered in each workshop (we cannot show exactly who took part in each discussion or specific activity e.g. putting tree ties during the workshop);
- Feedback from residents/users from year 1 and year 2 sites collected during revisits to show that they learnt new skills, are familiar with global environmental issues and that their relationship with the local community has improved;
- In addition to the above, we collected photos showing young people actively engaged in project activities, quotes from attendees, case studies and observational feedback from YMCA/Foyer support staff and project trainers.

We have also used a residents' survey that helped us collect data on how young people view and use their natural environment. This was completed by residents/users involved in the project as well as those that did not attend any of the project activities. Please see Annex 1 for detailed breakdown of feedback received throughout the project.

b) Support staff feedback

High staff turnover at YMCA/Foyer sites made it difficult to collect baseline data and match it with data collected at the end of the project in year 1. Therefore in year 2 and 3 of the project we only collected feedback from support staff at the end of the project activities, asking how they feel the project impacted the young people they work with. The data presented below is combined feedback from staff who were consistently involved as well as staff who joined the project at a later stage and provided feedback only after all workshops took place.

## Numbers reached

Target group	Numbers and comments
<b>Residents and users aged 11-24</b>	1117 individuals, attended project workshops with 359 of them attending more than 1 workshop
<b>Volunteers and community members</b>	360 <u>volunteers</u> (including residents and users outside of the target age group) engaged in the project with over 500 <u>community members</u> attending the celebration events across 3 years.
<b>Centre support staff</b>	211 staff members supported young people by attending the project workshops
<b>Trees planted</b>	688 trees were planted throughout the project with more than 300 soft fruit bushes, shrubs, flowers and herbs. In addition to this we grafted 60 fruit trees that will be ready for planting next year.
<b>FFC Website</b>	3280 unique users who visited <a href="http://www.fruitfullcommunities.org">www.fruitfullcommunities.org</a>
<b>Fruit-full Communities online community</b>	Since the start of the project we regularly linked up with 4 African projects and our project featured in an annual impact report that went out to 300 organisations worldwide. Our closed Facebook group has now 64 members from UK and abroad and we have 68 followers on twitter.

The target for the project was originally 6,000 residents impacted by the project. As soon as we started to engage with the YMCA settings we realised that many of them had very small numbers of residents. We also wanted to record figures of those young people actively engaged in the project and not just those who lived at the residencies where the orchards were being created. These two factors combined meant that we recorded significantly lower numbers (1,117 individuals) than in the original target but we know that these were the residents who actively took part in the project and were not just impacted by an occasional visit. This has resulted in lower numbers but higher levels of impact and engagement.

**Outcome 1** young people living in YMCA Housing Schemes, Supported Lodgings and/or attending YMCA Youth Groups will have gained new horticultural/arboricultural skills and will demonstrate a heightened awareness of the role of trees and forests in relation to climate change, livelihoods, biodiversity and sustainable global development.

**a) During the project**

Through the project the young people undertook a range of workshop sessions where they learnt practical skills as they planned and planted new orchards in the grounds of their settings. Skills included measuring, reading and creating plans, selecting plants for the orchard, planting them and making sure they were well established. Many also took part in construction projects such as creating seating and pergolas. They also learned about local food and air miles and their environmental impact across the globe.

During each of the activities, we recorded the names and ages of all young people, volunteers and staff taking part. The numbers presented above reflect that engagement by the young people, staff and volunteers.

As collecting quantitative feedback from attendees proved challenging we focused on qualitative feedback through informal discussions and visual satisfaction from activities undertaken. We have also discussed the project with a number of young people after project activities finished. Through these processes we have learnt that:

**Participants' favourite activities included a number of new skills they developed through the project:**

- measuring the site – different methods, planning the orchard
- soil testing and learning about what grows best in what soil
- looking for inspiration in a local park or another orchard
- learning about fruit trees and orchard produce
- fruit tasting and learning what can be grown in the UK and how to store different fruit
- discussions about the importance of trees
- making fire and cooking on the fire safely
- tree planting and tree care
- discussions on how they could use the allotment/orchard as a source of income
- using power tools, making planters and benches
- multi-use of plan drawings
- tree training techniques

*"I knew most of it but learnt about Mycorrhizal fungi for fertilization....I learnt how to plant a tree!" - YMCA Norfolk resident*

### Global and environmental issues:

- young people are interested in trees, climate change and biodiversity but we found this needed to be put into the context of a practical activity
- they are glad they now understand what impact they have on the environment
- they like making a difference
- they were more open about sharing their knowledge and skills with others when outside
- they liked hearing about how and why communities overseas value their own trees

### Hopes for the project and the orchard

Young people may not always be keen to share their thoughts or opinions but many of them were very keen to tell us what they would like from their outside space. The main themes were:

- a place for their own children and to hang out
- lots of fruit to harvest, self sustaining and providing food for healthy eating whilst also providing food for kitchen
- an outdoors space to enjoy, sit and talk that can be accessed easily
- a quiet meditation area
- barbeques, poly-tunnel and raised beds, willow screens, smoking areas
- somewhere contemporary, welcoming and inviting to celebrate freedom, equality and diversity and for getting people together (without phones or computers)
- an opportunity to learn about tree varieties, grafting, design and budgeting
- be productive, do something, have an experience
- make an improvement to where they live, gain satisfaction and pride, sense of achievement
- make new friends and get the community together

*“Yes this project has had a positive effect on the young people involved in the project. I see this as a small part, the big benefits will be from now, the maintaining of the orchard and when the trees bear fruit”- Support Worker, YMCA Basingstoke*

Nicola Harding, Reaching Communities Project Coordinator at YMCA White Rose, said: *“The introduction of an orchard at Mount Tabor was a great opportunity for people to come together to work on a brand new organic project. Young people and families were able to contribute their ideas and share special moments together, learning about nature right on their doorstep”.*

#### a) After the project – longer term impact and orchard sustainability

During the on-site project workshops, we trained residents/users and staff how to look after these trees. With a large staff turnover, changing roles and priorities as well as the natural fluctuation of residents and users, there was a concern that skills and tools may not be passed on to replacement staff members and new cohorts of residents/users. We therefore revisited all sites from year 1 and 2 of the project in the final year which helped us ensure the orchards long term sustainability. During the revisits we:

- checked the state of the trees/orchards and replaced trees that didn't take (only 2 needed replacement)
- undertook necessary care and maintenance tasks and delivered the basic training on tree care to new staff and residents/users and volunteers
- celebrated the orchard again and enthused new staff and residents
- reiterated the importance of trees and how the orchards can benefit young people, the environment and the community

During the revisits we also collected feedback from 38 residents/users and 34 staff members to investigate longer term benefits of the newly created spaces and the impact of the project on individuals.

#### Here is what staff members reported during the revisits:

- 82% confirmed that since the project the young people spend more time outside, engage more in activities and socialise more, with only 5% saying that no change has been noticed
- Over 70% of staff who provided feedback noticed positive impact of the newly created spaces and in particular an increase in engagement from residents, more respect for the environment and the outside space. Residents are calmer and less disruptive and they are generally proud of the space now.
- Staff reported that at least 15 young people either started a college course in horticulture or got a job working outdoors in landscape gardening as a direct result of the project.

As a Warrington Foyer staff member said: *“The orchard works as a good distraction when they've been having a bad day with their mental health. It opens conversations up when you're getting on with something - they just start to talk about what's going on in their life. Behaviour - less antisocial behaviour like littering. Massive improvements here. They go outside all the time. Do a lot of support sessions out there, better than being in the rooms.”*

**Here is what residents and users said during the revisits when asked about the orchard and its impact on them so far:**

- 14 of 38 young people who provided feedback were originally involved in the orchard planning and planting. Out of these all but 1 confirmed that they definitely spend more time outside now.
- When asked about how being in the orchard makes them feel, young people said repeatedly that they feel more relaxed, calm and proud.

Resident at YMCA Humber said; *“Being outside makes me feel good. I often come and sit outside, even at night. It makes me feel peaceful. Having the orchard is a good thing for Peaks Lane. Although my arthritis is inhibiting, the project gives me other opportunities to get involved and be part of a team. This makes me feel that I belong.”*

A YMCA Plymouth young person said that being in the orchard *“Makes me feel relaxed and more positive”*.

As part of the project, we also regularly facilitated virtual exchanges between young people here in the UK and abroad. This included regular posts shared on our Facebook group as well as letters and messages to engage and link young people from other countries with young people taking part in Fruit-full Communities project here in the UK. To date we have 64 members of this group. In addition, some centres created message boards to link up with their friends in Africa, as shown below. These exchanges not only helped raise awareness of global environmental issues but they also helped young people develop their social conscience!



Below is the list of projects that we regularly link up with:

- **Zambia** – a project called Revival, very active on the Facebook group and have sent messages of support for the celebration days. They were informally ‘twinned’ with YMCA Derby as they were planting fruit trees at a school in Lundazi and working with the YMCA there.

- **Kenya** – Mount Kenya Environmental Conservation, very active on the Facebook group and sent messages of support for the celebration days.
- **Uganda** – PROBICOU. One of their representatives (Happy Bruno) is active on the Facebook group and took part in an exchange of messages at the first three workshops at YMCA Derby in the second year.
- **Uganda** – Alpha Women Empowerment Initiative. They don't have easy access to take part directly in the Facebook group, but have sent photos, letters and videos. Letters have been sent back from YMCA Barnsley Allotment group in the second year.
- **Bwindi** Conservation for Generations Foundation in Uganda were very active in sharing photos of their work doing agroforestry (growing trees and other crops together). They have also sent photos of the school groups they work with to clean up plastics from the areas around the Bwindi National Forest.
- Centre for Global Education in York have been sharing news of the projects at Humber and Ryedale to their followers on Facebook.
- YMCA Plymouth already has a link with a YMCA in **India** and they have been using their garden developments as something to share and revitalise that connection.
- Both Exeter and Plymouth Foyers have shared messages, photos and videos with a group in **Nilgiris** in India who have been planting fruit trees.
- YMCA Taunton and YMCA Hirwaun have had three Skype meetings with a group in **Gambia** who are also involved in planting fruit trees. YMCA Taunton in particular are keen to keep this link going beyond the project and have even talked of organising an exchange visit.

In addition to the above, Fruit-full Communities regularly featured in the International Tree Foundation [Impact Report](#) and Trees Journal that goes out to 1,107 individuals and about 300 organisations across the UK and abroad.

**Outcome 2 young people living in YMCA Housing Schemes, Supported Lodgings and/or attending YMCA Youth Groups will report feeling more engaged with and accepted by the local community; with up to 500 local community members more engaged in the work of the local YMCA Housing Scheme and/or Supporting Lodgings**

This project provided many young people with the opportunity to interact with local community members by engaging in activities and discussions together. Creating new green spaces in their local neighborhoods brought both groups close together and allowed them to get to know each other thus increasing social interaction and community cohesion.

**When asked about how residents and users feel about their local community, they said:**

- some residents don't want to admit that they live at the YMCA/Foyer as they fear this limits their chances of getting a job interview.
- some feel that local community members don't really care about them but others witnessed community members offering help once the orchard project started, e.g. plants and tools offered by fellow allotment owners (YMCA North Tyneside) or offers of help (YMCA Norfolk).
- the common feeling was that residents would like the community to get to know them better and they are keen to explore opportunities to forge tighter links with their local community

**One of the reasons why young people want to engage in this project is because:**

- they feel that projects like this help them build a positive image in the local community as they show that they can work hard, care about their environment and their own space.

*"I like this kind of work, it gives me more confidence."* Tyrone YMCA Crawley resident

Please visit <http://www.fruitfullcommunities.org/inspiration/> for case studies from the project that show the positive impact of the project on young people who have been homeless and their community.

We have recorded over 360 community volunteers who were involved in the project to date. Many of them attended more than one workshop and some were very keen to work with their local YMCAs and Foyers on a daily basis.

*"If you want me to come again, I'd really like to, it's really good to do community work in the town, especially planting trees because you will see them for years to come as well"* - young volunteer from a local college

Many local organisations were involved in the project across all centres that planted orchards, the full list of these is available in Annex 2. For example, YMCA North Tyneside involved Virgin Money volunteers in planting and looking after their

orchard as part of the Virgin Money 2 days a year volunteering programme. This was a great success and they already have a few more volunteering 'Allotment orchard days' booked with Virgin Money in year 2. They also regularly work with Warburtons.

Each of the YMCAs and Foyers taking part organised a celebratory event at the end of the project. Across 42 orchards we had more than 500 community members attending the celebration events, with many of them leaving very encouraging comments about the project and YMCA/Foyer residents/users and many good wishes.

*'The group worked tirelessly from the moment they arrived to the time that they finished. They have done a marvelous job and I am sure the trees will bear the fruits of their labour'* YMCA Teesdale volunteer

During the revisits young people confirmed **that they learnt something new** – from the benefits of manure and how to plant a tree to health and safety concerns when planning a family friendly celebratory event. They were able to explain the importance of trees very clearly, raising points about food production, CO2 emissions and recycling. They also pointed out how planting trees brings people together and makes the Earth beautiful.

**When asked about the impact of the project on their local community**, everyone felt that it helped their neighbours to see the YMCA/Foyer and its residents in a new positive light as “an asset”, “active in the community”, “hard working”, “helping the environment” and the buildings themselves as “welcoming and friendly”.

Young people reiterated the positive feedback they heard from others about the orchard and how nice it looks, this included praise from parents and family members of residents, passers-by as well as friends.

**Outcome 3:** youth support workers will report feeling more confident in using outdoors improvement activities to support the welfare needs of young people living in housing schemes and supported lodgings

**a) Feedback from Year 1**

Support workers who were consistently involved and provided feedback, claimed that they either work with young people outside the same amount of time or more often and that their confidence has increased.

*‘The staff have taken ownership of the area now and making sure people are looking after the space. People are proud of it’* Support Worker, YMCA Norfolk

**The main barriers identified by support workers to young people spending time outdoors are:**

- reluctance due to weather, especially in winter months
- unfamiliarity with the outdoors, dislike of mud and bugs
- lack of interest in horticulture
- lack of motivation and/or confidence
- difficulty staying focused and interested throughout the activities
- inconvenient workshop days/times

Although the impact of the above varied from site to site, it posed a significant difficulty with young people’s appropriate engagement.

**The main barriers for support workers when working with young people outdoors were:**

- health and safety concerns, especially around fire
- insufficient knowledge about orchards etc.
- lack of confidence and ideas for activities
- time to plan and organise activities

**When asked if their confidence has increased after being involved in this project,** all but one support worker said Yes!

Support workers felt that the project has indeed benefitted their residents:

*‘It has got them outside, learning about healthy food and how it grows, getting involved with other people from the project where they live, getting in contact with other agencies working on the project and working as a team’* Kate Coppock, YMCA Crawley

*‘Yes, has taught them how to plant trees and plants and how to look after them... because it is good for their mental health and well-being to get outside and participate in activities’* Kevin Budge, YMCA Horsham

**b) Feedback from Year 2 and 3:**

Due to high turnover of support staff at YMCA and frequent changes of the staff

involved in the project throughout the workshops, we asked all support workers that were at the YMCA/Foyer at the end of the project about their opinion on the benefits and impact of the project on the residents and users – as discussed and agreed with Our Bright Future Programme Manager, Cath Hare. Findings from the support staff questionnaires are presented below.

29 support workers completed the survey in year 2 and 28 in year 3. The percentages below are in comparison to the total number of support workers who took part in the survey and not to how many of them responded to a particular question.

**Since the start of the project, do you feel you work with young people outdoors more often?**

52% of support workers in year 2 and 68% in year 3 who completed the survey said they definitely work with young people outdoors more often now with 17% in year 2 and 25% in year 3 feeling they work outside a bit more often. 27% in year 2 and 7% in year 3 claimed they work outside with the young people as often as they did before the project.

**Having been involved in this project, how confident do you feel about working with young people outdoors?**

31% in year 2 and 39% in year 3 of support workers who completed the survey said they feel more confident working with young people outdoors with 38% in year 2 and 53% in year 3 feeling their confidence has increased a lot since the project started.

**Has the orchard encouraged your young people to go outside more frequently?**

72% in year 2 and 79% in year 3 of support workers felt that this project has encouraged residents and users to spend time outdoors more frequently, with 7% in both years feeling the amount of time has not changed.

**How do you feel the project has benefitted any of the young people you work with?**

The below shows how support workers feel the project benefitted the young people:

- 86% in year 2 and 86% in year 3: They learned new practical skills
- 86% in year 2 and 89% in year 3: They learnt to work together
- 83% in year 2 and 86% in year 3: They enjoyed making improvements
- 69% in year 2 and 75% in year 3: They are more aware of environmental issues
- 35% in year 2 and 54% in year 3: They feel more connected and accepted by their neighbours and the local community

**What other benefits (incl. health & wellbeing) can you see to the young people at your centre? Any noticeable changes in behaviour, attitudes etc?**

A significant majority of staff reported on the positive impact of this project on young people's behaviour, confidence, health and wellbeing.

*"I believe the residents are now much more relaxed and comfortable in their abilities to communicate with each other since planting the orchard. They seem to enjoy spending more time together as a group which benefits their mental health enormously."* – Ravenhead Foyer, staff

*"Yes I see a massive difference in the young people's attitudes. They seem to be much more appreciative of their home and staff and other residents."* Brecon Close Foyer, staff

*"It has helped our residents to access the outdoors more, for example one of our residents sometimes feels low and struggles to leave his flat, having a nice outdoors space has made it easier for us to entice him outdoors for fresh air, it's a nice place to have chats and complete 1:1 sessions."* Bridge Foyer staff.

In addition to the above, the feedback provided by support workers also shows that, following on from the project, a number of young people they work with:

- feel stronger links with their local community, their own YMCA/Foyer and fellow residents/users
- discovered new interests and increased their environmental awareness
- feel proud and respect their outside space more

**When asked for evidence and examples of how this project has improved life opportunities and developed skills of residents and users, the following has been mentioned:**

- Increased confidence, self-esteem, motivation and better time management that allowed residents to get involved with and do things they would not do before like travel to meetings with other young people, volunteering;
- Residents engaged in outdoor activities they would not consider before and some are now looking into career opportunities
- Young people involved have taken the time to update their CVs to promote new skills and show how they've contributed to benefitting their local community. Many of them used hours spent working in the orchard as work experience validated by a reference from their YMCA/Foyer site

As one support worker said: *"There has been evidence to show that some individuals have taken a keen liking to being outdoors, maintaining and growing within green space. This has provided them with an opportunity which would have been difficult to gain previously"*

David Finn, YMCA Derbyshire reported *"4 of our most regular participants have*

*shown consistently high motivation and positive work ethic. All four are to be recommended for our Toyota Work Preparation Programme which commences in May and one is being offered work experience placement at a company based at East Midlands airport."*

**We asked support workers to tell us how they will ensure that the orchard thrives and that its legacy is passed on to new residents. Responses were as follows:**

- 83% in year 2 and 60% in year 3 of support workers confirmed that they will do so through regular orchard/garden days for all residents and volunteers (min once a month)
- 90% in year 2 and 71% in year 3 will ensure there are regular volunteers committed to help look after the orchard and a staff member oversee the orchard care
- 55% in year 2 and 57% in year 3 confirmed that they will share orchard care resources with new residents during their induction

In addition to the above, there were also other plans and ideas mentioned, including:

- The orchard being included on YMCA strategic plan to ensure its future as part of our legacy
- The orchard being included in site management plans to ensure that it gets coordinated care from the various maintenance partners
- Further workshops to see where food comes from, cooking sessions with the fruit that has been planted and potentially woodwork so the young people that don't have an opportunity to engage can still contribute to the garden/orchard and have a sense of ownership. This will also help to improve young people's independent living skills
- Monthly outdoor sessions to maintain the orchard and improve any areas needed. To build on our community network and donate grown fruit to local food banks and charitable cafes such as Salvation Army

*As John Spriggs from Ravenhead Foyer said "The orchard has now become integral to the scheme as a whole and this is a listed item on our scheme show around agenda, when receiving scheme visits and during our open day events."*

**Outcome 4:** 50 new community orchards and over 1,000 new trees will be planted over the lifetime of the project; which will sequester an estimated 0.2 tones of Carbon Dioxide per year.

Over the course of the project, young people planted 688 trees and over 300 soft fruit bushes. In addition to this they also planted shrubs, herbs and flowers. During the two grafting workshops held in YMCA Barnsley and YMCA Humber in March 2019, young people grafted 50 new trees. These will be planted into the ground next year, taking the potential total of trees planted to 738.

## Section 2: Additional data gathering commitment

As part of the project, we committed to collect some information about how young people view and use their natural environment and how involved they feel in making decisions about their local spaces.

For this we used a questionnaire and offered an incentive (£50 worth of Love2shop vouchers) for 2 lucky respondents each year. We received feedback from 412 residents and users in total. **The feedback showed that:**

- 48% were not in employment, education or training
- 48% claimed they go outside every day, with only 7% stating they don't go out at all
- the most popular outdoor activities were - hang out with friends (61%), relax (48%), smoke (39%) and do sports/exercise (30%)
- 24% said they like watching and being close to nature

### When asked what is missing from their outside space:

- 31% of residents respondents said they are missing a space to grow fruit and vegetables
- 37% said they are missing a space to play sports
- 32% would like a social space to hang out with friends
- 29% would like a quiet place to relax/read
- 8% said they don't have any outside space at all

38% of respondents said they would like to be involved in making decisions about their outside space. However, 24% felt they have never been asked to do so. Some residents added: *"I feel it is important for all residents to have our say as it's our communal area for us to enjoy AND everyone's input is valued"* and *"If residents are involved they will respect it more"*

Please see Annex 1 for detailed breakdown of feedback received

### Section 3: Project delivery review

We consulted with our trainers and the YMCA and Foyer staff regularly throughout the project to identify any issues that were arising and to implement improvements as the project progressed. As a result, we reviewed the delivery models for the project at the end of year 1 and used a new, more flexible approach in year 2 and 3, which worked very well. The key implemented improvements included:

1. Unlike in year 1, trainers in year 2 and 3 worked together with their co-trainer on each session, which allowed them to:
  - share responsibility for workshop planning, preparation, data collection and report writing
  - share delivery on the day and fully utilise each others' skills and strengths
  - share communication with the YMCAs/Foyers
  - use their complementary skills with the young people which really helped with engagement
2. As the project developed we realised that several YMCA settings were finding it hard to take part in the project. Reasons included changes in national government policy resulting in uncertainty for settings to their long-term future. By definition, planting trees is a project with long-term impact and therefore settings felt they could not commit to working as part of the project. We therefore looked to other organisations to help us fill some of these gaps and Foyer (an organisation with a similar remit) was able to get on board.
3. YMCA/Foyer staff received more frequent contact and support from the project team which ensured that:
  - The person appointed by the site to co-ordinate the project was more committed and had some interest in gardening etc. However, staff changes at YMCAs/Foyers still caused some delays and frustration.
  - Workshops were promoted on each site regularly and a few sites managed to link project activities with other regular activities already taking place at the site which helped with higher attendance of young people
  - More support was offered to YMCA/Foyers with buying orchard materials, trees etc.
4. Following on from the feedback from trainers, support staff and young people themselves, project activities were tailored by the trainers to individual site

needs, which was particularly important when working with people with additional needs. This allowed for better engagement and participation of young people through:

- Offering practical hands-on activities at each workshop and key messages and global aspects being discussed in a more relaxed way
- Working on other physical features in the orchard before planting day
- Promoting the workshop early on and reminding residents/users – a week before, the day before, on the morning etc. – using posters, flyers, notice boards
- Adjusting workshop timings to match residents’ daily schedules and offering food and drink to encourage more people to attend
- Giving jobs and responsibilities on the day, which kept them interested and involved
- Offering a prize for completing a survey helped us collect more responses

## Section 4: Recommendations for the future:

### Project management and governance

- ✓ YMCA/Foyer manager/s and support staff should be consulted in the planning stages for such projects – they can advise on how to design and deliver the project effectively taking into account the reality of how YMCAs/Foyers work
- ✓ YMCA/Foyer manager/s should be on the project board and support staff reps should be part of a delivery/working group – this should be planned and included in the budget from the onset (to cover costs for their time)
- ✓ More time needs to be allocated to the project team (project manager and administration) as sites require much more support and guidance than anticipated, particularly Foyer sites that required the project team to purchase all trees and orchard materials for them.
- ✓ More time needs to be allocated to finance administration to process all payments (for purchases of orchard materials and trees) and to process more frequent grant claims from centres. One-off grant claims are not an option for the majority of sites.

### Evaluation

- ✓ As outlined above it has not been possible to collect sufficient baseline data and then match it with attendees' feedback at the end of the project due to turnover of young people and staff and the ways that young people engaged best. Therefore, observational evaluation has been found to be a more realistic approach with this group of young people, including photographic evidence of engagement, quotes, anecdotes as well as feedback from staff members working with young people on a daily basis.
- ✓ A simplified post workshop evaluation form was needed to allow trainers to gather sufficient feedback during the workshops while concentrating their efforts on engaging young people and delivering key messages and skills. This included a tick list of areas that were covered in the workshops as well as post-it notes feedback on a few simple questions.
- ✓ Open ended questions worked better and allowed us to collect more in-depth information on how young people really feel and think

## Working with YMCA/Foyer sites

- ✓ Trainers/workshop facilitators should be included in all correspondence going out to sites as this allows them to support the sites better
- ✓ All onsite activities should be delivered by both trainers/facilitators present – this helps with engagement and also with any H&S aspects.
- ✓ Flexibility is required for facilitators to be able to adjust the activities on the day to the group they are working with. Having a list of key themes to cover but no prescribed method and order to deliver these works best
- ✓ Additional time (admin) needs to be written into trainers' contracts as a lot of support is needed between workshops.
- ✓ Staff turnover at YMCA/Foyer sites is very high often with no project handover often taking place. Project briefing documents outlining what happens when and what is required from the centres are needed which can then be shared with any new staff members coming into the project.
- ✓ Centre managers should be included in all correspondence with the centre staff, especially when decisions and plans are made about orchard features, spending money, H&S and events
- ✓ Given the nature of the young people we worked with and also the inconsistency of staff involvement across sites, it would be more effective to have regular (for example fortnightly) shorter sessions run by FFC trainers/facilitators instead of 5 workshops spread across a number of months. These would become a regular feature at each centre which would help with residents' engagement – e.g. gardening club style sessions.
- ✓ YMCA centres often worked quite independently from YMCA England which we only discovered as we got going. This meant that we found that we needed to communicate directly with the settings to get them on board rather than through the national body.

## Working with young people who have been homeless

- ✓ Pre-project training is needed for delivery staff to build basic skills and knowledge on how to engage residents and users in activities and how to deal with common behavioural issues. Not all support staff working on the project had appropriate skills.
- ✓ Workshops need to be focused on practical/interactive activities with environmental elements discussed ad-hoc throughout. The classroom-based approach is unsuccessful.
- ✓ More time should be allowed for planting and to create features in the orchards – one workshop day is not enough
- ✓ Timing and spacing of the workshops is crucial; it's useful to alternate days/times to allow more people to get involved

- ✓ Encouraging centre staff to plan and run regular orchard related activities between workshops is very effective, these should include practical hands on things – like digging, planting small plants etc.
- ✓ It's important to discuss and revisit the benefits of getting involved in the project from the very beginning – especially skills and knowledge that can be gained, accruing valuable volunteering hours and work experience.
- ✓ Providing food for each workshop is crucial!

## A legacy

As a legacy of the project we have created two videos – one with participants of the project, both young people and those who work with them and one an animation based on someone who might have taken part in the project. In addition we have created short social media clips both from the videos and from stills taken during the project, that we will continue to use over the months ahead.

The aim of these videos is to inspire young people, and those who work with them, to consider tree planting and the creation of garden spaces as something that they might like to take part in. To show the impact that undertaking a project like this can have on young people as well as to promote the participation of the project partners and their support through the project.

## In conclusion:

Fruit-full Communities has been a challenging yet ultimately rewarding project. For the three most active project partners this has been a new audience to work with, with many lessons learned along the way as outlined above. These partners have worked well together and drawn upon the strengths they each bring to deliver a successful project one that was a finalist in the National Lottery Awards in 2017.

One of the successes of the project has to be how the project team has adapted to change and issues as the project has developed. More flexible delivery methods, hands-on activities and a wider range of settings have all led to successful work on the ground.

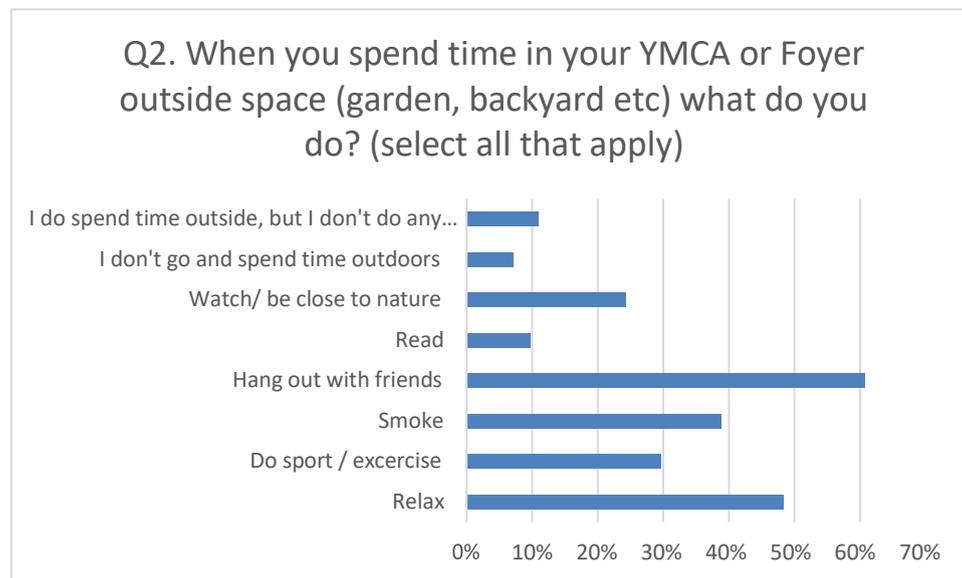
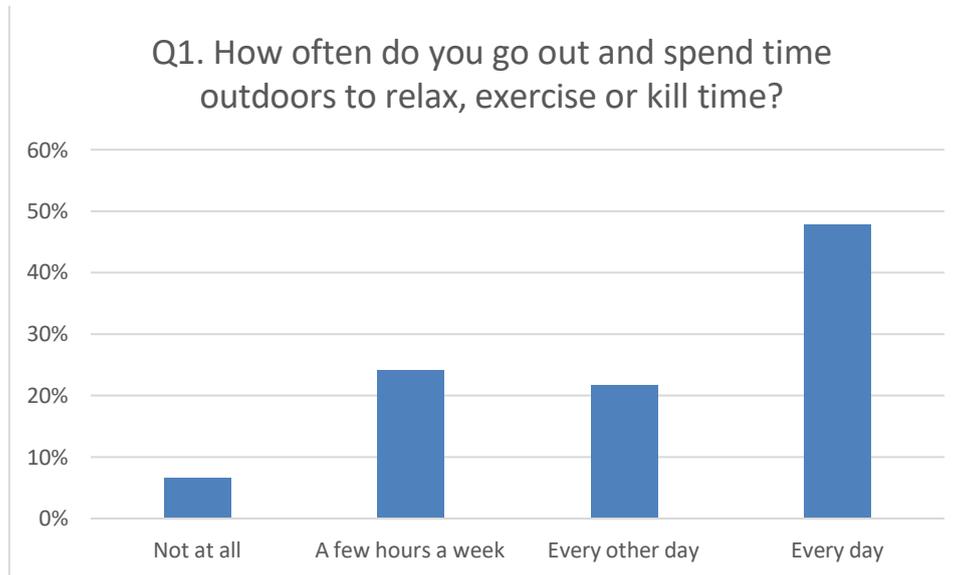
But the most important success has been for the young people involved.

*Ellie McNeil, CEO of YMCA Liverpool, said: "The Orchard Project has been fantastic for YMCA Liverpool. Our orchard has taken an unused area of Dutch Farm and brought it to life and it will continue to be used for years to come. It has been great for the young people we support. One young person is now a member of the Fruit- full Communities panel and is involved on a regional and national basis. Young people have planned exactly what they would like to see from the orchard and have learned about planting and encouraging wildlife in the process. It is an excellent example of co-production, empowering young people to take charge of a project and see it through from development to completion. Moreover, the orchard has helped us to develop a really positive partnership with some of our local schools, which is something we are looking forward to developing further."*

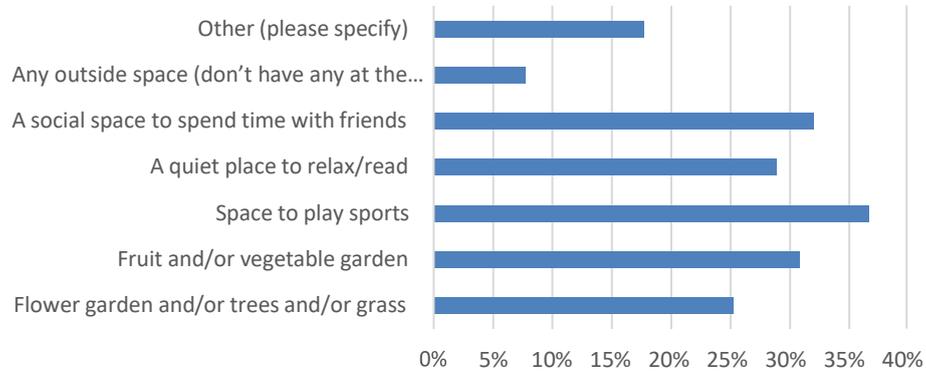
*And one YMCA Humber resident said: "The orchard project has given me an opportunity to make a positive difference. I am planning to go to Newcastle in late August to begin a degree in Landscape Geography. I can see from the orchard how landscape is important in making people feel good and provides opportunities for them to interact, work and feel better about themselves."*

We will be revisiting a selection of settings and their orchards over the next year to see the impact of the changes and we look forward to seeing both the trees and the young people flourishing.

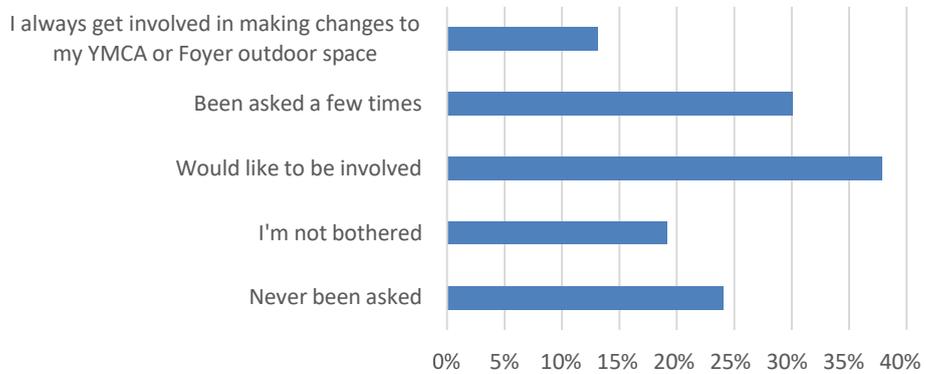
## Annex 1. Complete breakdown of data from Residents and Users Survey for Fruit-full Communities

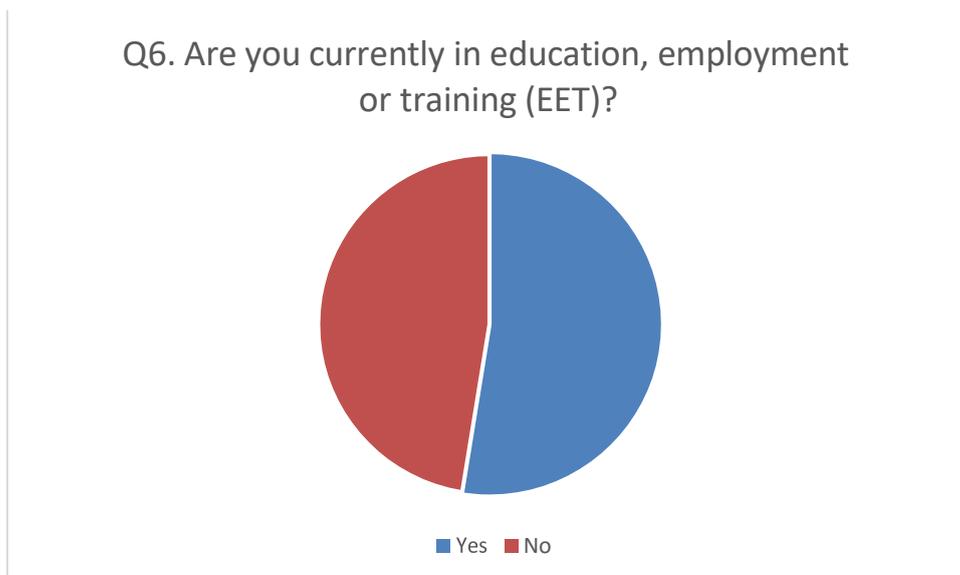
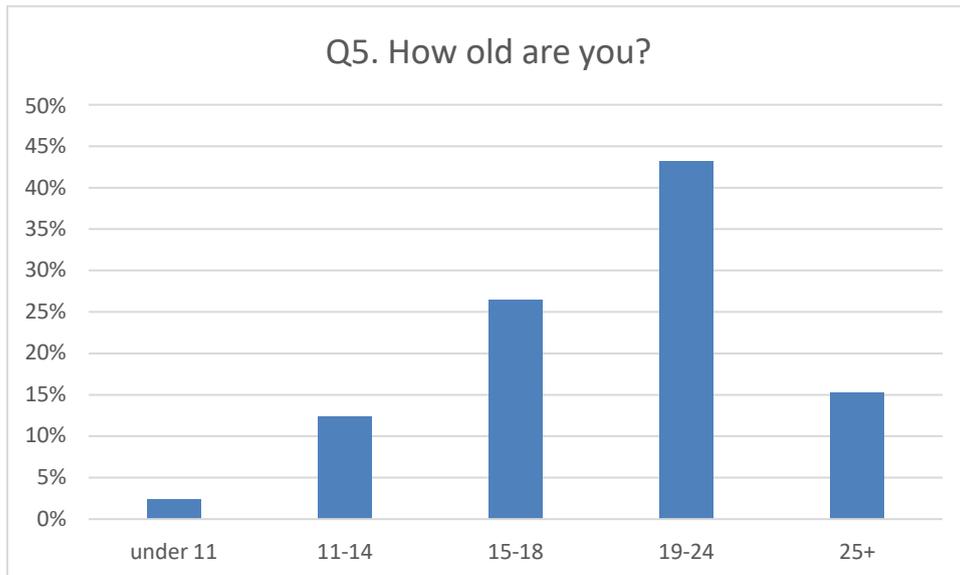


**Q3. Is there anything missing in your YMCA or Foyer outdoor space at the moment? (select all that apply)**



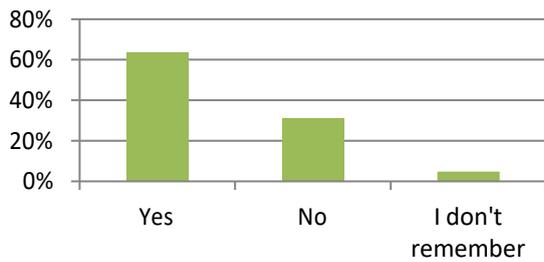
**Q4. How involved do you feel in making decisions about what your YMCA or Foyer outside space looks like and how it is used?**



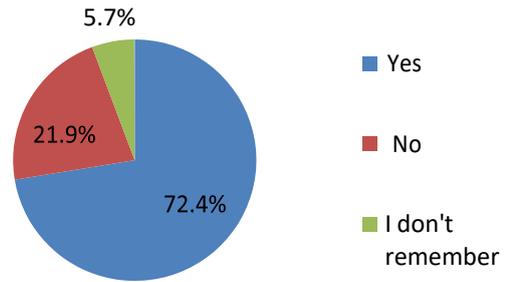


**Additional information collected only in Year 1**

**Have you ever taken part in an activity that involved conservation or protection of the environment?**



**Have you ever done any planting/ growing of trees, fruits or vegetables?**



## **Annex 2. List of external and local organisations involved in the project**

These are the groups that have been involved in Fruit-full Communities Project activities across England and Wales:

### **Local organisations, including:**

- 10th Sheffield Parson Cross Scouts
- All Ways Apples
- Barnsley Council Parks Dept.
- Abundance Sheffield
- Derby County Community Trust
- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT)
- Dig for Devonport
- Dutch Farm volunteers
- Environment Plymouth- Plymouth Community Orchards
- Four Greens Community Trust
- Green Party Councillor
- Greenacre School
- Grow Stonehouse
- Hirwaun YMCA Youth
- Honicknowle Partnership for Extended Services
- Honicknowle Youth Centre
- Hope School – SEN school
- Horticultural Therapy Trust
- LEAF Sheffield Community Allotment Project
- Liverpool City College / Can Do project
- LiveWest Staff Volunteers
- Local NCS Groups
- Men in Sheds
- Mount Tabor Methodist Church
- On Course Southwest
- Parson Cross Initiative Projects
- Plymouth Tree Partnership
- Plymouth Tyresmith

- Probation Service
- Real Ideas Organisation
- Sheffield Tree Action Group
- Solid (YMCA Derbyshire Residents Association)
- St Osmund's parish
- St Pancreas Church
- The Academy of St Nicholas
- The Cabin Nursery
- The Hoyle Mill Inn
- The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Tomorrows Natural Leaders,
- The Zone
- Wilmorton Allotments Association
- Wilmorton Residents Association
- Wortley Hall Organic Kitchen Walled Garden and Volunteer Group

#### **National organisations, including:**

- Tree Charter
- PSS – adults with learning difficulties
- Travis Perkins
- Twiggs
- The Prince's Trust Team
- The Diabetic Group
- Tesco and Coop

#### **Worldwide reach:**

- Zambia – Revival project
- Mount Kenya Environmental Conservation
- PROBICOU - Uganda.
- Alpha Women Empowerment Initiative – Uganda
- Bwindi Conservation for Generations Foundation in Uganda
- YMCA in India
- Nilgiris fruit tree planting group - India
- Gambia fruit tree planting group

### Annex 3. Some stills from the final project videos

Stills from our Fruit-full Communities animation





Stills from our Fruit-full Communities film







