



Final Evaluation Report 2021

Project partners:



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1.Executive Summary

In 2016, a consortium of partners headed up by Probe Hull Ltd, were awarded funding by the National Lottery Community Fund for Youth in Nature (YiN), a five-year project, as part of a wider programme 'Our Bright Future'. Probe Hull Ltd, worked in partnership with Child Dynamix, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, EMS Hull Ltd and East Hull Community Farm to collectively implement the project. which ended in June 2021.

The overall aims of the YiN project were:

- *Young people improving places that are important to them.*
- *Young people being fully involved in shaping and delivering the project and practical activities.*
- *Increasing young people's knowledge and understanding of nature, the natural world and its importance.*
- *Helping young people to make a positive contribution to their community, and to gain skills, knowledge and experience in order to improve life chances and employment prospects.*
- *Bringing together young people and local residents in developing actions, thereby improving community cohesion and sustainability.*
- *Positive long-lasting impacts on young people, local communities, nature and the natural environment.*

The project was supported by Our Bright Future to offer a flexible approach to the achievement of its aims which responded creatively to the changing needs of the young people for whom the project was intended to serve. The project worked with young people living in some of the most disadvantaged areas in Hull, a city which itself is located within the top 20% of the most deprived areas in England as measured by the English Indices of Deprivation 2019.¹ As

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (IoD2019)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/IoD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf

the project progressed it became clear that the achievement of some of the original proposed outcomes was not going to be feasible or applicable for the young people who were accessing the project who were commonly experiencing chaotic life circumstances and presenting challenging behaviour . The project outcomes were carefully considered and adapted in consultation with Our Bright Future in order to offer a more realistic projection. These were based more on the development of knowledge and skills for young people around wildlife and the environment rather than on more structured academic and employability- based outcomes.

1.1 Project Evaluation

The evaluation of the YiN project has been carried out by Dr Charlotte Dean, Charlotte works part-time as a researcher and lecturer at the University of Hull and has carried out this evaluation in her capacity as an independent research consultant. Charlotte has been supported in the design of the evaluation by Christine Smith, Lecturer and Professional Practice Co-ordinator for the Youth Work and Community Development Programme at the University of Hull School of Education.

Evaluation tasks have included: identifying evaluation questions and indicators; designing and facilitating evaluation events and implementing participatory research methods such as youth-led evaluation activities (informal interviews, surveys and questionnaires), interviews and online engagement with project stakeholders and key partners and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collated throughout the life of the project.

1.2 Summary of key findings

The YiN project has exceeded the majority of it’s intended outputs and outcomes.

Outcome 1: Proposed	Outcome 1: Exceeded
1,500 young people informed about the project through contact with the roadshows and at local/city wide events	2,943 young people informed about the project through contact with the roadshows and at local/city wide events

<p>Outcome 2: Proposed</p> <p>1,500 young people increasing their knowledge of environmental issues and giving them the opportunity to 'sign up' to the project</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Exceeded</p> <p>2943 young people attended environment education sessions and out of these, 801 young people signed up to the project and gained more in-depth knowledge through taking part in sessions, activities, trips and qualifications</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Proposed</p> <p>500 young people increasing their life chances, by increasing their employability/enterprise prospects, knowledge and skills during the life of the project by being involved in Youth in Nature</p>	<p>Outcome 3: Exceeded</p> <p>801 Young people signed up to YIN and took part in activities which increased their life chances by gaining knowledge and skills, and also gaining confidence and wider personal skills</p>
<p>Outcome 4: Proposed</p> <p>16 wildlife zones created and maintained by young people and community volunteers/organisations within their local communities during the life of the project</p>	<p>Outcome 4: Exceeded</p> <p>29 wildlife zones were created or improved over the life of the project</p>
<p>Outcome 5: Proposed</p> <p>100 young people becoming active citizens and influencing developments within their communities during the life of the project</p>	<p>Outcome 5: Not Met</p> <p>96 young people were identified as becoming active citizens taking part in different influencing and volunteering activities within their communities.</p>
<p>Outcome 6: Proposed</p> <p>A minimum of 8 roadshows taking place throughout the life of the project as a tool for engagement and promotion</p>	<p>Outcome 6: Exceeded</p> <p>31 roadshows took place to inform and engage young people.</p>

<p>Outcome 7: Proposed</p> <p>175 young people involved will achieve formal and/or non-formal accredited training during the life of the project</p>	<p>Outcome 7: Exceeded</p> <p>176 young people achieved at least one accreditation: ASDAN Short Course x 68 RHS Gardening Awards x 61 Hull City Council Youth Achievement Awards x 16 DoE Volunteering element x 35 First Aid x 9</p>
<p>Outcome 8: Proposed</p> <p>250 young people will experience nature through trips and visits</p>	<p>Outcome 8: Exceeded</p> <p>256 young people went on a trip or visit – some of these were local, and some involved travelling further afield. Some young people went on more than one trip – with a total of 453 trip places filled.</p>

There are also a number of notable highlights from the project which are summarised below:

- Creation of an active and sustained Youth Steering Group with some members now taking a leadership role in citywide initiatives such as the Youth Parliament, University of Hull Youth Research Group and nationally in the Our Bright Future Youth Forum.
- In 2017 over 50 young people took part in a beach clean that stretched 8 miles across the East Coast resulting in them winning the Humber Nature Partnership Award
- Working with the University of Hull to produce an animated film, rap and website resources – all aimed at educating other young people about how to reuse and recycle single use plastics
- Growing their own food on their allotment and contributing crops to the Hull Festival
- Running workshops and Rewilding Reading events at local woods and festivals such as the Big Malarkey 2021
- In 2019 young people were runners up on the RHS Gardening Group of the Year

- In 2021 the project created a woodland and communal planting spaces in the grounds of a local SEN school.
- Further funding secured to facilitate the Green Influencers programme in Hull and participation in the University of Hull's Erasmus Young Citizens for Change programme.

“I've learned so many new skills such as wood carving, how to build a bug hotel etc. I feel so much [more] confident and relaxed being in a natural habitat than I did before.”

YiN Participant

2. Introduction to the Project

Based in Hull, Youth in Nature (YiN) was established in 2016 as one of the 31 projects in the Our Bright Future programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Over the last 5 years, the project has worked with almost 3000 young people aged 11-24 of which just over 800 attended regular sessions. 256 young people have been on trips to experience wildlife and natural wild environments in areas across the UK and 176 young people have achieved a qualification or certificate of achievement. Above all, young people have been involved in creating or improving 29 local wildlife zones including community gardens, woodlands and allotments, all the while improving young people's knowledge and understanding of issues relating to the natural world and connecting them to the environment.

Throughout the life of the project a variety of full and part-time staff were employed as well as numerous freelance outdoor activity instructors, a youth work apprentice, sessional youth work staff, volunteers and also students on placement as part of their studies at the University of Hull.

The project was implemented in various locations across Kingston upon Hull with several activities for participants also taking place in various locations across the UK.

YiN worked across three broad thematic areas:

1. *Enabling young people to gain new skills relevant to finding jobs, training, volunteering opportunities, or starting entrepreneurial projects that contribute to the green economy.*
2. *Engaging young people with their environment; inspiring and enabling action.*
3. *Inspiring communities about the environment and stimulating action and community cohesion.*

The overall aims of the project were:

- *Young people improving places that are important to them.*
- *Young people being fully involved in shaping and delivering the project and practical activities.*
- *Increasing young people's knowledge and understanding of nature, the natural world and its importance.*
- *Helping young people to make a positive contribution to their community, and to gain skills, knowledge and experience in order to improve life chances and employment prospects.*
- *Bringing together young people and local residents in developing actions, thereby improving community cohesion and sustainability.*
- *Positive long-lasting impacts on young people, local communities, nature and the natural environment.*

2.1 Project Rationale

The project aimed to connect young people, particular those living in disadvantaged areas in Kingston upon Hull, with nature, the environment and outdoor activity. There are important physical and mental health reasons why access to outdoor activity is important for children. An estimated 28 per cent of

children aged two to 15 are overweight or obese². Children aged five and from the poorest income groups are twice as likely to be obese compared to their most well-off counterparts, and by age 11 they are three times as likely³.

Statistics also show that children and young people are increasingly being affected by mental health issues:

- 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year.⁴
- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24.⁵
- 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental problem⁶, yet 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.⁷

The YiN programme based its activity on evidence of the potential mental health benefits of outdoor and adventure education programmes which, research showed, the participation of young people in such activity can increase self-efficacy, mindfulness and subjective well-being.⁸

Research also tells us that although young people enjoy spending time outdoors they often have little or no connection, understanding or knowledge around the

² Health Survey for England (2016) <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/pdf/s/q/hse2016-summary.pdf#page=8>

³ House of Commons (2017) Health Committee: Childhood Obesity; Time for Action. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhealth/882/882.pdf>

⁴ WHO (2003). Caring for children and adolescents with mental disorders: Setting WHO directions. [online] Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at: http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/785.pdf [Accessed 14 Sep. 2021].

⁵ Kessler, R.C, Berglund, P. Demler, O, Jin R, Merikangas, K.R., Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62 (6) pp. 593-602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593

⁶ Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, Ford, T., Goodman, R. 2005 Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain: 2004. Office for National Statistics

⁷ Children's Society (2008) The Good Childhood Inquiry: health research evidence. London: Children's Society

⁸ Mutz, M. and Miller, J. (2016) Mental health benefits of outdoor adventures: Results from two pilot studies. Journal of Adolescence (49) pp. 105-144

environmental issues facing the world today⁹. In order for young people to make informed choices about environmental decisions and behaviours impacting on the health of the environment in the future, young people need to be fully informed and understand the impact they can make on their environments both locally, nationally and globally.

Over the last decade, a large amount of research¹⁰ has been carried out into the diverse benefits for children of contact with nature and outdoor experiences. These benefits include positive impacts on education, physical health, emotional wellbeing and personal and social skills, including the development of pro-citizenship behaviour. A connection to nature developed from childhood and adolescence has also been shown to relate to happiness in adults with a similar effect size as established factors, such as income and education¹¹.

“Outdoor natural space provides additional opportunities for critical thinking, creative inquiry and problem solving; fundamental life skills permitting students to ‘think critically about issues pertinent to their lives and the world outside the classroom”¹²

2.2 A Partnership Approach

The YiN project brought together a group of organisations each with a range of skills and existing activities that would collaborate to ensure that the aims of the project were met and to create a platform on which to build a project which would have a significant impact across the city, both in terms of enhancing the life chances of young people and improving the natural and built environment to support and aid the growth and sustainability of wildlife corridors in a built up, urban environment.

2.3 Project Partners

⁹ Young, S. (2019) World Environment Day: 80% of teens feel under pressure to save the planet, but aren't learning how. Accessed online on 29/09/21 at <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/teenagers-save-planet-world-environment-day-2019-climate-change-plastic-pollution-protest-a8945131.html>

¹⁰ Richardson, M., Sheffield, D., Harvey, C. and Petronzi, D. (2015) The Impact of Children's Connection to Nature. University of Derby Nature Connectedness Group <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/positions/education/the-impact-of-childrens-connection-to-nature.pdf>

¹¹ Capaldi C. A., Dopko R. L. and Zelenski J. M. (2014). The relationship between nature connectedness and happiness: a meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00976

¹² J. Pretty, C. Angus, M. Bain, et al. *Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways*, University of Essex: interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Society (iCES) Occasional Paper 2009-2 (2009)

Probe (Hull) Limited – *Lead partner, accountable body and active delivery partner.* Probe had been involved in a range of community projects, working with people of all ages, for nearly 20 years and had substantial experience of working with young people aged 14 – 24, which included providing alternative curriculum opportunities for young people at risk of exclusion from school, and skills and employability development for young people not in education, training or employment. Probe had also been heavily involved in community food growing projects for six years and, as such, had a sound background in sustainability, eco-commerce and food growing networks.

Child Dynamix – *Coordination of youth involvement, provision of management information systems and access to existing youth provision.* Child Dynamix had almost 20 years of experience in working with children, young people and their families. The youth work element of the charity was established in 2000 and had worked with some of the most challenging and vulnerable young people living in Hull, in particular the Preston Road estate. Child Dynamix’s experience spanned the full age range of children and young people targeted by the YiN project, with a particular focus on the 10 to 19 age group. They were experienced in planning and delivering youth club sessions along with providing needs-led support covering a wide range of issues affecting young people such as crime, drugs, sexual health, employment and relationships.

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – *Support and advisory role along with specialist staffing support and delivery.* Yorkshire Wildlife Trust was a local charity working for a county rich in wildlife. They looked after over 95 of Yorkshire’s primary sites of wildlife conservation and preservation and encourage people to visit and get involved with their care. The Trust had a regional office base in Hull and had run projects across the city for many years. They ran a wildlife garden in the city centre as well as a citywide events and education programme. Yorkshire Wildlife trust designed a new model of working to inspire young people in a Youth Work setting that had been successfully running for 18 months previous to the bid submission and this new model was planned to be expanded across the city as part of the YiN project.

EMS Ltd – *Risk assessment and management support.* EMS was an incorporated charity that had been operational since August 2009 and worked throughout Hull, East Yorkshire, North and North East Lincolnshire. EMS brought their environmental and Human Resources (including Specialised Risk

Assessments) specialisms, and access to green sites across the city to the project. Previous and current works include the development of community allotments (45 plots and four community/edible gardens), working with residents to ensure their voices were heard on the delivery of a range of projects run by the public and private sectors, facilitating events and linking together businesses and community volunteers to help develop or maintain public and private green/open spaces. EMS were also the lead partner in a project to help address fuel poverty and sustainable lifestyles, working with residents in two wards of east Hull to reduce their carbon footprint.

East Hull Community Farm – *SEN/ALN specialist support and advice*. East Hull Community Farm were specialists in working with adults with learning difficulties and also had a working community farm site which would provide access to fields and wildlife habitat. The farm also offered their experience and expertise gained through the provision of a community growing area for the Probe (Hull) Ltd/EMS Ltd sustainable lifestyles project. East Yorkshire Community Farm were also managing bee hives which could be used as a resource for encouraging bee keeping/bee awareness amongst young people.

All of the above were charitable or not for profit organisations.

At the onset of the YiN project, Probe (Hull) Ltd and EMS Ltd were working in partnership in the delivery of a sustainable living project within the East of Hull, which included supporting people in growing their own food and delivering 'eco' related activities. This work had already seen some developments in the creation of small-scale wildlife initiatives such as bug hotels, supported primary schools in the development of eco-clubs, and had also been very successful in attracting and engaging with volunteers leading to progression onto horticultural training programmes for some.

At the time (and currently), Child Dynamix were the lead partner in commissioned Youth Work for East Hull and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust had undertaken activities locally to engage young people in the environment and nature. The work had been highly successful and was set to continue into its second year. The YiN project anticipated building on this initial interest set by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and endeavoured to develop further the previous projects activities.

3.Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was commissioned by Probe Ltd as part of its responsibilities as the Lead Partner and accountable body for the YiN project. Meetings were held at the beginning of the evaluation phase with the researchers and the General Manager of Probe Ltd in which the following areas were identified as being used to form the basis of the evaluation:

- Nature of interventions
- Expected and unintended issues
- Inclusion and influence of young people
- Impact/significant change
- Management/partnerships and resources
- Future learning

In order to address the above, a table of general questions was created to act as a guide to structure those posed to key stakeholders, young people, community members and parents/carers in order to ascertain the key areas of inquiry pertinent to each of the following areas:

<p>Nature of Interventions (i.e. identify the distinctiveness of any methodologies/pedagogies employed to engage young people)</p>	<p>What were the activities, who was involved, over what period of time? Was the intervention delivered as intended? What worked effectively? What did not go according to plan? Were any particular groups impacted more than others and can the reasons be identified? In what ways did external factors influence interventions? What areas for development/improvement have been identified?</p>
<p>Issues</p>	<p>Any expected and unintended issues?</p>

<p>Inclusion and influence of young people</p>	<p>Did the project reach all the people it intended to? What was distinctive about the approach to engaging young people in terms of its ability to be inclusive? What influence were young people able to make? What influences did the project have?</p>
<p>Impact / Significant Change</p>	<p>Most significant change? In what ways can outcomes be attributed to interventions?</p>
<p>Management/partnership and resources</p>	<p>What was distinctive about the management, partnership arrangements? What were the challenges, strengths and opportunities? Were the resources sufficient and was the project activity the most effective use of resources?</p>
<p>Future learning</p>	<p>What is the key learning from this project? What is distinctive about the interventions? What have been the most significant changes? Is the project replicable and sustainable from financial, economic, social and environmental perspectives?</p>

3.1 Information collected:

Quantitative data:

- Analysis of information management system (Upshot) data and other project records and registers. Online surveys of past participants and stakeholders.
- Analysis of project Business Plans; Annual Reports and Interim Update reports provided by the YiN management team and project workers to key stakeholders and submitted to the Our Bright Future programme.

Qualitative data:

- Interviews and surveys with stakeholders, young people, families (parents/carers/siblings), community members, school and youth centre staff (teachers, youth workers).
- Case Study Analysis
- Testimonials from participating schools, youth projects and individuals.

3.2 How and why information was collected:

In order to provide as broad a view as possible of the feedback and findings related to the YiN project, information was collected in a number of ways including through the use of online survey platforms such as Google Forms (see Appendix 2) and Mentimeter. Face to face interviews also took place either in person or via Microsoft Teams/Zoom.

Young people were involved in the interview process through the setting up of a Youth Evaluation Team (consisting of members of the YiN Youth Steering Group) who undertook a short training session with the researcher around how to use a digital voice recorder, interviewing skills, how to ascertain consent from participants and personal health and safety considerations. The Youth Evaluation Team then devised a set of questions (see Appendix 1) to structure their interviews and used digital voice recorders to record their conversations. Recordings were transcribed and analysed by the researcher and organised using a thematic coding system. Many of the verbal and written responses to interviews and surveys are displayed as quotes within this evaluation.

A YiN Celebration and Evaluation Day took place in The Lozenge - one of the urban woodland spaces which the project had developed for use as a community/youth-oriented environment.

3.3 Limitations to evaluation approach

Evaluation data has been collected consistently throughout the programme using a variety of methods including evidence inputted into the Upshot information management system along with empirical evidence such as testimonials, verbal feedback, shared stories and observations.

Perhaps the biggest impact on the collection of reliable evidence and data to support the evaluation of the project has been that caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which occurred across what was intended to form the main evaluative phase for the project along with the execution of the project exit strategy.

4. Evaluation Findings

As outlined in the previous section, evaluation findings were collected and analysed within the following thematic areas:

- **Nature of interventions**
- **Expected and unintended issues**
- **Inclusion and influence of young people**
- **Impact/significant change**
- **Management/partnerships and resources**
- **Future learning**

The individual findings for each of these thematic areas are hereby discussed as follows:

4.1 Nature of interventions

The project has provided an innovative learning environment in which young people have had the opportunity to learn useful life skills in a variety of outdoor

education spaces. This might have been a clearing in their local woods, in a youth centre garden and/or around a camp fire. As well as life and employability skills young people engaged in practical physical activities such as log gathering and chopping; den-building, hill-climbing and hiking – all activities aimed at improving fitness, confidence, team working skills, and social skills.

“It's hard to pick out one thing. I have enjoyed every part of the project even things that I didn't think I would.”

YiN participant

The project has supported young people to create or improve local wildlife zones within communities, whilst improving their own knowledge and understanding of issues relating to the natural world and the environment. Some of the activities that have taken place with the aim of connecting young people to their local outdoor environments and to equip young people with new skills, knowledge and experiences have included:

- **Bush craft** – foraging, fire making, tracking, wild cooking, shelter building tools / craft – whittling, woodwork (saws, drills), making bird boxes, planters, bat boxes and creative recycling to reduce waste and create useful, repurposed items out of single use plastics.



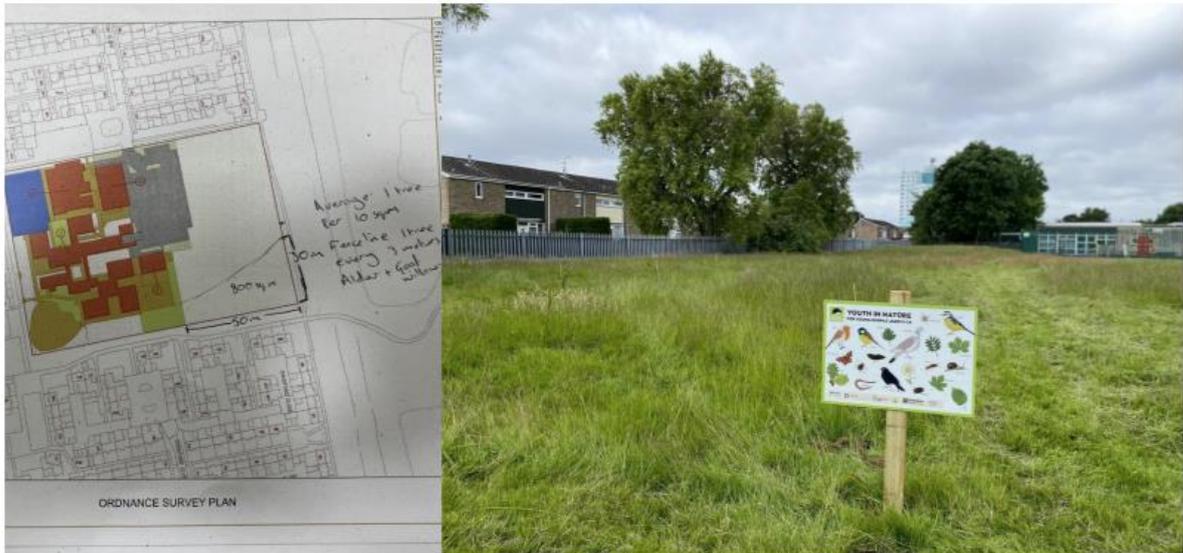
- **Working with environment experts** in outdoor education to learn about foraging, using plants and herbs as foods and medicines and identifying local flora and fauna



- **Rewilding Reading** – a project delivered in partnership with the University of Hull and Hull Libraries to engage young people with wild literature through outdoor activity, local history and storytelling. Watch the film about the project [HERE](#)



- **Future forest planting for local SEN school** – designing and planting a designated woodland area on the school field containing a fire circle and wild flowers



- **Creating nature zones in local schools** for children to learn about growing and caring for plants and herbs along with brightening up unused spaces in school grounds



- **Local environment campaigns** – help to encourage residents, developers/builders, businesses, to be wildlife friendly and protect or improve the environment



- Creating **wildlife corridors** and **wildlife zones** to safeguard and encourage the animals, birds and plants in areas undergoing renovation and construction.



- **Wider Youth Education Sessions** – the project staff along with members of the Youth Steering Group attended different youth centres across the City delivering activities that include rewilding education, creative

recycling art and crafts, wood work and animal habitat creations such as bird boxes bug and hedgehog hotels.



- **Trips and Visits** – The project coordinated and facilitated trips and visits for young people to different various wild locations that helped broaden their experiences and build their confidence and self-esteem.



- **Engagement with local community** - In 2019, when St Andrew's Court a specialist nursing care home for adults living with mental health conditions and physical disabilities in Hull was being built, young volunteers from Youth in Nature, helped design the garden. Residents at

the home now enjoy freshly planted evergreen trees, flowerbeds, a raised herb garden, bird boxes, and a pond.



- **Allotment project** – the project acquired a plot on an inner-city allotment site on which they built raised beds and grew fruit, vegetables and herbs. Once the allotment was established it was donated back to the local community.



- **The Plastic Citizen project** - YiN got involved with a research project with the University of Hull utilising participatory research to engage young people in the circular economy. The young people made a film and created a rap about recycling plastic aimed at educating other young people about the 4 Rs. Watch the film [HERE](#).



“Learning about the effects of plastic has convinced me to reuse and recycle more.”

YiN Participant

4.2 Expected and Unintended Issues

Several changes in the core project staffing impacted on the project in terms of the need to accommodate new staff and adapt to any changes to the project dynamics. These changes were due to staff leaving or moving into other roles and were seen as unavoidable. In some cases, staff had moved onto more substantial full-time roles for which their time with YiN had enhanced their employability prospects.

The biggest unintended issue to face the project was the outbreak of Covid-19 and its subsequent impact on the face to face aspect of the project delivery. However, the project staff adapted admirably to the situation through immediately moving engagement with regular participants in the project online. Methods used to engage the young people included online quizzes, animation software, Zoom meetings and various other online platforms.

4.3 Inclusion and Influence of Young People

The area of inclusion and influence relating to the level of involvement of young people in the project was one which consistently received positive feedback.

“The steering group was massive for dictating the direction of YiN sessions. On top of that the project was very feedback orientated, and young people could share their opinion and have that opinion respected and acted upon.”

Project Staff

Eliciting the feedback from young people about the activities they had participated in and involving them in planning for future activities was an area in which the project excelled. Feedback from both project stakeholders, staff,

parents and young people themselves showed that they felt listened and responded to:

“on many occasions the voice and influence of young people was acted upon through the feedback process from young people. This resulted in the sessions being totally planned and designed by young people which included preferred trip locations along with the planning, design and delivery of a number of campaigns and wildlife habitat creations.”

Project Staff

“I felt listened to for the first time in my life, I got bullied at school and stuff and just never got involved with anything before.”

Youth Steering Group Member

4.4 Impact/Significant Change

“When we run the sessions in the youth centres, we have individuals that struggle to be involved, they really alter the dynamics of the group with their behaviour which adds to the frustration of the rest of the group. Whilst doing the bushcrafting stuff outside like fire lighting and den-building, these individuals excelled! We witnessed them taking ownership of the tasks, we saw concentration, camaraderie, team work, respecting the work of their peers by encouraging and congratulating them.”

Project Staff

The Youth in Nature project has supported some of the hardest to reach young people living in the most deprived and disadvantaged areas in Kingston upon Hull. They have done this through employing skilled and qualified youth work staff along with environment and wildlife specialists. The project has served the young people though fostering their **personal growth, improved mental wellbeing, resilience, and employability**. The project engaged young people through immersing them in a series of outdoor activities and challenges whilst providing support and guidance with the aim of developing inner strength and resilience to help them address key issues in their lives which may be restricting their development.

Some of the young people who participated in the project have identified as some or all of the following criteria according to project statistics:

- **Struggling to engage and stay in school**
- **At risk of suspension leading to exclusion**
- **Struggling with family and relationship issues**
- **Finding boundaries to be a challenge**
- **Experiencing low-level mental health issues/ social anxiety**
- **Engaging in risky behaviours**
- **Getting involved in anti-social behaviours**

The main areas that both stakeholders and participants in the project identified as areas where they felt the project had made significant change were that:

- Staff and Young people have become more aware of environmental issues.

“How else can we get young people to care about the environment? Get them outdoors! It’s all well and good sitting in a classroom talking about it but when you get them outside and they actually see it first hand, that’s amazing!”

Project Staff

- Socially isolated young people have been actively engaged and involved in a youth programme that is different to the traditional youth work offer

“being outdoors really worked for me. I struggled a lot sometimes meeting new people with being quite shy, but being outside just doing stuff and also learning about the environment made me forget about myself really.”

YiN Participant

- Young people have established friendships as a result of attending youth in nature

“the best thing for me was working with everyone and talking to everyone here, meeting new people and going on nature walks.”

YiN Participant

- Young people learnt new knowledge and skills which in turn heightened their self-confidence and ability to think positively about the future.

“Youth in Nature has influenced me to choose an environment related course at college. Also, it has given me lots of opportunities that I wouldn’t have otherwise had. I believe Youth in Nature should continue to influence young people like myself and spread awareness of current environmental issues.”

Youth Steering Group Member

- Young people learned about and were involved in caring for their local environments which has resulted in them showing increased interest in learning more about how to care for the planet.

“It’s definitely made me more aware of the environment. I’m more conscious of pollution and things like that. Me and my family are trying to change how much plastic we use and ways we can reduce waste.”

YiN Participant

- Wild spaces have been created all around Hull that will prove a lasting legacy for the project, the local communities and for the involvement of future young people

“I can’t tell you what a difference you have made to this wood now. It was a dark and scary place before, always full of glass and motorbikes everywhere. I really love the benches, I’ve got a lung condition and the other day I came over all funny, I just sat on that bench over there with my dog, and I just felt better and I could just hear all the birds singing. There was a fox in here the other day aswell you know...”

Local Community Member

The YiN project successfully built up a history of positive early intervention work, supporting vulnerable groups and individual young people with activities and interventions that have proved both challenging and therapeutic. In order to focus on this vital work, the original targets relating to meeting employability and progression outcomes were amended during the project with a view to best meeting the very diverse needs of the project participants through focusing more on the development of soft skills such as raising self-esteem, developing resilience and self-confidence.

“It gave me more confidence to speak to new people because I felt like I knew as much as them about nature and wildlife.”

YiN Participant

“Youth in Nature has genuinely changed my life and made me a stronger person who can face things without just getting angry all the time.”

YiN Participant

The project has shown that it has been successful in engaging hard to reach young people and those whose adverse experiences and often chaotic lives have had a real impact on their emotional and mental wellbeing. Impacts which can often be expressed through frustrations, moments of anger and verbal and physical outbursts. The experienced team supported these young people through sharing with them the tools to recognise the triggers and signs, how to cope with their anger and encouraging them to talk about their feelings before during and after the experience.

“I do still get angry and stuff but I’ve learnt that just being outside can make you feel calmer and less likely to kick off. I never thought I’d be the kind of person who’d enjoy digging and stuff to do with nature though!”

YiN Participant

“I’ve been involved right from the beginning and it’s given me loads of skills to put on my CV and changed my personal attitude and behaviour.”

Youth Steering Group Member

Feedback from both young people and their parents has shown consistently that participating in the project has impacted on their self-confidence and self-esteem as their engagement with the outdoors and knowledge about wildlife and the natural world increased:

“It has been a fantastic opportunity for both my girls to take part in something that has helped them both in learning about nature and the environment but has also helped them with their confidence.”

Parent of YiN participants

“YiN has done a lot for me in the last few years. Firstly, I have made a new group of friends with similar interests to mine. I am not the best at making friends as I am naturally a shy person around people I haven’t met before but YiN has given me more confidence in myself and around others. Secondly, before I started YiN I wanted to go on and be an architect but since I joined I now want to work in conservation of British wildlife and have gone on to do work experience with YiN and am now at Bishop Burton college studying Countryside Management.”

YiN Participant

The impacts generated by the project were not just experienced by the young people, staff members working on the project also reported developing their ability to work autonomously through carrying out so much of their work outdoors. Additional skill sets and knowledge acquisition were noted, especially around developing the capacity of youth workers to utilise outdoor education

skills in engaging young people. Staff members progressed beyond the project to establish various environment related projects and students working with the project on their university work practice placements secured employment with youth outdoor education projects both locally and nationally.

4.5 Management/partnerships and resources

The partnership approach to delivery was a distinctive feature of YiN, harnessing various specialisms to ensure high quality opportunities for young people, the community and the environment. Feedback from stakeholders and participants showed that this partnership approach, though not without its issues, was one of the key contributing factors to the success of the project.

“One of the main strengths of the project was that the staff team included a wide range of people with a broad skill set and knowledge, passion for the young people and the natural world, resilience and persistence in the approach to get the work done with trust and reliability.”

Project Stakeholder

Each named partner was responsible for ensuring the achievement of outcomes within agreed budgets and timescales, including operational decision making and the compilation of management information. The partners each had previous experience of delivering and managing local youth and community projects and as such were responsible for their own project staff and resources.

Inevitably, some challenges to having a multi-agency staff team were reported:

“the benefits of having staff from different organisations allowed young people to have access to a wider range of resources and skills. However, this also meant decisions take longer to be made due to multiple people having to be consulted.”

Project Stakeholder

“challenges were sometimes a lack of timely communication between partners but the strengths were a good leadership structure was in place where if

someone didn't have the resources or the capacity, then somebody else would always find it."

Project Staff

The partners were initially intending to monitor targets on a monthly basis to ensure that agreed objectives were being met which, in general did happen. The partners were also expected to attend regular network meetings to ensure that all stakeholders were kept informed about the project, to identify good practice and to discuss any issues/changes relating to provision. However, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted both the delivery programme and some of the management aspects of the project – most notably, the ability for the management team to come together to develop and implement an effective exit strategy in terms of securing further funding for the continuation of the project.

A particular strength of the partnership approach to managing the project emerged from the use of the Upshot monitoring, evaluation and information management system. This was currently used by one of the partners (Child Dynamix) to great effect and an element of the project budget was utilised to subscribe to the system for recording qualitative and quantitative data relevant to the YiN project. The online information management platform proved invaluable in evidencing the projects' activities were having by enabling project staff to: survey participants; record outcomes achieved; demonstrate impact; store photos and videos giving the 'real story' behind statistics; and use a timeline to show participants' 'journeys'.

4.6 Future Learning

A key strength of the project was that the project staff team included highly skilled and occupationally competent delivery staff. Professionally qualified youth workers employed by Child Dynamix were employed as coordinators and facilitators of the project and were supported by trainee youth work students on placement from the University of Hull's BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Studies programme.

"I feel all that as professional Youth Workers, we were highly successful at delivering a youth-led project that encompassed many of the National Youth Agency values and principles of youth work." **Project Staff Member**

Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values¹³ which informed the practice of the staff on the project whilst working with young people. These included:

- Young people choosing to take part.
- Treating young people with respect.
- Seeking to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem' behaviours.
- Helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities.
- Respecting and valuing differences.
- Promoting the voice of young people.

The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust further enhanced the expertise of the project team through seconding a full-time member of staff to the project who again, was extremely skilled in engaging young people and also widely knowledgeable about wildlife, conservation and environmental issues. This staff member with their duality of skills offered was integral to the success of the programme as evidenced through the achievement of project outcomes and also through the many positive comments from the young people who participated in the project.

“Youth in Nature has genuinely changed my life and gave me the best memories...getting close to people was the best...I feel like Les and Sara are like family.”

YiN Participant

An important aspect of the multi-agency working approach was the resulting sharing of skills between project staff:

“I feel like I learnt new skills as well, I've learnt how to be a better youth worker.”

Project Staff

¹³ [Code of Ethics published by the Institute for Youth work at iyw.org.uk.](https://www.iyw.org.uk/code-of-ethics)

5. Closing Comments

The final evaluation process which has resulted in this report has enabled the project stakeholders, staff and participants to reflect upon the project's legacy, along with identifying and addressing any challenges that were raised through the 5 years project duration. Through this process the following points of consideration have emerged which may influence and impact on future projects:

- The value of multi-agency learning cannot be under-estimated. Although the process of bringing together differing organisational ethos and values can at times be problematic, the impact within this project on the learning and development of project staff has been impressive. Skills and knowledge exchange have resulted in the staff members developing and extending their skills at engaging with young people, particularly those with challenging behaviour along with the development of knowledge around nature, wildlife, outdoor education and the environment. These skills will be taken back into the respective organisations and will continue to enhance and build on the good practice therein.
- Exit strategy – the ongoing impact of Covid-19 has impinged on the ability of the management team to execute a coordinated and planned end for the project which may have improved opportunities for further funding and enhanced the sustainability of the project.
- The continued need for funding in order to sustain such projects as Youth in Nature is apparent. The transformational and inspirational effects of working with young people outdoors continue to be evidenced through projects such as this but unfortunately, such work does not fall within the remit or core funding requirements covered by schools and more formal education projects. It is hoped then that projects such as Our Bright Future will continue to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to connect with their natural environment locally, nationally and globally in order for this vital work to continue.

“It would be good to carry on and bring more awareness to the environment – if it does carry on – what we need to do is show young people what’s going on in the world right now around them, not just the things that have already happened because we can’t change those.”

YiN Participant

“It has been really fun and interesting to attend. I have loved making new friends and I want that to continue. if YIN ended I don’t know what else I would do in my spare time”

YiN Participant

“Youth in Nature has influenced me to choose an environment related course at college. Also, it has given me lots of opportunities that I wouldn't have otherwise had. I believe Youth in Nature should continue so it can continue to influence young people like myself and spread awareness of current environmental issues.”

YiN Participant

“A lot of young people, especially young people living in cities, just don’t get the opportunity to get outside. We just need to get young people out into the environment, get them seeing it and valuing it, if young people value it, if they can enjoy it, if they can just come out more and sit in it and think ‘this is a lovely place to be’ then they’ll want to protect it.”

Project Stakeholder

6. Appendices

Appendix 1

Youth in Nature YP Evaluation

1. How have you been involved with Youth in Nature, what did you do?
2. What have been the best bits of your time with Youth in Nature?
3. Is there anything we could have improved?
4. Has been involved in Youth in Nature changed you in any way, did you learn new skills or did it make you feel different in any way?
5. How do you think is the best way to help young people to care about the environment?
6. Would you like to see Youth in Nature carry on? If so, what kind of things do you think we should be doing?

Appendix 2

Section 1 of 7

Youth in Nature Key Stakeholder Evaluation

You have been asked to take part in this evaluation as you have been identified as a key stakeholder in the Youth in Nature (YiN) project funded by the National Lottery through Our Bright Future.

As you will be aware, the funding for this project has now ended and we are now taking some time to undertake an impact evaluation which will culminate in an evaluation report for dissemination to funding bodies and key policy/decision makers.

The aim of the evaluation is to assess across five key areas of inquiry:

- 1) Identification of issues and corresponding interventions;
- 2) Inclusion and influence of young people and communities;
- 3) Impact assessment;
- 4) Management/partnerships and resources;
- 5) Identification of learning/development for future initiatives.

As a key stakeholder in the project your views and insight into the above key areas are very much valued and we would appreciate your feedback which will subsequently inform the content of the evaluation.

In this feedback form you will be presented with a set of prompt questions which correspond to each of the five areas outlined above. Please provide a summary containing your response to each of these questions and of course add any additional information as you see fit.

Your details



The information that you provide in this questionnaire will be used to evaluate the views of key stakeholders on the impacts, challenges and opportunities presented by the Youth in Nature project. We may like to use your feedback in the form of quotes to appear in the final report which you will be provided with a copy to read through before it's release.

Please can you indicate below whether you are happy for us to use your feedback in this way.

What is your name, job title and organisation?

Short answer text

What role did you/your organisation play in the facilitation of the Youth in Nature project? (i.e. finance management/staff employment/provision of training etc.)

Long answer text

Do you consent to the use of short quotes from your feedback contained within this questionnaire to potentially appear as quotes within the final report?

Short answer text

Issues and Interventions



Description (optional)

What were the activities relating to YiN that you/your organisation was involved in and over what period of time?

Long answer text

Was your contribution delivered as intended? If not, what changed and why?

Long answer text

Do you feel that the project achieved what it set out to? Please explain why.

Long answer text

Which parts of the project worked well?

Short answer text

In what ways did external factors influence the project outcomes?

Long answer text

Were there any expected or unexpected issues that you had to deal with in your involvement with the project?

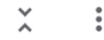
Long answer text

What have been the key areas for development/improvement?

Long answer text

Section 4 of 7

Inclusion and Influence of Young People and Communities



Description (optional)

Do you feel that the project engaged with the people it intended to?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Maybe

What was distinctive about the project's approach to engaging young people?

Long answer text

Did young people have the opportunity to influence the development of the project? If so, how? If not, why not?

Long answer text

Did the project influence any other areas that it engaged with? (i.e. policy/practice development?)

Long answer text

Section 5 of 7

Impact



Description (optional)

What do you think have been the most significant changes resulting from the project activities?

Long answer text

Were any particular groups impacted more than others and can the reasons be identified?

Long answer text

Section 6 of 7

Management/partnerships and resources



Description (optional)

What was distinctive about the management, partnership arrangements?

Long answer text

What were the challenges, strengths and opportunities created by the management structure?

Long answer text

Were the resources sufficient and were the project activities the most effective use of resources?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Is there anything you would change about the management structure if you were to engage with a similar project?

Long answer text

Section 7 of 7

Learning/Development for the Future



Description (optional)

What has been the key learning from this project?

Long answer text

What is distinctive about the interventions/methods used to facilitate this project?

Long answer text

What have been the most significant changes arising from the project?

Long answer text

Is the project replicable and sustainable from financial, economic, social and environmental perspectives? Please explain why/why not.

Long answer text

