



Youth Led Peer Research - Impact and Response

In September 2021, The National Lottery Community Fund commissioned Youth Led Peer Research (YLPR), delivered by The Young Foundation. This work saw 10 young people in each region of England being trained in research and analysis, who then went on to plan and conduct research into the experiences and priorities of their peers. This research brought together the work of the #iwill Fund and The Fund's wider Youth Voice Strategy, and built on work done by The Fund's Youth Voice team in Wales. The full report about the Youth Led Peer Research can be found [here](#).

Our response is built around the impact areas for young people from The Fund's 2021 impact report [Putting Communities First](#).

Impact Area: Wellbeing and Resilience

What the Youth Led Peer Research told us:

- There needs to be raised **awareness** of mental health provision - including advertising in places where young people will see it
- Mental health provision needs to be more **accessible and open to all**, including online provision to eliminate barriers that travel can put in place
- There should be **more choice** involved in accessing support - compatible support from someone who understands the issues of the individual, rather than generic support from someone who is available
- Mental health support should be **incorporated into community spaces**
- There should be **universal provision** to support day to day mental health, not just professional intervention for those who are in crisis
- Reducing stigma is important - **discussions** around mental health should be normalised from primary school age
- There needs to be increased community support for those belonging to **marginalised groups**
- **Drug and alcohol abuse** is a concern for young people, and could be addressed with open conversations or presentations by people from a range of backgrounds who have lived experience. Young people also want access to anonymous and non-judgemental support for issues around drugs and alcohol abuse, to encourage people to seek help.

What insights and learning do we already have in this area?

Since 2016 we have funded 4231 grants worth £568m that support young people's mental wellbeing and build their resilience.

[Mind Our Future](#) is a £10m grant programme to put young people in the lead so that they can imagine and create a more resilient and mentally healthy future for young people in Wales. Its focus and aims have been co-designed with the [Youth Voice Team](#) in Wales.

[HeadStart](#) is a £67.4m programme to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Four of the six HeadStart partnerships are piloting new approaches set out in the Government's 2017 Green Paper on Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health.

- Almost 202,000 young people have had access to support, including safe spaces and resilience building.
- 37,400 young people have attended at least one additional support session, such as peer mentoring or talking therapies.
- Around 247,000 professionals and volunteers who work with young people have been trained on mental health, resilience and/or trauma-informed practice.

- [Toolkits](#) to support the wellbeing and resilience of young people and reduce their risk of mental health problems were produced, and are available for anyone to use

What we will do thanks to this work:

- We will produce and communicate a ‘Top Tips for Funders’ document, based on the findings of the YLPR, so all youth projects are asked about mental health provision, signposting, safeguarding and accessibility
- The #iwill Fund will introduce mental health as a specific focus area
- We will continue to highlight the mental health provision that is already available, including:
 - One place to go - Shout: <https://giveusashout.org/>
 - Young minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
 - The Mix: <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health>
 - Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems>
 - Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/self-help/>
 - ChildLine: <https://www.childline.org.uk>
 - HeadStart resources: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/headstart-learning-team/young-people>
- We will encourage grant holders to advertise their provision in a variety of different places to maximise visibility, and to not rely just on social media
- We will continue our focus on early intervention, such as the HeadStart toolkits linked above to reduce the stigma around mental health projects.
- We will feed the importance of young people’s mental health into all new funding development across England

Impact Area: Skills for work

What the Youth Led Peer Research told us:

- Many young people need **access to space and equipment** such as desks and laptops in order to be able to learn properly
- Students with different needs should have access to different courses
- Young people want and need **training on their employment rights**
- Young people need support and advice on **all the options**, not just the university pathway
- There is a need for **‘new world’ employment skills**, such as training in how to approach online interviews

What insights and learning do we already have in this area?

Over the last five years, 2499 projects worth £473.8 million have helped young people find work or set up their own business. A major focus of this funding is equipping participants with the skills needed to find post-education employment and help those furthest from the labour market. We have also funded 8047 projects providing formal education and training, and 3413 projects offering life skills training.

A fifth of our grant holders who work with young people are helping those young people to gain skills for work, and 13% of them are supporting young people to gain new academic or vocational qualifications.

[Building Better Opportunities](#) is a programme where The National Lottery Community Fund matched funding from the European Social Fund for projects across England that tackle poverty and promote social inclusion. It funds a variety of projects, ranging from those improving employability for the most disadvantaged, helping those with multiple and complex needs, to improving financial literacy. Approximately 25% of beneficiaries have been young people. A range of evaluation and learning documents can be found [here](#).

[Talent Match](#) (2013-2018) was a five-year programme that helped young people facing significant and multiple barriers to finding work. In 2017 sustainability funding was awarded to Talent Match [Liverpool](#), Talent Match [Black Country](#), and Talent Match [Humber](#) to continue the model for a further three years.

- Over 27,000 young people (aged 18-24) have been supported to date.
- Almost 12,000 (46%) secured some form of job, including nearly 4,500 (17%) who secured sustained employment or self-employment.
- 81% of participants that received in-work support held onto their job for at least six months, compared to 75% for those unable or unwilling to receive in-work support.
- Talent Match Greater Manchester created an [Employer Toolkit](#) for adapting recruitment processes to get the best out of young people

What we will do thanks to this work:

- We will support and promote the legacy of the Talent Match programme and the best practice that came out of it in order to encourage employers and local businesses to support young people as assets
- We will champion the inclusion of transport and digital inclusion within our funding for those who are otherwise unable to access provision
- The #iwill Fund will continue to support young people's skills development and employability and will make young people's transition points a focus area, such as move from primary school to secondary school, and moving from education to employment
- We will produce and communicate a 'Top Tips for Funders' document, based on the findings of the YLPR, so youth projects focussing on employability are asked about what good quality work looks like, and accessibility

Impact Area: Youth Sector

What the Youth Led Peer Research told us:

- Young people want more **social activities that are only for young people**, and for there to be online activities available as well for those who don't have access to transport
- Youth centres are needed to provide a **safe space** for young people to 'just exist' without being expected to buy something. These centres could provide classes in sports and other hobbies to **support wellbeing**, and give young people skills and experiences
- Young people want **venues** where they can produce and display/perform art
- Young people want access to a **variety of activities**, not just the obvious choices, such as football, but other options such as archery, learning languages, or learning crafts
- Youth opportunities should be available in a variety of areas - not just in the middle of cities, but in the **outskirts and rural areas** so more people can access them

What insights and learning do we already have in this area?

Since 2016 we have funded 796 grants, worth £209m to support young people at the earliest opportunity, before problems intensify, or to prevent them from happening in the first place.

The [Youth Investment Fund](#) (YiF) is a joint £40m programme with DCMS that aims to expand delivery of open access youth provision in six regions of England. Grants were awarded to around 90 youth organisations. As of August 2020, almost 57,000 young people have attended YiF projects. 80% were based in the five most areas of England, with the majority (51%) in the two most deprived areas. After three months YiF provision had a statistically significant positive impact in a range of areas:

- Young people saying they felt confident to be the leader of a team increased from 43% to 66%.
- The ability to handle conflict with friends went up from 46% to 61%.
- Those reporting being happy with their life rose from 68% to 76%.
- The number of young people scoring highly for psychological distress or risk of depression fell from 27% to 11%.

YiF also led to the development of a shared theory of change for [open access youth provision](#)

What we will do thanks to this work:

- We will promote youth provision through our Top Tips for Funders, which will include question prompts that funding staff can ask those applying for youth project funding to ensure that young people's voice is embedded in those projects

- We will continue to work with other funders to collaborate and avoid duplication, including working alongside Government funding through the Youth Investment Fund.
- We will continue to work through regional teams who have local knowledge in order to support youth provision in rural and coastal areas, so that young people can access provision where they are.
- We will continue to promote best practice around open-access youth provision

Impact Area: Volunteering and Social Action

What the Youth Led Peer Research told us:

- **More education** is needed about **social issues** such as racism, equality, and LGBTQ+ rights
- Young people want to **have a voice** in the decisions that are made in their communities
- Young people want to learn more about **politics**, and want to get involved at a local and national level
- **Climate change** is a big issue of concern among young people
- Young people **care passionately** about the issues they see around them, and want to collaborate with other young people in order to **take action**, but are unsure of how to connect with other people or organisations that can support them

What insights and learning do we already have in this area?

We put young people at the heart of our decision-making and governance. Our [Youth Voice Teams](#) bring together young adults from projects we've funded; they help shape our work and are valuable ambassadors for their communities and youth organisations.

Since 2016 we have funded 4,865 youth volunteering projects worth £627m.

[Our Bright Future](#) was a £33m programme that ran between 2016 and 2021, supporting young people to make long term environmental improvements to their local area. 31 projects were funded across the UK, which led to over 120,000 young people gaining skills and experience, and improving their wellbeing through environmental action. Ways to get involved can be found [here](#).

The [#iwill Fund](#) is an England-wide investment with DCMS, aiming to make social action the norm for young people aged 10-20. As of June 2021, almost 501,000 young people have taken action. In February 2022, DCMS announced that they would be providing an additional £4m to the #iwill Fund, creating thousands of new youth volunteering opportunities across England so young people are supported to gain new skills. Current opportunities to get involved can be found [here](#).

What we will do thanks to this work:

- We will be embedding these findings in the plans for the addition #iwill Fund budget, including young people in the design of the programme, and ensuring that new opportunities are created for young people to lead and take action about issues that matter to them

- We will continue to increase youth voice across our funding, and within the projects we fund
- We will ensure that young people's voices are included in the [Climate Action Fund](#)
- We will share documents on our website that bring together information that young people have told us, such as the [Top #iwill Takeaways](#), where young people told us how funders can best work with young people to help to identify and take action against challenges they see and face in their community
- We will feed this learning into the Fund's strategy renewal process, embedding it in the way that The National Lottery Community Fund works