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# The Co-op Foundation #iwill Fund – Year 2 Report

May 2023



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IFF Research alone are responsible for the views expressed in this report, which do not necessarily represent the views, decisions, or policies of the institutions with which they are affiliated. More information on IFF Research can be found at: [www.iffresearch.com](http://www.iffresearch.com).

## Images included in the report

Throughout the report, images are included which were provided to IFF Research by the #iwill projects: Bradford YMCA, Bradford Youth Development Partnership and St. Oswalds Hospice.

The image on the cover of the report was provided by Youth Focus North East and depicts project participants taking part in a group activity.

This research can be cited as follows:

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## Executive summary

The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. In 2019, the Co-op Foundation committed £3.3 million to matching a portion of the #iwill Fund to distribute among youth social action projects.

In 2020 IFF Research were commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the #iwill Fund on behalf of the Co-op Foundation. This report relates to the Year 2 evaluation activities which took place from January 2023 to March 2023. For the qualitative elements of the research (interviews with grant managers and programme participants), this covers project activities during the period from April 2022 until March 2023; and for the quantitative elements (analysis of projects' monitoring form submissions), this covers the whole period of project activities, starting in early 2020 up until February 2023 when the most recent monitoring submissions were made.

### Key Findings

- The Co-op Foundation's #iwill Fund has provided opportunities for nearly 10,000 young people to directly take part in youth social action (YSA). The Fund has also engaged over 20,000 further young people indirectly, who have benefitted in some way as a result of the projects' activities.<sup>1</sup>
- Successful recruitment was supported by going to where young people are, involving diverse and with local knowledge staff to identify young people and remove barriers to participation, and advertising projects through social media. As projects became better known in their areas, community awareness also contributed to successful recruitment.
- Successful strategies for engaging young people in YSA, included creating spaces for them to share their experiences, empowering participants to make decisions in project design and play active roles in project delivery, embedding support within the project, and involving a diverse and knowledgeable staff team.
- The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis had far-reaching impacts on staff and young people involved in #iwill projects, including reducing the capacity to deliver projects, reducing the scale of delivery and changing the focus of some activities.
- To a large extent, projects are fulfilling their strand's remit:
  - Community Spaces projects are most impactful in helping young people to achieve outcomes related to community and influence, which closely aligns with their community based remit;
  - School Transitions projects are most impactful in helping young people cope with challenging situations, which aligns with their remit to support young people's wellbeing as they progress to secondary school;
  - Bereavement projects are most impactful in helping young people cope with challenging situations which is an important part of their remit, but they are least impactful in helping young people gain communication skills, which would suggest that they are not yet fulfilling their remit to help young people share their experiences. Grant managers explained that

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<sup>1</sup> Based on analysis of monitoring submissions from 36 projects

young people who have been bereaved need intensive personal support to cope with their immediate needs, and therefore need more time to feel able to start engaging other young people.

- Projects have reported limited progress towards the wider community outcomes. In particular, few projects reported that *'the wider community's perception of young people has changed'*.

### Recommendations for the funder

- Given the diversity of projects and their varying monitoring capabilities, it may not be reasonable to expect projects to change, and demonstrate changing, community views. The Co-op Foundation may want to revisit this outcome going forward. An outcome of promoting a positive image of young people to the community, may be more achievable.
- Bereavement projects tend to be smaller in scale and the young people participating need more intensive personal support to be able to cope with their immediate needs. They therefore need more time to achieve outcomes and to engage their peers. Co-op Foundation could consider if there are any ways in which projects could report on the 'distance travelled' by young people in addition to the 'achievement' of outcomes.

### Recommendations for grantees

- Project staff demonstrated resourcefulness, flexibility and creativity in developing recruitment approaches and refining project activities to the needs of young people. Grantees should continue to be adaptive and make on-going refinements in the face of changing circumstances and needs.
- A key risk to young people participating and achieving outcomes is staff turnover. Grantees should consider whether they have continuity plans in place in the event of staff turnover, to minimise young people dropping out or delayed progress to outcomes.
- Unfamiliar words and descriptions can be off-putting and confusing for young people. Grantees should include young people when promoting and disseminating project activities to other young people.
- Grantees should move away from summer and school term holidays because fewer young people are consistently available at these times. Similarly, meeting too often could deter busy young people from engaging but meeting not often enough could lose momentum. Grantees should consider the best frequency for their project and participants.
- The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, are felt by young people. Grantees should consider how these could be creating barriers to young people's participation in projects and plan ways to remove these barriers.
- Some young people need more time and individualised support to be ready to engage in YSA. Grantees should consider how best to prepare these young people for youth social action in their local contexts. This could involve assessing how ready young people are to progress to YSA at the point of recruitment, and adapting the project plan for that.
- Grantees should consider developing or building on alumni networks, involving project alumni in future delivery, sharing best practice within projects and with the wider sector.

- For some young people, small changes amount to considerable achievements. Grantees should consider how best to monitor these steps that are the precursor to achieving the #iwill Fund's core outcomes.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The #iwill Fund brings together a group of organisations who all contribute funding to embed meaningful social action into the lives of young people. The #iwill Fund supports the aims of the #iwill movement - to make involvement in social action a part of life for young people, by recognising the benefit for both young people and their communities. By bringing together funders from across different sectors and by making sure that young people have a say in where the funding goes – the #iwill Fund is taking a collaborative approach. In 2019, the Co-op Foundation committed £3.3 million to matching a portion of the #iwill Fund to distribute among youth social action projects, aligned with their strategy:

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'We're the Co-op's charity and we're co-operating for a fairer world. We believe co-operation is at the heart of strong communities and this makes us a different kind of funder. We work closely with communities, we listen and we learn. We unlock communities' power by focusing on those who have most at stake. We asked young people to shape our vision, and now we're co-operating with them and others to turn this into reality.'

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Social action involves young people campaigning, fundraising and volunteering, all of which enable young people to make a positive difference in their communities as well as develop their own skills and knowledge. Youth social action (YSA) is defined by two main elements<sup>2</sup>:

- A double benefit - YSA should achieve a benefit for the community as well as a benefit for young people in that they gain a greater social awareness and develop a wider perspective.
- Youth led – YSA should be, at least to some extent, youth led. This can mean young people making decisions about the community benefit they are trying to achieve, the activities they pursue, and the length of their engagement.

The Co-op Foundation's matched Fund aims to support youth social action projects across the UK between 2019-2023. 48 projects received funding in 2020, of which 35 received continuation funding in 2022 from the Co-op Foundation's #iwill Fund. While the #iwill Fund only operates in England, the Co-op Foundation have also funded six projects in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. These six projects have been included in the overall number of 48 projects. The projects are grouped into three thematic strands and description of the projects can be found in Appendix A:

- Community Spaces, aimed at helping young people to improve the design and use of community spaces;

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<sup>2</sup> #iwill Fund Learning Hub, *What is youth social action* (London: DCMS, NLCF, Dartington Service Design Lab, 2022), <https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/What%20is%20youth%20social%20action%20report%20updated.pdf>

- School Transitions, aimed at supporting young peoples' wellbeing in the transition from primary to secondary school;
- Bereavement, aimed at providing young people safe spaces and support to share their experience of bereavement.

## 1.2 Evaluation aims

In 2020 IFF Research were commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the #iwill Fund on behalf of the Co-op Foundation. This evaluation aims to:

- Combine existing knowledge and best practice learnings and share this with projects in accessible ways (including the most effective models that could be used in other contexts);
- Collaborate with grant-holders to capture emerging learnings and enable sharing of stories of their work across the programme and beyond;
- Produce iterative learning summaries that explain key lessons, to support, influence and inform project action and activity; and
- Analyse evidence of the overall impact of project activity on youth social action on the individual and the impact of this on the wider community.

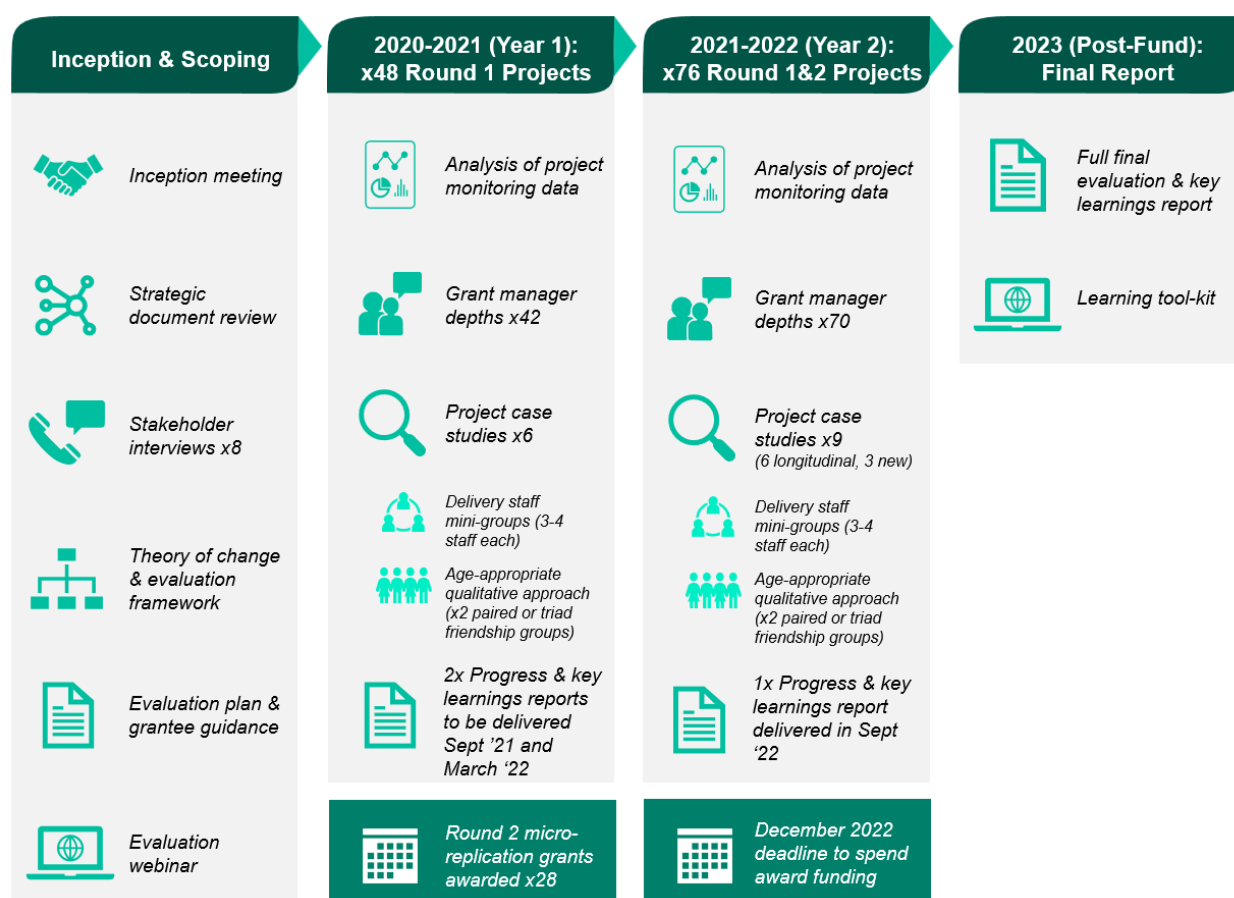
The evaluation covers the period from when the first round of projects were initially funded in late 2019 until funding ends in December 2023. This report relates to the Year 2 evaluation activities which took place from January 2023 to March 2023. For the qualitative elements of the research (interviews with grant managers and programme participants), this covers project activities during the period from April 2022 until March 2023; and for the quantitative elements (analysis of projects' monitoring form submissions), this covers the whole period of project activities, starting in early 2020 up until February 2023 when the most recent monitoring submissions were made

## 1.3 Research approach

As summarised in Figure 1.1 below, the evaluation started in 2020 with a Scoping phase and is being conducted across three 'Years' of the Fund, with research activities to conclude and the final report to be delivered in April 2024. The evaluation includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods.



Figure 1.1 Summary evaluation approach



Originally, the evaluation was commissioned to be carried out over two ‘Years’ and to conclude in April 2023. However, on the conclusion of Year 1 of the evaluation it was decided to extend the evaluation to cover the entire period of time that projects will be funded. To extend the evaluation without increasing the budget, the evaluation activities that were originally intended to be carried out in Year 2 were reduced in scope slightly and were split across two separate years. This is why there is a smaller number of Grant manager interviews and no project case studies in Years 2 and 3.

More details on the approach are discussed below.

## Scoping

During the scoping phase in 2020 the evaluation team:

- **Conducted seven interviews with key stakeholders**, including senior staff members of the Co-op Foundation and the #iwill Fund, and Grant managers from funded projects.
- **Reviewed and synthesised 35 documents** provided by the Co-op Foundation, including the background to the Co-op Foundation’s #iwill Fund and the overall #iwill Fund, application forms and previous monitoring data from projects, and evaluation documents from the #iwill Fund Learning Hub.
- **Identified types of data** through the document review and stakeholder interviews that would allow us to comment on the #iwill Fund’s implementation and impact.



- **Developed Theories of Change<sup>3</sup>** for each strand of the #iwill Fund.
- **Developed an evaluation framework** to identify how each of the desired outcomes from the Theories of Change would be measured through the evaluation.
- **Hosted a webinar with #iwill funded projects** to explain the purpose and objectives of the evaluation and outline what would be required of projects.
- **Developed a guidance document** for projects to support them in completing the six-monthly monitoring forms.

## Qualitative research

### Grant manager interviews

To gather insights on best practice and key lessons, as well as evidence on impact, all 42 grant managers (excluding the six projects in devolved nations) will be interviewed at least once, and in most cases, twice or three times over the duration of the evaluation. In Year 1, interviews with all 42 grant managers were conducted between May 2021 and March 2022. In Year 2, 22 grant manager interviews, covering all three strands, were conducted between January and March 2023. In Year 3, a further 22 Grant manager interviews will be conducted at a similar time of year, including all those who were not interviewed in Year 2 to ensure full coverage across funded projects.

The interviews take approximately 30-45 minutes and are conducted by telephone or over a digital platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interview guides are also published, in a separate complementary document to this report.

### Case studies and young people interviews

In Year 1, six projects were selected as case studies to showcase the type of work being carried out by projects across the different strands. In addition to interviewing the grant managers, this involved interviewing young people who participated in project activities and conducting interviews and mini-focus groups with project staff. As outlined above, case studies were not part of the Year 2 and 3 evaluation activities.

Year 2 of the evaluation included nine interviews with young people in March 2023, reaching a total of 18 young people aged between 10 and 20, from across nine projects. These interviews were set up by grant managers. In Year 2, young people received £20 for taking part in an interview. A similar approach will be taken in Year 3.

### Analysis

All interviews were thematically analysed using a framework approach. The findings in this report relate to analysis of Year 2 activities during the period from April 2022 until March 2023.

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<sup>3</sup> A Theory of Change is a visual representation that outlines the activities that a project is going to undertake, the ultimate impact it aims to have, and the outcomes that lead or contribute to the longer-term impacts. It summarises the rationale for acting, sets out the inputs, activities, intended outcomes and impacts, and also shows the mechanisms by which change is intended to occur. The Theories of Change for each strand are included in a separate methods document.

## Quantitative analysis of monitoring form responses

The Co-op Foundation provide projects with an online form to submit participation and outcomes figures (see table 1.1). So far, projects have submitted this data on four separate occasions - the 0.5 submission in August 2021, the 1.0 submission in February 2022, the 1.5 submission in August 2022, and most recently the 2.0 submission in February 2023. The next reporting deadlines will be in August 2023 and February 2024.

**Table 1.1 Project monitoring submissions**

<b>Number of young people participating and benefitting</b>	<b>Number of young people directly participating in YSA</b>	
	Number of young people indirectly benefitting from YSA	
<b>Number of young people achieving seven core outcomes</b>	Wellbeing	Are better equipped to cope with challenging situations
	Confidence	Have the confidence in themselves to set meaningful personal goals
	Connectedness	Feel part of a wider community
		Feel they have good-quality relationships based on mutual trust and empathy
	Skills	Develop teamwork and planning skills
		Gain communication skills (including speaking, presenting, and listening)
Influence	Feel they have influenced support, services or spaces in the community or school	
<b>Project has achieved community outcomes (Y/N)</b>	Influence	Support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people
	Connectedness	The wider community's perception of young people have changed
	Participation	There are plans to deliver more youth social action projects as a result of your project

The Co-op Foundation collate the monitoring form responses from all projects and share these with IFF Research to conduct analysis. In Year 1 it was decided to not include an analysis of the monitoring form responses as upon receipt of the 1.0 submission, IFF Research identified inconsistencies in how projects were reporting participation and outcomes for young people, meaning that we could not be confident that all projects' data was reliable. Ahead of the Year 2 evaluation activities, changes were made to the online monitoring form and all projects were invited to an online workshop held jointly by IFF Research and the Co-op Foundation to ensure that future sets of data would be of a high quality.

The findings in Chapter 3 of this report refer to the monitoring form responses up to and including the 2.0 submission. Analysis of the data included producing overall figures for the number of young people directly participating, benefitting, and achieving the seven core outcomes. These overall figures were broken down by fund strand and other sub-categories, and averages were calculated to allow for like-for-like comparisons. Similar analysis was conducted for community outcomes.

## 1.4 Impact of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis

The timescales for the scoping phase and Year 1 of the evaluation coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. As a result, projects revised their designs and continued to refine their delivery approach in response to the pressures the pandemic and associated social distancing rules placed on their young people and partner organisations.

Project delivery in 2022-2023 was undertaken as the cost-of-living crisis and the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are felt throughout the UK. This report captures the influence this has had on project delivery and young people's experiences, from the perspective of grant managers and young people.

## 1.5 Reading this report

This report presents the findings from Year 2 of the #iwill Fund. The report is structured as follows:

- **How projects are delivering YSA:** presents findings around recruitment of young people, delivering the activities and YSA, and a discussion of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and Covid-19 pandemic on the projects. Success and challenges of delivery and lessons learnt are included throughout.
- **Impact of #iwill funded projects:** discusses the overall reach of the projects and the progress made towards achieving the outcomes for young people and communities.
- **Conclusion and recommendations:** summarises the main findings discussed in the previous chapters and sets out recommendations for the funder and grantees.

When referring to the young people who took part in interviews for this evaluation or when referring to young people who took part in specific projects as illustrative examples, we describe them as 'participants', and when referring to young people more broadly, we describe them as 'young people' or use the abbreviation 'YP'. When referring to 'partners' we mean the local stakeholders, organisations and individuals supporting projects' delivery. When referring to youth social action we use the abbreviation 'YSA'. When discussing analysis of 'monitoring form responses' we are referring to projects' submission of participation and outcomes data to the Co-op Foundation via an online form that all projects are required to complete.

## 2 How projects are delivering YSA

This chapter discusses the range of strategies used by projects to recruit and engage young people in YSA, and explores which strategies were successful and the challenges faced. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis upon projects and young people.

The findings presented in this chapter support the findings in other #iwill Fund reports, in particular in relation to recruiting young people, working with trusted partners, and removing barriers to participation.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

### 2.1 Recruiting young people to youth social action

Young people from a diverse range of backgrounds participated within and across projects. Projects operated throughout the UK, in some of the least affluent areas of the country and worked with young people aged 10 to 20. Some projects had a specific target group of young people that they engaged, such as from minoritised communities and members of the LGBTQIA+<sup>7</sup> community.

Projects used many different recruitment approaches to identify and recruit eligible young people to their projects. Successful recruitment was supported by going to where young people are, involving diverse and locally knowledgeable staff to identify potential recruits and remove barriers to project participation, and advertising projects through social media. As projects built up a good reputation in their areas, the increased awareness within the community also contributed to successful recruitment; one grantee reported that as they became embedded in the community, young people were able to self-refer to the project as they had heard about the opportunity through word of mouth. These findings are explored in further detail below.

#### Recruitment successes

##### Making connections and being present in relevant spaces

By going to where young people are, projects more efficiently identified potential recruits to take part in their projects. Projects from all three strands used schools to signpost potential young people to their projects because teachers had a good understanding of their needs and who may benefit from YSA. For example, project staff gave presentations about the project at school assemblies and teachers and pastoral care staff told pupils about the projects. School Transitions projects benefited from relationships with teachers who could identify the young people who would likely struggle with the transition from primary to secondary school and would benefit from taking part in a project.

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<sup>4</sup> #iwill Fund Learning Hub, *How do we support youth social action for all?* (London: DCMS, NLCF, Dartington Service Design Lab 2023), <https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2023-02/How%20do%20we%20support%20youth%20social%20action%20for%20all%20-%20iwill%20summative%20report%202.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> #iwill Fund Learning Hub, *The Socio-Economic Participation Gap in Youth Social Action* (London: DCMS, NLCF, Dartington Service Design Lab 2019), [https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/iwill\\_fund\\_learning\\_hub\\_-\\_evidence\\_workstream\\_-\\_the\\_socio-economic\\_participation\\_gap\\_in\\_youth\\_social\\_action.pdf](https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/iwill_fund_learning_hub_-_evidence_workstream_-_the_socio-economic_participation_gap_in_youth_social_action.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Wavehill: social and economic research, #iwill Youth Social Action Fund: Final Evaluation (Ceredigion: 2022), <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/media/insights/documents/iwill-Youth-Social-Action-Fund-Evaluation-Report-final-003.pdf?mtime=20220617140036&focal=none>

<sup>7</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual (or allies).

Across all three strands, successful recruitment was supported by adults working closely with young people, such as religious and faith leaders, counsellors, social workers and youth workers. A School Transitions project successfully recruited underserved young people through a school's pastoral care team and children's social workers in the local area. An example of a Bereavement project that worked with a local Imam for recruitment is presented in the Spotlight box below.

### **In the spotlight: Recruiting through religious and faith leaders**

A Bereavement project knew many local children attended religious schools. Though the project offered secular rather than religious support, they worked with local religious institutions to make sure young people from those communities were aware that the support was available to them.

For example, Imams spoke to their congregation about grief support available for young people.

*"We work with the local religious institutions who are aware we are secular. We have had a couple of Imams who spoke to their congregation, and supported it, they said it [the project] is about mental health outside the realm of religion."* **Grant manager, Bereavement**

### **Utilising social media**

Projects also advertised their presence on social media platforms and channels they knew young people were using, including Instagram and TikTok, which proved to be an effective strategy as illustrated in the Spotlight box below.

### **In the spotlight: Recruiting through Instagram**

A Community Spaces project used Instagram to promote their project. This approach helped them recruit young people they would not have reached through their other recruitment channels. The young people recruited this way found the Instagram post clear and mentioned it contained all the information they needed to know in order to sign up quickly and easily for the project.

*"I think it was all quite clear when I saw it [the post], so I didn't really seek out more information because I knew what I was signing up for, I'd seen it through Instagram numerous times."* **Young person, Community Spaces**

### **Word of mouth**

Word of mouth was a less common recruitment approach that helped some projects extend the reach of their recruitment. Young people who had already participated in a Community Spaces project helped to recruit other young people to take part in the project in future. Where young people were signposted to the project by their friends, this helped them to feel that it was relevant to them.

## **Recruitment challenges and learnings**

### **Convincing school staff to support recruitment**

School staff were essential recruitment partners for many projects. In less economically affluent areas, there were more additional demands on staff time. Grant managers felt that this made it more challenging for projects in these areas to gain access to young people. The staff were therefore hesitant to distract the young people from classes, or they felt they could not prioritise recruitment activities above other tasks in their workload. Where projects faced this, they leaned on their other recruitment channels such as promotional materials in public spaces or on social media, and through

other professionals close to young people. This included involving pastoral care teams and social workers to ensure underserved young people were reached.

### Using accurate and appealing messaging about what the project involves

Involving partners with good local knowledge, to identify young people was a successful approach for most projects. However, a learning from one project was that it was important to ensure these partners have clear and simple messages to use to encourage young people's participation. A Community Spaces project found teachers advertised the project as an easy way for their pupils to leave class early, rather than as a project that would personally benefit them. The result was that early dropout rates were higher than expected, because the young people quickly learned that the project required some effort.

*“Teachers will sell it more as an easy way to get out of class rather than explaining what it is. This leads to drop off when young people start attending and realise the effort required.”*

**Grant manager, Community Spaces**

A project looked to overcome this issue by ensuring the project staff spoke directly with the young people before the project started, to manage expectations, identify barriers to engagement and work with the young people to remove those barriers.

Using language to describe and promote projects that young people understand and relate to is also important for engaging them. Some participants told us that the word ‘transitions’ in ‘School Transitions’ brought to their mind gender transition; moreover, they did not know or understand what mentions of ‘mindfulness’ activities in project descriptions referred to. Also importantly, the term ‘youth social action’ was not widely understood. Instead of using these umbrella terms or words which could be misconstrued, projects were more effective in engaging young people when they described what the project actually did in straightforward and direct terms.

### Engaging schools on sensitive topics

Projects exploring sensitive topics faced additional challenges to recruiting young people. For example, grant managers from Bereavement projects perceived school staff did not appreciate the importance of bereavement support for young people and as a result did not put much effort to recruit on the project's behalf. In this case, grant managers found it useful to tell school staff they knew there were bereaved young people in the school, and highlighted the benefits of the project to these young people's concentration and class engagement.

*“The challenge has been empowering the schools, getting them to understand this support is needed and available.”*

**Grant manager, Bereavement**

## 2.2 Experiences of young people delivering youth social action

As summarised in Table 2.1 there was a broad range of YSA activities being delivered by projects, reflecting the broad criteria of YSA as part of the #iwill Fund.

**Table 2.1 Types of YSA being delivered by projects**

	Type of YSA	Examples
<b>Community Spaces</b>	Young people adapt or create public spaces to improve their use	Improving the design and use of local parks
	Young people adapt or create public spaces to deliver a message	Environmental action in green spaces
	Young people support specific groups of young people to engage with public spaces and services	Giving SEND <sup>8</sup> YP the skills needed to use public transport and influencing decision makers to improve public transport  Supporting LGBTQIA+ YP to feel confident being themselves in public spaces, including their schools
<b>School Transitions</b>	Older pupils provide ‘peer support’ to younger pupils or peers	Older pupils become ‘buddies’ for younger pupils who are identified as needing support  Older pupils wearing lanyards to indicate that they can be approached to talk about any concerns
	Young people deliver activities to support wellbeing	Non-contact boxing sessions and debating
	Young people deliver informational or skills workshops	Older pupils delivering ‘wellbeing and resilience’ workshops to younger pupils
	Young people form and facilitate support groups	Support groups for young carers Creating ‘friendship groups’
<b>Bereavement</b>	Young people develop resources to help other bereaved YP	Creating a film about their experiences of bereavement  Creating ‘bereavement packs’ for YP and for schools  Developing a board game themed around bereavement for trained young people to play with younger people
	Young people become peer mentors and advocates	Bereaved YP being trained to run support groups  YP ‘lobbying’ teachers to understand bereaved YP’s needs

<sup>8</sup> Special Educational Needs and Disability





*YP taking part in a workshop - image provided by Bradford YMCA*

Grant managers and participants highlighted successful strategies for engaging young people in YSA, including creating spaces for them to share their experiences, empowering participants to make decisions in project design and play active roles in project delivery, embedding support within the project, and involving a diverse and knowledgeable staff team. For some young people, a lot of support and time is needed for them to be ready to engage with YSA.

The strategies, and challenges experienced by grant managers and young people to deliver YSA, are explored in further detail below.

## **YSA delivery successes**

### **Encouraging young people to share their experiences and express themselves**

Projects created space for young people to share their experiences and engage in YSA. This was supported by relationship and trust building between project staff and participants, which helped young people to actively participate in activities. For projects covering sensitive topics and with participants with low self-confidence, developing trust was an essential building block to project success. A Schools Transitions project introduced a feedback board where young people (both directly and indirectly involved in the project) could write about the impact the project had on them. Young people had free access to read this feedback as it came in. Feedback was left as written, without editing or removing it, and allowed young people to witness the direct impact their work had on the school. The unfiltered nature of the board also allowed young people to learn how to take less positive feedback constructively.

*“[We] try to build a culture within schools where it is respected to be very non-judgemental... and building a culture of trust.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

Projects used different communication platforms to enable young people to connect and share their experiences, such as video conferencing platforms and WhatsApp. This was most successful when the platforms they adopted were popular and easy to use among their participants. An example of this on a Community Spaces project is discussed in the Spotlight box.

### **In the spotlight: Using Discord to engage**

A Community Spaces project used Discord, an online instant messaging platform, to safely connect participants and enable them to share their experiences and questions. Grant managers perceived this to be especially helpful for young people developing their social skills and confidence in communication.

Young people also created and maintained welcoming and inclusive spaces using creative means to appear approachable and be helpful to their peers. For example, peer mentors wore 'Use Your Voice' lanyards to encourage others to not be afraid to speak up about issues which may affect them, and volunteers at a SEND school wore 'Friendly Face' badges. Related to this, pupils were encouraged to vocalise their feelings more widely through campaigns and activities which contributed to increasing their confidence.

*"In our school's student voice campaign, we all had to do a speech and there was like a lot of people there. [We] did that speech and it was very nerve wracking at first, but then we were confident."*

**Young person, School Transitions**

### **Empowering young people**

Empowering young people to actively engage in YSA was important for delivering youth-led activities. Projects achieved this by giving participants autonomy to design their YSA and choosing their roles in its delivery, while also ensuring project staff were encouraging, listening to concerns and available for questions. For example, participants in a Community Spaces project greeted visitors to an arts and crafts market the project hosted and signposted them to market areas. Both grant managers and participants noted that this helped to improve their confidence and social skills by providing them with an opportunity to interact and feel connected to others whilst also assisting in creating a welcoming environment.

*"I mainly hung around and it was so nice to meet all the different artists and I wandered around the table and helped them with all the little tasks that they have to do, and it was just very nice because I felt once again connected to everyone."*

**Young person, Community Spaces**

The Spotlight box below is an example of young people being empowered to design project outputs based on what they have learned from their own experiences.

### **In the spotlight: Youth-led project delivery**

In a School Transitions project, young people who had recently transitioned to secondary school shared how they sometimes felt nervous travelling to and from school. Together, they developed a simple and powerful way to help others like them to feel less nervous; they designed a badge young people in the project could wear that signals they are approachable if someone feeling nervous wanted to talk or sit together.

Whilst designing the badge, participants learned of other initiatives led by their local council, including a discounted travel on buses card. They created posters to raise awareness of the card in their school, and explored other ways they might encourage different travel to school, such as a cycle-to-school scheme and a road crossing safety training session.

*“That benefits the whole school really, anyone can get one of the badges, and everyone will see the posters” – Grant manager, School Transitions*

### **Leveraging young people’s knowledge, skills and experiences**

Leveraging young people’s local knowledge to tailor peer mentoring and advocacy in the local context added credibility and relevance to the YSA. For instance, a Bereavement project allowed pupils from different primary and secondary schools to create tailored bereavement packs based on what they knew about their schools’ needs. This initiative allowed for young people to benefit from materials created by their peers who understood their needs. A School Transitions project focused on building friendships and overcoming loneliness among young people moving into secondary school because the participants had seen a rise in mental health concerns in their schools.

The evaluation identified examples of YSA activities being sustained where project alumni delivered the project, creating a virtuous cycle. A School Transitions project developed participants confidence to deliver information sessions about being a young carer and what helped them, to their peers and teachers.

*“They want it driven from them, not the teachers ... they can provide the young people with training to run little sessions ... the kids know enough – the sky’s the limit!”*

**Young person, School Transitions**

A Bereavement project participant began a lunchtime group for bereaved young people to meet and share their experiences. Through their discussions, it became clear many had not received any support, so the group agreed to become advocates and mentors to other bereaved young people.



*Peer mentors on a School Transitions project – image provided by Bradford Youth Development Partnership*

### **Collaborating with partners**

Partnership working between project staff and local partners helped projects to collaborate on and contribute to their sustainability. For example, grant managers of school-based projects described working hard to maintain good relationships with school stakeholders. This led to longer-term benefits; these schools had committed to sustaining project involvement in future years. For example, a youth worker from a School Transitions project built and managed relationships with a school by visiting the school to talk with staff about the schools' needs.

*“On that day you're part of their staff team. The key is identifying the gap in the school and that we can help fill that.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

### **YSA delivery challenges and lessons**

#### **Frequency and scheduling of activities**

The frequency with which projects brought young people together was important for maintaining momentum and engagement. For example, a grant manager reflected that during the early stages of delivery, meeting monthly was not frequent enough because the young people forgot what was discussed in the last session and they did not have enough opportunities to build relationships with other young people. However, moving to weekly proved too demanding of the young people's time. For this project, fortnightly gatherings when the project had a lot going on, and monthly gatherings over the summer, was just right. The appropriate frequency will depend on the nature of the project and the needs of the young people.

Scheduling project activities was a considerable challenge for projects as they had to accommodate the varying needs and competing commitments of young people from different locations. All projects spent considerable time trying to best schedule activities to maximise engagement. School-based

projects were more susceptible to this challenge because schools often timetabled school events when project activities were planned which meant that project attendance suffered. For similar reasons, projects learned to limit or avoid activities during summer and half term holidays. There was no one time of day or year that worked best for scheduling activities. The best timings depended on the circumstances of the young people, and the requirements and availability of the locations where projects were meeting.

*“Working with so many different schools we didn’t manage to get a uniform method of delivery in terms of timings. [We know], based on now going into the third year, what we think works best of all, but we’ve still got schools saying, ‘we don’t want it like that’.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

### **Location of project activities**

A key learning highlighted by some projects was that location was important in the delivery of sessions. A School Transition project began their sessions with young people in secondary school but discovered this made some Year 6 (primary school) students uncomfortable and overwhelmed. To overcome this, the project moved the first few sessions for a new cohort to the primary school to allow young people to adapt to the project first and build confidence. Another project took secondary school participants to dance and music lessons at the primary school, to begin project discussions.

### **Project partners’ engagement with young people**

Key partners such as teachers engaging with the project are vital to delivery and achieving the overall outcomes for young people. A participant from a Bereavement project mentioned that, as part of peer support and advocacy, they had created bereavement packs for their peers which contained information and support. However, after they shared the materials with their teacher, they did not receive any feedback. When teachers don’t follow through and provide feedback or take action related to the peer support or advocacy, it can be demoralising and damaging for the young person.

*“I took the pack into school; they took it away and they haven’t engaged with that or talked to [the project lead] since. I think it was the wrong teacher I gave it to – he is the support teacher, but he isn’t supportive. So, I was confused...it felt weird because I was excited to help my school with that. But they acted like they didn’t want it to happen even though they agreed to.”*

**Young person, Bereavement**

### **Project staff turnover**

As previously highlighted, project staff relationships with young people are important for building trust and enabling them to engage with YSA. Staff turnover was a key risk to project success. Projects that experienced high staff turnover required more time to forge new relationships. The implications of this were project delays.

## **2.3 Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis**

The pandemic and cost of living crisis had far-reaching impacts on individuals and organisations, including reducing the capacity of staff to delivery projects and reducing the scale of, or changing the focus of, some project activities, and changing the focus of some project activities. Moreover, the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis These social and economic changes impacted projects’ ability to engage young people in YSA because of practical difficulties related to delivery and young people’s reduced capacity to engage because while they were dealing with other issueschallenges, like adverse effects on their mental health issues. All findings below are from the perspective of grant managers.



## Covid-19 pandemic

Most projects did not experience additional delivery challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, beyond what was reported in [Year 1 of the evaluation](#). Instead, the reduced risk of infection and need for social distancing presented positive opportunities for projects. For example, some School Transitions projects returned to face-to-face delivery in Year 2 and noticed improved engagement of young people, and better awareness of the secondary school environment, when their Year 6 to 7 transition event was held in-person rather than online. Another School Transitions project introduced a residential trip for students that was not possible in the pandemic. young people, and better awareness of the secondary school environment, when their Year 6 to 7 transition event was held in-person rather than online. Another School Transitions project introduced a residential trip for students that was not possible in the pandemic.

*“The residential trip was also a huge success; particularly given they had missed out on these trips during covid. This was all the children’s favourite part of the programme.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

Young people were dealing with many issues during the pandemic, including adverse effects on their mental health. Projects observed the need for additional wellbeing support and adapted their project plans to meet this need. For example, a Community Spaces project found that they needed to build in additional time and activities to build trust, both between the young people and project staff, and among the group of young people. The grant manager attributed this to a surfacing of emotional difficulties resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, that have only emerged now since the restrictions had eased.

*“There was a lot of work we had to do relating to Covid recovery – it has taken a lot of work to build trust [among the young people]. We’re finding it harder to recruit young people...it’s taking a few weeks to recruit to next round, compared to a few days previously. Young people are feeling quite apathetic and tired...they want to commit [to the #iwill Fund project] but may find it hard to do it and have the headspace for it.”*

**Grant manager, Community Spaces**

The emotional needs of young people triggered by the pandemic led to changes in eligibility criteria for a project. A Community Spaces project working with young people with SEND initially planned to work with young people up to the age of 20 years old. However, they continued to support the same group of young people as they grew older than 20 years because, the grant manager recognised, they were in high need and there was limited other support available to them in the community.

## The cost-of-living crisis

Most projects in Year 2 were able to deliver their programme as planned, with limited disruption due to the cost-of-living crisis. However, These projects did notice the changes to their operating costs, with heating and electricity bills increasing. Some covered their rise in expenses through their own organisations’ funds and through other fundraising activities.<sup>9</sup>

A less commonly reported but deeply felt experience were projects who faced significant financial hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis that resulted in changes to project plans. For example, a

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<sup>9</sup> In recognition of the difficulties that projects’ faced with the cost-of-living crisis, in April 2023 the Co-op Foundation provided a sum of money to each project as a one off unrestricted funding top-up, to help them meet rising costs.

School Transitions project reduced their duration from 12 weeks to eight weeks, reduced the therapists and artists available per session to one, and removed a free buffet lunch for young people.

*“This allowed the project to survive but did limit the impact it could have had.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

A Bereavement project saw the adverse effects the cost-of-living crisis was having on their participants; the project saw a spike in the number of counselling sessions required to be able to move on to delivering YSA, beyond the six sessions offered that were funded by the #iwill Fund. The organisation self-funded counselling for 11 young people, beyond the six allocated sessions.

*“Everything is far more expensive, we don’t get a lot of money from the Co-op Foundation, for example for heating and lighting, we are having to cover it through other means. We need the Co-op Foundation to know how much is being done [by us]. If we were to do the bare minimum from what we get the grant from, there will be a serious safeguarding concern. We stopped at six [counselling] sessions, but for those with high needs (11 kids) we paid for additional sessions.”*

**Grant manager, Bereavement**

Some projects anticipated potential barriers for young people to participate in their activities due to the cost-of-living crisis and were more proactive. For example, a School Transitions project reviewed their planned activities and did not identify barriers for attendance among children whose families were struggling financially. Another project began offering free snacks to encourage young people to attend who may be struggling to afford food.

*“The last thing we want to do is put in any barrier to participation.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

Similar to the pandemic period, young people were dealing with many issues in the cost-of-living crisis, including adverse effects on their mental health. Young people expressed concerns about their parents’ financial situation due to the cost-of-living crisis. In response, a project incorporated more social and fun activities, for example, woodwork and creative arts, and introduced a rewards system so young people were recognised for showing good behaviour and skills within the sessions.

*“There are far more challenges to the emotional wellbeing of the children, they ask more questions, there is a lot of awareness [of what is happening in wider society], and more anxiety. We put more interactive systems in place such as rewards for good behaviour and for good work. We have also put on more activities ... more social activities for example woodwork and creative arts ... to give them a sense of satisfaction.”*

**Grant manager, School Transitions**

Young people were also experiencing financial difficulty that impacted their engagement with the projects. A Community Spaces project noticed young people were presenting with poor self-care; project staff were concerned about whether some young people had enough to eat and could afford to travel to the venue. In response, the project self-funded an increased transport budget for young people to attend in-person project activities.

*“We have had some wellbeing issues – it’s [cost-of-living crisis] affecting the young people’s self-care. We also have a lot of concerns about the young people’s eating at the moment. We are having to do three times as much work on the same [#iwill Fund] budget.”*

**Grant manager, Community Spaces**



### 3 Impact of #iwill funded projects

This chapter discusses the impact of the #iwill funded projects so far, including the overall reach of the projects, progress made on outcomes for young people and wider communities, and grant manager and young people's perceptions of outcomes. The findings are based on analysis of the monitoring forms projects submit to the Co-op Foundation and are supported by evidence from qualitative interviews with grant managers and young people.

Table 3.1 summarises the overall reach and outcomes projects have reported achieving to date. These are explored in further detail below.

**Table 3.1 Overall reach and outcomes projects have reported since funding began in 2019 up to February 2023**

Reach of projects	Community Spaces (6)	School Transitions (13)	Bereavement (17)	Total
<b>Direct participants</b>	5,087	3,528	1,244	9,859
<b>Indirect beneficiaries</b>	6,095	8,039	6,218	20,352
Outcome theme	YP outcome			Overall number of reported YP achieving outcome
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Are better equipped to cope with challenging situations			8,103
<b>Confidence</b>	Have the confidence in themselves to set meaningful personal goals			7,466
<b>Connectedness</b>	Feel part of a wider community			8,051
	Feel they have good-quality relationships based on mutual trust and empathy			6,263
<b>Skills</b>	Develop teamwork and planning skills			6,159
	Gain communication skills (including speaking, presenting, and listening)			6,212
<b>Influence</b>	Feel they have influenced support, services or spaces in the community or school			7,087
Outcome theme	Community outcome			Number of projects achieving outcome
<b>Influence</b>	Support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people			24 / 36 (67%)
<b>Connectedness</b>	The wider community's perception of young people have changed			4 / 36 (11%)
<b>Participation</b>	There are plans to deliver more youth social action projects as a result of your project			19 / 36 (53%)

### 3.1 Analysis of monitoring form responses

Since the start of the evaluation, projects have submitted monitoring information to the Co-op Foundation covering participation figures and achieved outcomes on four separate occasions, these were the 0.5 submission in August 2021, the 1.0 submission in February 2022, the 1.5 submission in August 2022, and most recently the 2.0 submission in February 2023. In their monitoring submissions, projects provided figures for the number of young people who directly participated in YSA and those who have been observed to have benefited in some way from the project.

The definition of 'direct participation' is specific to each project. For Community Spaces projects, the direct participants include those who planned and delivered events, or developed spaces and services the project was responsible for; for School Transitions projects, the direct participants include those who have received support/training from project staff and have delivered support to their peers; and for Bereavement projects, the direct participants include those who have received counselling from the project or have been trained to provide peer support.

The definition of 'beneficiary' is much broader than that of direct participant and could be applied in a great variety of circumstances, further there was no minimum requirement that had to be met for a project to consider a young person to have benefited. Most commonly, projects counted young people as having benefited from their project if they had attended a workshop, presentation, or assembly, or had received peer support from project participants. One project counted young people who had attended theatre performances as beneficiaries of their project, and another counted young people who had received newsletters as beneficiaries.

Findings presented in this chapter are based on thirty-six projects: six Community Spaces projects, 13 School Transitions projects and 17 Bereavement projects.

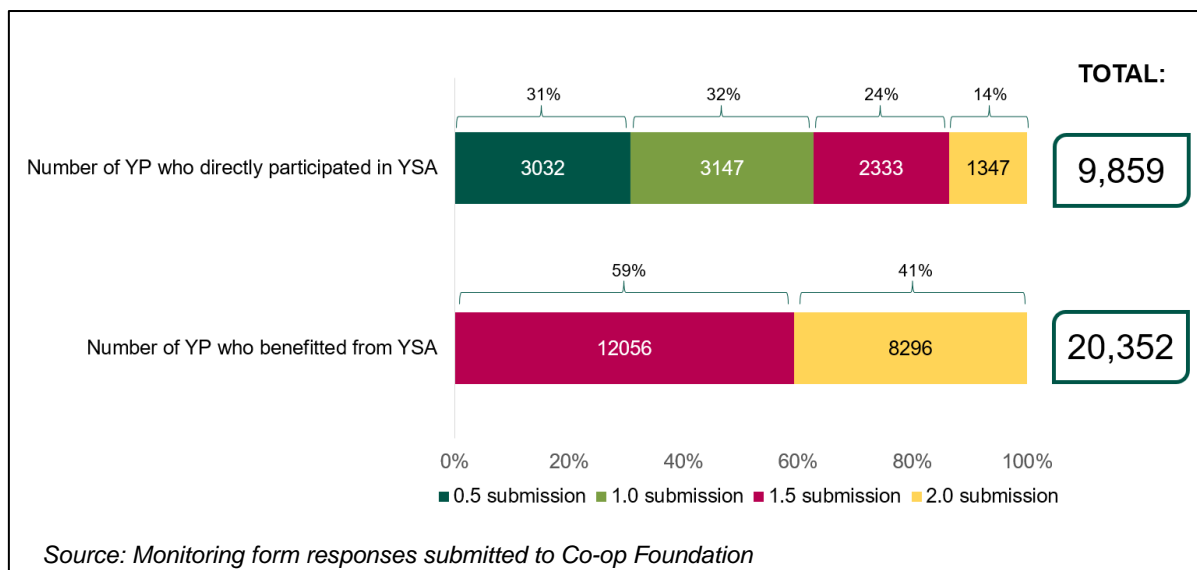
### 3.2 Reach of the Co-op Foundation's #iwill funded projects

#### Overall reach of the projects

Since funding began in 2019, nearly 10,000 young people have directly participated in YSA through the 36 projects included in this analysis. A further 20,000 young people have been recorded as having benefited in some way as a result of the 36 projects' activities. Taken together, over 30,000 young people have had some form of involvement or benefit from YSA through the Co-op Foundation's #iwill Fund.

Most young people directly participating in the projects did so in the early stages with more than 60% having been recorded as starting their participation in the 0.5 and 1.0 submissions (i.e. before February 2022) (see Figure 3.1). The data presented in Figure 3.1 also shows that the majority of beneficiaries were recorded as having benefited in the 1.5 submission (i.e. before August 2022). However, the proportion of young people recorded as a beneficiary in the 2.0 submission (i.e. from August 2022 to February 2023) was very high at 41% of the total, which would suggest that over time, projects are increasing the number of young people they can benefit in some way. This could be due to projects maturing and becoming established in their communities, and project staff and participants becoming more capable of delivering YSA.

**Figure 3.1 Number of young people directly participated in YSA and benefitted from YSA**



### Reach of the projects by strand

Community Spaces and Schools Transitions projects had the widest reach, both in terms of young people directly participating in the projects and for young people benefiting from their projects. In comparison, Bereavement projects were relatively small in terms of the number of direct participants and the number of beneficiaries (this was particularly the case for direct participants).

#### Direct participants

As shown in Figure 3.2, Community Spaces projects engaged the most direct participants with just over half of the total number of participants (5,087), followed by School Transitions projects with around a third of the total number of participants (3,528), and the remaining participants were engaged by Bereavement projects (1,244). On average: 848 young people directly participated in the six Community Spaces projects<sup>10</sup>; 271 young people directly participated in the 13 Schools Transitions projects; and 73 young people directly participated in the 17 Bereavement projects.

Given the challenges that young people who have been bereaved face, it is not surprising that Bereavement projects directly engaged a smaller number of young people on average than projects in the other strands. Young people participating in Bereavement projects generally needed intensive support to cope with their challenges and projects therefore had to focus resources on a small number of direct participants.

#### Beneficiaries

Also shown in Figure 3.2, 6,095 young people were reported as benefiting from Community Spaces, 8,039 young people were reported as benefiting from School Transitions projects, and 6,218 young people were reported as benefiting from Bereavement projects. On average, 1,015 young people benefited from each of the six Community Spaces projects; 618 young people benefited from each

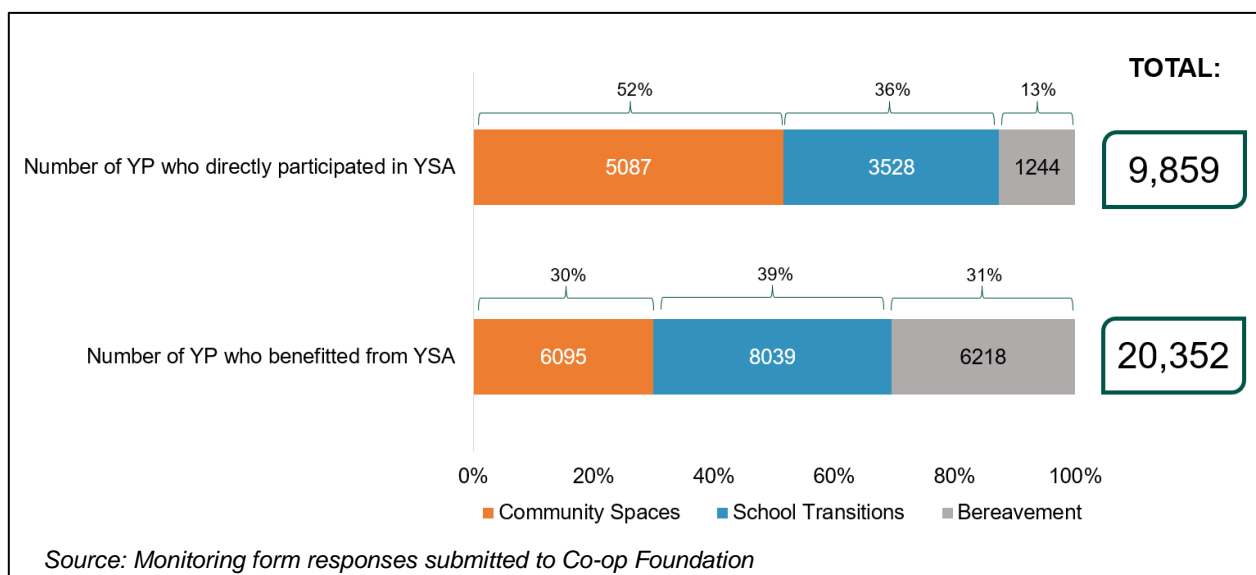
<sup>10</sup> One Community Spaces project reported over 4,000 direct participants. The average number of direct participants drops to 190 when this outlier is removed from the analysis.

the 13 Schools Transitions projects; and 366 young people benefited from each of the 17 Bereavement projects.<sup>11</sup>

As with the number of direct participants, the number of beneficiaries was lower for Bereavement projects. Grant managers explained that this was because project activities focussed predominantly on supporting the young people with their challenges, and engaging their peers was considered as something which they may do in the future when they feel ready. This was because young people who have been bereaved felt less capable of engaging their peers in YSA and needed time to build up the confidence and resilience to be able to do so.

As illustrated in Table 2.1, the types of activities that Community Spaces and School Transitions projects deliver, naturally lend themselves to reaching large numbers of young people beyond the direct participants. For example, large numbers of young people were able to access the spaces created by Community Spaces projects, and entire school year groups were exposed to the workshops and materials produced by a School Transitions project.

**Figure 3.2 Number of young people who have directly participated in YSA and benefitted from YSA since funding began in 2019 to 2.0 submission in February 2023**



### Reach of the projects by Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles

Projects were operating in the least socioeconomically affluent areas of the country, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). To date, almost half of the direct participants had been engaged by projects operating in areas within the 0-10% (30%) and 11- 20% (18%) most deprived deciles in the IMD, and two thirds of the beneficiaries had benefitted from projects operating in areas within the 0-10% (53%) and 11- 20% (10%) most deprived deciles in the IMD.

<sup>11</sup> One project in each of Community Spaces and Bereavement strands reported much higher beneficiary figures than the other projects in those strands. When removing these outliers, the average number of beneficiaries in the five remaining Community Spaces projects was 784; and the average number of beneficiaries from the 16 remaining Bereavement projects was 115.

Projects operating in the least socio-economically affluent areas appear to take longer than other projects to establish themselves and recruit young people to their projects, but they are now becoming well established in their communities. When only looking at the 2.0 submissions, the proportion of young people who directly participated in projects operating in the 0-10% deprivation decile in the IMD is higher than for previous rounds of submission – in the 2.0 submission 55% of direct participants had been engaged in YSA by projects operating in the 0-10% most deprived decile in the IMD, compared to 23% in the 0.5 submissions.

Feedback from one grant manager suggests that this could be occurring due to the time taken to build relationships with key figures in the community that young people trust. Once these relationships are established, young people are more likely to be referred or signposted to projects.

### Reach of the projects by age ranges engaged

The ages of individual direct participants and beneficiaries is not available during this reporting period. Based on information on the age range of individuals that projects intended to serve, which was shared with IFF Research at the beginning of the evaluation, projects are reaching the full 10-20 age range. There was a skew towards the 10-15 age range which can be explained by the majority of School Transitions projects only serving this age range. To date, two thirds (67%) of young people who had directly participated in YSA had been engaged by projects that served the full 10-20 age range. Relatively few young people directly participated in projects which served either the younger age group or older age group exclusively – 29% of direct participants had been engaged by projects who only served the 10-15 age-range, and 4% of direct participants had been engaged by projects who only served the 16-20 age-range. The proportions of young people benefitting from projects serving these age ranges are very similar – 65% had benefited from projects serving the full 10-20 age-range, 33% had benefited from projects serving the 10-15 age-range, and 2% benefited from projects serving the 16-20 age-range.

### 3.3 Impact of #iwill funded projects on young people

As shown in Table 3.1, there were seven core outcomes the Co-op Foundation expected to be achieved when young people participated in or benefited from funded projects. In their submissions, projects reported the number of young people (direct participants and beneficiaries) that they had evidence achieving these outcomes. It was not a requirement or expectation that projects would report young people achieving all seven outcomes as a result of participating in their activities. Projects provided explanations for how they could evidence young people achieving outcomes in their monitoring form submission. In cases where young people did not achieve particular outcomes, projects could explain why this was the case. Outcomes were evidenced in a number of ways. Commonly, projects surveyed participants on various wellbeing and efficacy metrics at different points of their involvement in the project. Projects also gathered written feedback from participants as to their experiences and personal outlook. Another common method was through project staff's observations of the ways in which young people were benefiting and changing.

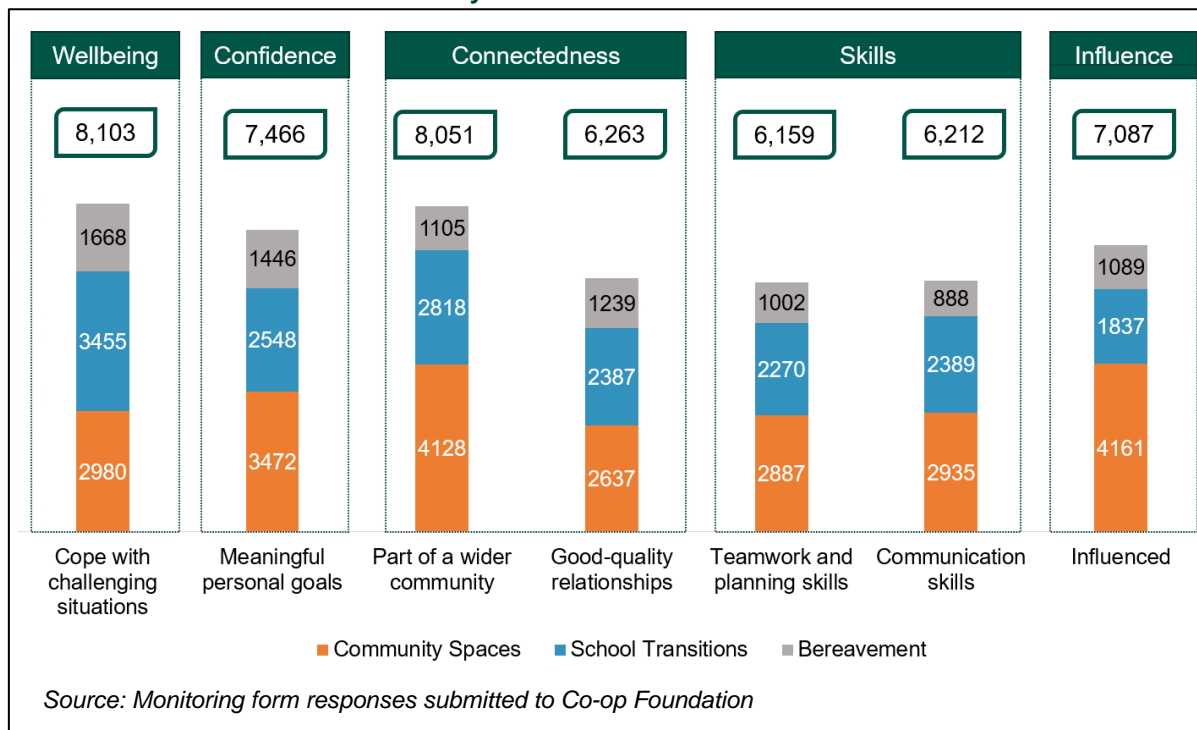
#### Outcomes achieved by young people involved in projects

Involvement in YSA has helped young people to develop social outcomes, including belonging and a sense of community, improved confidence, agency and self-worth. Involvement has also helped to develop young people's communication and practical skills, such as planning, organisation and creative skills.

The most commonly achieved outcome by young people was that they were *'better equipped to cope with challenging situations'* (8,103 young people), closely followed by *'feel part of a wider community'* (8,051 young people). The least commonly achieved outcomes were both in the 'Skills' theme, with

6,212 young people reported to have ‘*gain[ed] communications skills*’, and 6,159 young people reported to have ‘*develop[ed] teamwork and planning skills*’. The overall numbers of young people achieving the core outcomes is shown in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3 Overall numbers of young people achieving the core outcomes since funding began in 2019 to 2.0 submission in February 2023**



### Outcomes achieved, by strand

The overall numbers show that Community Spaces projects had the widest overall impact in terms of the number of young people who achieved the core outcomes, followed by School Transitions projects which also reported large numbers of young people achieving outcomes. Comparatively, Bereavement projects reported a much smaller number of young people achieving the outcomes. As well as the highest numbers overall, Community Spaces projects reported achieving the highest numbers of young people achieving outcomes per project.

Table 3.2 presents the average number of young people achieving outcomes per project, broken down by strand. The table is colour coded on a scale from green to red to show the outcomes in which strands are most impactful (green) to least impactful (white) in helping young people to achieve. By looking at average numbers of young people achieving the outcomes per project, broken down by strand, we can see which outcomes individual strands were most and least impactful in helping young people to achieve.

Community Spaces projects were most successful in helping young people to achieve the outcomes – ‘*influenced support, services or spaces*’ and ‘*feeling part of a wider community*’, and they were less successful in helping young people build ‘*good-quality relationships*’. As they are most impactful in outcomes relating to influence and community, this would suggest that they are fulfilling their aim to ‘help young people to improve the design and use of community spaces’ (as outlined in the introduction).

School Transitions projects were more successful in helping young people to ‘cope with challenging situations’ and less successful in helping young people ‘influence support, services or spaces’. This would suggest that School Transitions projects are also fulfilling their aim to ‘support young people’s wellbeing in the transition from primary to secondary school’.

Bereavement projects were more successful in helping young people to ‘cope with challenging situations’ and less successful in helping young people gain ‘communication skills’. Bereavement projects are only fulfilling their aim to ‘provide young people safe spaces and support to share their experience of bereavement’ in part as they are most impactful in helping young people improve their wellbeing and confidence, but so far they are least impactful in helping young people build communication skills. Feedback from grant managers would suggest that many of the direct participants are not yet ready to share their experiences more widely.

**Table 3.2 Average number of young people achieving outcomes per project since funding began in 2019 to 2.0 submission in February 2023– by strand**

	Cope with challenging situations	Meaningful personal goals	Part of a wider community	Good-quality relationships	Teamwork and planning skills	Communication skills	Influenced
Community Spaces (n=6)	497	579	688	440	481	489	694
School Transitions (n=13)	266	196	217	184	175	184	141
Bereavement (n=16)	104	90	69	77	63	56	68

Source: Monitoring form responses submitted to the Co-op Foundation. Colour shading indicates highest (green) to lowest (white) average numbers within strands.

### 3.4 Grant manager and young people views on outcomes

Grant managers and participants interviewed for the evaluation were positive about the changes projects brought about for young people. Formal support projects included in their delivery, activities projects used with young people and the environments projects created, were perceived to have contributed to young people outcomes. Grant managers and young people shared their views on what outcomes were achieved and the factors influencing these outcomes. This is described in more detail below.

#### Young people’s overall satisfaction with the projects

Participants interviewed were positive about their project experiences. They described supportive environments and project staff, and a sense of camaraderie with the other young people they engaged with through the projects.

*[The project is] Fun, engaging. The collective effort brings everyone together. It's like that special time when everyone just comes together and talks to each other."*

**Young person, School Transitions**



Participants also recognised that they were learning new skills and gaining useful experience through participation.

*“Before I thought it was just going to be a little club, I wouldn’t actually learn anything from it but once I joined... I’ve learned a lot of things I didn’t know before. It’s also life lessons and things from experience that people can tell us.”*

**Young person, School Transitions**

Next, we discuss young people’s experiences of the seven core #iwill Fund outcomes.

### **Views on outcome: Better equipped to cope with challenging situations**

Young people felt more comfortable sharing their feelings and disclosing personal situations in their projects, and to wider audiences compared to before taking part in project sessions. For example, participants described sharing for the first time, with project members and schools, their experiences of being a young carer, and the circumstances around their bereavement.

*“I feel that I’m able to talk about it [my grief] more freely with peers, before I couldn’t talk to no one.”*

**Young person, Bereavement**

Young people from different projects learned about strategies to process and cope with challenging situations through discussions with other young people and through support offered by the projects (such as individualised support from project staff; online resources and guidance). These discussions were supported by project activities such as a formal course that gave young people qualifications on learning to cope with challenging situations, and activities to understand and manage triggers to their mental health. The participant quoted below described how playing games helped them to manage emotions and talk about their feelings.

*“When we play games it’s really fun... sometimes we get to talk to each other about stuff and it helps us calm down a bit if you’re angry about something or if you’re scared of it.”*

**Young person, School Transitions**

Another example from a Community Spaces project was providing ‘travel training’ to SEND young people so that they could cope with the challenge of accessing public transport and be able to travel more freely within their community.

Sometimes projects used novel and fun approaches to encourage young people to express themselves and cope with challenging circumstances, such as designing a boardgame to help young people talk about bereavement.



'Grievopoly' boardgame - image provided by St. Oswalds Hospice

### Views on outcome: Confidence in themselves to set meaningful personal goals

Where projects included goal setting, which could include personal goals around wellbeing or efficacy as well as project related goals, this was done at the project start and then reflected on at the end. For a small number of projects, goal setting went beyond the project; they discussed goal setting for the future to help young people achieve what they wanted. Projects where goals were set at the start of their delivery used these goals to help build young people's wider confidence and skills. For example, project goals set, like keeping to the project budget, meant young people needed to monitor the budget and act when it was not on track. A grant manager described how a young person managed a project budget by speaking up in project meetings more to keep the budget on track.

*"They've played on that strength of, like, actually, I'm really good at maths in school so I'm gonna help the team by doing that and then they get that real sense of achievement".*

**Grant manager, Community Spaces**

Participants felt that by setting and achieving goals, they became more confident and able to approach situations with more certainty and with a greater sense of direction than they would have done previously.

*"I'm more confident than when I started, before I was confused... but now I walk in and know what to do."*

**Young person, School Transitions**

## **Views on outcome: Feel part of a wider community**

Feeling part of a wider community was the most commonly expressed benefit of project participation among young people interviewed, and especially for young people from minoritised communities such as LGBTQIA+ communities or young carers.

Young people often spoke about feeling different from their peers. By meeting young people with shared experiences and interests they started to feel as though they had somewhere 'to belong'.

*"Before, I felt really isolated, a lot of really weird things had been happening to LGBT people around my personal area and I felt kinda scared and alone. The minute this event was put on I thought there is actually a place for me."*

### **Young person, Community Spaces**

Feeling part of a wider community was underpinned by a sense that other young people with similar experiences understood them, and together they could support each other.

*"Just knowing other people were going through the same sort of thing, being able to talk about death experiences...they can understand it and I can understand it for them as well. One week can be upset and one week can be full and happy, and they understand that. But in school, or friends, don't understand that."*

### **Young person, Bereavement**

Grant managers reported additional, related benefits to this sense of community; young people were reportedly more present and engaged in classes and extracurricular activities, and took on leadership roles outside the project. For example, acting as school representatives on 'transitions days', holiday camps and wider community activities run by the school.

## **Views on outcome: Feel they have good-quality relationships based on mutual trust and empathy**

This outcome was the least commonly discussed in interviews and when it was discussed, it was in relation to the projects. It was considered important that young peoples' relationships with project staff and partners were seen as two-way and that they were communicating on the same level to each other.

*"Because the teacher is on the same level as them, they're all being trained together, it's nice for the children to see their members of staff as peers also."*

### **Grant manager, School Transitions**

The importance of staff and partners following through on their promises and being responsive to the young people was also commented upon. In one reported example, a teacher did not review project materials produced by young people as it was originally agreed, leaving them feeling demoralised.

## **Views on outcome: Develop teamwork and planning skills**

Projects across all strands required young people to work together to plan events or peer support sessions. Through this, young people learnt to listen to each other and take on suggestions. In some cases, they created group guidelines and undertook team building activities to enable them to work together effectively.

*"It definitely helped me with friendship and teamwork skills because before that I would not work with anyone else."*

## Young person, School Transitions

### Views on outcome: Gain communication skills

Young people shared how they felt they gained speaking, presenting and listening skills from project participation.

Young people developed their communication skills by practising these skills during project activities. For example, facilitating and engaging in meetings, workshops and information sessions, and speaking at an assembly, welcome evening or staff training day. A project included presenting YSA ideas to a panel of staff in a 'Dragons' Den' style pitch. Young people were also supported through formal training the projects offered on topics such as active listening and the boundaries of confidentiality in a discussion. Staff encouragement was another contributing factor; young people spoke about the encouragement and positive feedback project staff and others involved in project delivery gave. An example is given in the Spotlight box below.

#### In the spotlight: Gaining communication skills

A School Transitions participant shared how she improved her communication skills by mentoring a young person in the year below. Every week, they met for an hour and played boardgames.

The student she is mentoring was initially very shy and she struggled at the beginning to help them feel able to share problems with her. After discussing this with the project staff, she learned to encourage her mentee with open questions, encouragement and giving time to open up. The mentee is now able to talk openly and discuss with her the challenges that they are facing at school.

*"I think the skills to be able to know how to talk to someone in general and be able to create a safe and open space is really important. Just in general, you can't rush them. You can't like force them to tell you, we have to wait and be patient."* - **Young person, School Transitions**

This young person now uses these skills outside of the programme to better support her friends.

*"I felt like my friends now could come and talk to me and they know I'll just listen... (I now have...) the skills to be able to communicate with someone, being approachable, being somebody that they know they can talk to and just creating a safe space for everyone."* - **Young person, School Transitions**

### Views on outcome: Feel they have influenced support, services or spaces in the community or school

To exert their influence, young people worked with external services and groups such as social services, child mental health support and scouts and brownies, wrote to local councillors and developed new support services at their schools. The Spotlight box below shares how one participant felt they had influenced support in their community through the project.

*"I think from the young people to start thinking, 'actually they're not just coming in and fobbing us off and saying they're gonna listen to us'... instead they see the outcome of, 'actually we've done this project'."*

#### Grant manager, Community Spaces

This outcome seems supported by feedback loops and active engagement from adults. For example, young people talked about the importance of getting feedback about how their work had been received, used and was benefitting communities. Adult input was often critical in allowing young



people to influence support services or spaces. Specifically, adults were needed to allow young people to access spaces and to connect with influential people.

### **In the spotlight: Influencing support in their community**

A Community Spaces participant shared their experiences of running an LGBTQIA+ event in their local area. Before the project, they did not feel there were many community spaces they felt comfortable in. Through the project, they have created a safe space for other people like them.

*"It does seem like there aren't many openly queer spaces in [my local city]... so I feel like the fact that we were able to target the event [to the LGBT community]... we were able to plug that gap. If anything, that kind of highlighted how important that need is for more safe spaces, especially with the things that people were saying throughout the day." - Young person, Community Spaces*

## **3.5 Impact on communities**

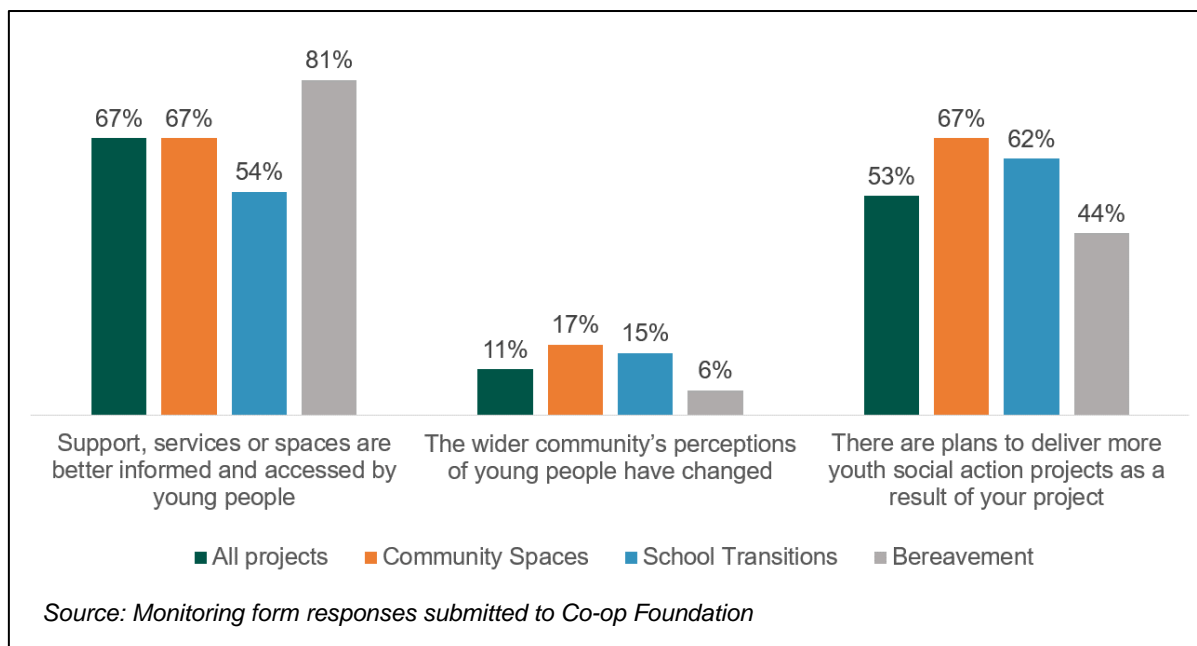
In the monitoring form submissions, projects were asked whether they had achieved any of the following three community outcomes:

- support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people;
- the wider community's perception of young people have changed; and
- there are plans to deliver more youth social action projects as a result of your project.

### **Overall community outcomes**

To date, few projects have reported achieving *'the wider community's perception of young people have changed'*, and there is still a large proportion of projects who have yet to achieve the other two community outcomes. Figure 3.4 shows two thirds of projects (67%) reported achieving the community outcome *'support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people'*, just over half (53%) of projects reported achieving *'there are plans to deliver more youth social action projects as a result of your project'*, and only 11% of projects reported achieving the outcome *'the wider community's perception of young people have changed'*.

**Figure 3.4 Percentage of projects achieving community outcomes since funding began in 2019**



This may be because these community outcomes are more difficult for projects to evidence or measure and they therefore do not report themselves as having achieved them, even if they are making progress towards them. It may also be the case that these community outcomes are not feasible. In particular, the lack of progress towards ‘the wider community’s perception of young people has changed’ could be because it requires projects to have an impact beyond their direct participants, beneficiaries and immediate environment. For smaller projects with more contained benefits, such as those in the Bereavement strand, this may be an unattainable outcome.

As described in an #iwill Fund report by The Centre of Youth Impact,<sup>12</sup> limited progress towards community outcomes is not unique to the Co-op Foundation’s #iwill funded projects. Projects generally do not have the mechanisms in place to ask for feedback from the community, and it is often the case that their primary focus is on the young people who are participating or benefitting. This does not mean that the ‘double benefit’ of community outcomes is not occurring, but may simply indicate that they are not being recorded effectively.

**Community outcome: Support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people**

This was the community outcome most commonly reported as being achieved by the projects, suggesting that this is an area where projects have had a widespread impact and is felt to be achievable for most projects.

Projects made progress towards this outcome in a number of ways, most commonly by raising awareness of the issues they focused on and the services available. Young people became aware of the support available to them through participating in the project. For School Transitions projects specifically, staff became aware of the challenges young people faced and then put in processes to address them.

<sup>12</sup> The Centre for Youth Impact (2019), *Report on the first #iwill Fund Learning Hub LabStorms* (London: 2019) [https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/report\\_on\\_the\\_first\\_iwill\\_fund\\_learning\\_hub\\_labstorms.pdf](https://www.youthimpact.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/report_on_the_first_iwill_fund_learning_hub_labstorms.pdf)

*"We have teachers sticking their head through the door and asking how they can assist. Meeting at a lunchtime or form-time<sup>13</sup> to do the mentoring."*

#### **Grant manager, School Transitions**

Young people directly engaged with services such as mental health support or counselling and provided feedback. This could take the form of informal and ad-hoc feedback during support/service provision, as well as through more formalised feedback processes.

Project activities were incorporated into service/support provision – this related to School Transitions projects in which the project activities were built into the timetable and school assemblies were delivered on the topics covered by the project.

There were a number of examples where the young people themselves provided the service. This was often the case for School Transitions projects where young people would become peer mentors or would host workshops for younger pupils. Young people who had received support through the project then went on to deliver the support to other young people.

Another way that projects influenced support, services or spaces was by campaigning on issues they cared about and by engaging in local political spaces. As a result, young people were increasingly visible in the community and this led to their views being sought out.

*"We've got that wider connection from other networks that are saying, 'can your young people come along? Can you invite some of your young people?'"*

#### **Grant manager, School Transitions**

There were a couple of examples in which local councillors championed the projects and sought their input on policy decisions, for example, by consulting young participants from a Community Spaces project about a regeneration initiative in the local area.

### **Community outcome: Wider community's perceptions of young people have changed**

This was the community outcome least commonly reported as being achieved by the projects. This may be because it was felt to not be feasible for some projects due to their scope or scale, or it may be that monitoring this outcome is beyond the skills and capacity of projects. However, while projects may not consider themselves to have changed the perceptions of the community, there are numerous examples of projects promoting a positive image of young people.

Projects used platforms and produced outputs to present a positive image of their participants and young people more broadly. This included running campaigns and producing materials on issues that were important to young people, as well as promoting their work on their websites and social media channels.

As described under the previous section, there were examples in which projects engaged with local politics and their causes were championed by local councillors.

Many projects could be described as presenting a positive image of young people through their public-facing events. For example, a Bereavement project hosted an event in which the participants delivered presentations to members of the community.

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<sup>13</sup> Form-time refers to time allocated in the school day which pupils spend with their form or tutor group.



One grant manager from a School Transitions project felt that there was an evident difference in young people's behaviour which had been noticed by other members of the community.

### **Community outcome: Plans to deliver more YSA as a result of project**

Just over half (53%) of projects reported that they had achieved this outcome. Projects across the three strands took similar approaches to achieving this outcome with grant managers mostly commenting on the opportunities to engage in wider YSA that open up to young people through participation in their project.

These opportunities were generated either through the external connections that young people made whilst on the project, or through the project organisation actively promoting other opportunities to the young people. Projects also encouraged engagement in YSA beyond the scope of their own project or those they had connections to. Some grant managers commented that they encouraged the young people participating in their project to be creative and to pursue causes that interested them.

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter sets out the main conclusions that can be taken from the research conducted in Year 2 of the evaluation. This is followed by recommendations for the funder (i.e. the Co-op Foundation and wider #iwill fund) and for grantees (i.e. the projects being funded).

### Conclusions

- Since it began in 2019, the Co-op Foundation's #iwill Fund has provided opportunities for nearly 10,000 young people to directly take part in YSA, through a range of activities delivered by the 36 grantees included in the analysis<sup>14</sup>. The Fund has also engaged over 20,000 further young people indirectly, who have benefitted in some way as a result of the projects' activities. Together, over 30,000 young people had some form of involvement or benefit from YSA through the Co-op Foundation's #iwill Fund.
- Projects used different approaches to identify and recruit eligible young people to the activities they were delivering. Successful recruitment was supported by going to where young people are, involving diverse and locally knowledgeable staff to identify young people and remove barriers to participation, and advertising projects through social media. As projects became better known in their areas, community awareness also contributed to successful recruitment; one grantee reported that as they became embedded in the community, young people were able to self-refer to the project as they had heard about the opportunity through word of mouth.
- Grant managers and participants highlighted successful strategies for engaging young people in YSA, including creating spaces for them to share their experiences, empowering participants to make decisions in project design and play active roles in project delivery, embedding support within the project, and involving a diverse and knowledgeable staff team. For some young people, particularly those on Bereavement projects, project staff needed to give a lot of support and time for them to be ready to engage in YSA.
- The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis had far-reaching impacts on staff and young people involved in #iwill projects and organisations, including reducing the capacity of staff to deliver projects, reducing the scale of delivery and changing the focus of some activities. These social and economic changes impacted projects' ability to engage young people in YSA. This was because of practical difficulties related to delivery and young people's reduced capacity to engage because they were dealing with other issues, like adverse effects on their mental health.
- Analysis of the outcomes being achieved by young people, as reported by the projects via online monitoring forms, suggests that projects are to a large extent fulfilling their strand's remit.
  - Community Spaces projects are most impactful in helping young people to achieve outcomes related to community and influence, which closely aligns with their community based remit;

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<sup>14</sup> Forty-five projects submitted monitoring form data for analysis to be included in this report. Nine projects were excluded from the analysis because information provided was incomplete or unreliable.

- School Transitions projects are most impactful in helping young people cope with challenging situations, which aligns with their remit to support young people's wellbeing as they progress to secondary school;
- Bereavement projects are more mixed, on the one hand they are most impactful in helping young people cope with challenging situations which is an important part of their remit, but on the other hand they are least impactful in helping young people gain communication skills, which would suggest that they are not yet fulfilling their remit to help young people share their experiences. Grant managers explained that young people who have been bereaved need intensive personal support to cope with their immediate needs, and that they naturally need more time than other young people to feel able and confident enough to start engaging other young people.
- To date, projects have reported limited progress towards the wider community outcomes. Projects have made some progress towards the outcomes *'support, services or spaces are better informed and accessed by young people'* and *'there are plans to deliver more youth social action projects as a result of your project'*. Few projects report progress on *'the wider community's perception of young people has changed'*.

### Recommendations for the funder

- A large proportion of projects have not reported community outcomes, and the outcome to change communities' perceptions towards young people is notably unreported. The terms of the funding are wide, and this is reflected in the funded project portfolio; projects are diverse geographically, by objectives, activity types and targeted young people. Given this diversity, and projects' monitoring capacity and capabilities, it may not be reasonable to expect projects to change, and demonstrate they've changed, community views. The Co-op Foundation may want to revisit this outcome going forward – for example, an outcome of promoting a positive image of young people to the community, may be more achievable.
- Up to this point, Bereavement projects have been least impactful in helping young people to gain communication skills and analysis of monitoring forms would suggest that young people on these projects are less likely to engage the wider community than young people participating in projects on the other strands. As explained by Grant managers, Bereavement projects tend to be smaller in scale and the young people participating need more intensive personal support to be able to cope with their immediate needs. They need more time to achieve outcomes and to feel confident enough to engage their peers. Assessments of 'success' or 'progress' therefore need to take this context into account. Co-op Foundation could consider if there are any ways in which projects could report on the 'distance travelled' by young people on their projects in addition to the 'achievement' of outcomes already being monitored.

### Recommendations for grantees

- Project staff demonstrated resourcefulness, flexibility and creativity in developing recruitment approaches and refining project activities to the needs of young people. Grantees should continue to be adaptive and make on-going refinements in the face of changing circumstances and needs.
- Relationship building between young people and project staff, and young people and project partners that connect them to projects, was essential for young people's engagement with projects. Therefore, a key risk to young people outcomes is staff turnover. Grantees should

consider whether they have continuity plans in place in the event of staff turnover, to minimise young people dropping out or delayed progress to outcomes.

- Language matters in promoting projects. Unfamiliar words or familiar words used in a context unfamiliar to young people can be off-putting and confusing and prevent young people engaging with projects. Grantees should include young people in project naming and in how best to 'sell' project activities to young people.
- Timings and frequency of project sessions influenced young people's engagement in YSA. Evidence suggests projects should move away from summer and school term holidays because fewer young people are consistently available at these times which may disrupt project cohesion and momentum. Similarly, meeting too often could deter busy young people from engaging but meeting not often enough could lose momentum. Grantees should consider the best frequency for their project type and the needs of their young people, and consider trialling different frequencies.
- The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, are felt by young people. Grantees should consider how these could be creating barriers to young people's participation in projects (for example, additional wellbeing needs and social difficulties caused by the pandemic, and financial hardship preventing them paying for transport to activities) and plan ways to remove these barriers.
- For some young people, they need more time and individualised support to be ready to engage in YSA. Grantees should consider how best to prepare these young people for youth social action in their local contexts. This could involve establishing a way to assess how ready young people are to progress to YSA at the point of recruitment, and adapt the project plan for that, such as by adjusting the timetable, activities or support.
- With many projects running for a number of years now, grantees should be focussing on legacy and sustainability. Grantees should consider developing or building on alumni networks, involving project alumni in future delivery, sharing best practice within projects and with the wider sector.
- For some young people, small changes amount to considerable achievements. Grantees should consider how best to monitor these steps that are the precursor to achieving the #iwill Fund's core outcomes. For projects that do not include goal setting, this could involve incorporating individual goal setting about what the young person wants from the project during recruitment or early in the project and revisiting this throughout the project.

## Appendix A: List of partners

Organisation	Strand	Summary
<b>Groundwork South Trust Ltd</b>	Community Spaces	This project will enable disadvantaged young people in SE Cornwall (Callington, Saltash and Liskeard) to deliver social action projects in their communities.
<b>Youth Focus North East</b>	Community Spaces	Young people are supported to improve the design and use of local parks in East Middlesbrough
<b>Comics Youth CIC</b>	Community Spaces	Support LGBTQIA young people across Liverpool to reclaim community spaces and provide their Safe Spaces in a Box support packages
<b>The Citizenship Foundation</b>	Community Spaces	Working with primary and secondary schools in Leeds, Dewsbury and Batley to create a toolkit to support schools engage pupils in social action and improve their community spaces.
<b>The Federation of Groundwork Trusts</b>	Community Spaces	Creating and supporting a network of young ambassadors who advocate for young people's voices to feed into the planning and use of green spaces
<b>Greater Manchester Youth Network</b>	Community Spaces	Support young people with special educational needs and disabilities across Greater Manchester to inform decisions around transport and have the confidence and skills to access public transport and community spaces.
<b>Young Lives Consortium</b>	Community Spaces	Working in collaboration with other organisations, young people will improve the design and use of unused retail space and create pop-up spaces across their district of Wakefield
<b>RECLAM Project Ltd</b>	Community Spaces	In Greater Manchester, young people will identify community spaces that are important to them and co-design an #OurSpace Manifesto with their owners and campaign for others to get involved
<b>OYAP Trust</b>	Community Spaces	LGBTQIA+ young people in Bicester will advocate to make everyday town facilities more accessible and inclusive for them as well as other young people who have hidden disabilities
<b>Make Some Noise</b>	School Transitions	Students in Staffordshire explore Schools Transitions experiences through music, informing older students to design a peer-to-peer support programme for those transitioning into secondary school.
<b>Youth Sport Trust</b>	School Transitions	Delivering 'Team Us' – a peer support project in Yorkshire using sport as a vehicle to form new friendships, deliver wider social action activities and improve transitions
<b>Power2</b>	School Transitions	A peer support project in Manchester, where older pupils will be trained in peer support and focus on particular themes of transition, such as first day at school, the curriculum and making friends
<b>Clapton Common Boys Club</b>	School Transitions	A peer support project in London where young people from the Orthodox Jewish Community will be trained to deliver peer support, workshops and befriending groups for younger pupils
<b>Salford Foundation Ltd</b>	School Transitions	Equipping pupils in Salford to plan, design and deliver transition activities for 6 primary schools. Pupils will receive an accredited qualification and develop learning resources for other primary schools to use in the future
<b>Astrea Academy Trust</b>	School Transitions	To deliver 'Move on Up' in 3 Secondary academies in South Yorkshire, where older pupils will be equipped to provide support, advice and guidance to younger pupils moving up to secondary school
<b>Sutton Carers Centre</b>	School Transitions	Supporting young carers in London to transition from primary to secondary school, through weekly peer support groups

<b>Bath Mind</b>	School Transitions	To design 'Creative Kindness' workshops in North East Somerset with older pupils, who will then tour these workshops across their link schools, culminating in a collectively designed 'Manifesto for Compassion'
<b>PIE: Pursuing Individual Excellence</b>	School Transitions	To deliver a peer support project across Greater Manchester, equipping older pupils with the skills they need to deliver peer support, culminating in a collective social action project around transition
<b>Lancashire Mind</b>	School Transitions	Delivering a resilience programme for young people in East Lancashire, followed by a 'Wellbeing Challenge', where pupils will form peer support groups and take ownership of issues around transition
<b>London Sports Trust</b>	School Transitions	The 'Debate Box Project' in London combines non-contact boxing and debate to improve the wellbeing of young people through school transition
<b>Black and Minority Ethnic Young People's Project</b>	School Transitions	A peer support project in Brighton where BAME young people will be trained as peer mentors and draw on their own lived experiences of transition to support younger pupils
<b>Oxfordshire Youth</b>	School Transitions	Leadership workshops for older pupils across Oxfordshire, who will then design and deliver workshops around wellbeing and resilience for younger pupils transitioning to secondary school
<b>City of Bradford YMCA</b>	School Transitions	To support a group of 'Peer Support Champions' in Bradford to co-design and deliver a Peer Support programme in primary and secondary schools
<b>Bradford Youth Development Partnership</b>	School Transitions	Engaging young people in Bradford to take part in activities over the summer holidays and after-school, and set up a peer-support programme where younger pupils are buddied up with older pupils
<b>Children North East</b>	School Transitions	To train older pupils to become Peer Mentors in North Tyneside, to support other pupils who have been identified as at risk of poor transition
<b>Priority 1-54</b>	School Transitions	To deliver a youth-led 'Smooth Moves Transition Programme' across the South East, working alongside local academy chains to provide arts-based peer support opportunities for those transitioning to secondary school
<b>Woodcraft Folk</b>	Bereavement	Bringing together young people to share their experiences of loss of a peer in Peterborough and support them to identify common support needs to create a practical toolkit that can be used in a youth work environment.
<b>Aspire4u CIC</b>	Bereavement	Training bereaved young people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the West Midlands to support others in similar circumstances, with the opportunity to receive further training as community action leaders to train their peers.
<b>Well Beings (Hopeview)</b>	Bereavement	Supporting bereaved young people through creative and therapeutic interventions and offer additional advocacy training to raise awareness of young people and bereavement in their schools and colleges.
<b>Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College</b>	Bereavement	Working with young people bereaved through suicide in North London to learn peer support and advocacy skills
<b>St Oswald's Hospice Ltd</b>	Bereavement	Training young people who have accessed bereavement support as peer mentors, designing and delivering their own bereavement support programme based on their experience of support.
<b>Bodie Hodges Foundation</b>	Bereavement	Recruiting and training young people who have lost a sibling and support them to create a film to reach even more bereaved young people across Leicestershire.

<b>Action to Prevent Suicide CIC</b>	Bereavement	Supporting bereaved young people in Exeter through training and development in peer support to create a new youth bereavement recovery service, delivered by and for young people.
<b>Apart of Me</b>	Bereavement	Bringing together disadvantaged young people and train them to become 'Grief Activists' helping other bereaved young people in their community through online workshops.
<b>Meridian Centre</b>	Bereavement	Working with bereaved young people in Bradford that have been most affected by deaths due to Covid-19, training them as advocates for improved bereavement services for young people.
<b>Walk Tall</b>	Bereavement	To train and support young people to achieve a formal counselling qualification so that they can be supported to facilitate bereavement support groups with other bereaved young people in North Kent.
<b>Leeds Mind</b>	Bereavement	Delivering tailored resilience and peer support training to young people across Leeds who have suffered a sudden bereavement, such as murder, suicide or accident.
<b>Diversify Now CIC</b>	Bereavement	To train bereaved young people in South Yorkshire as peer mentors and advocates. They will then work with schools to ensure that bereaved young people gain better bereavement support in schools.
<b>The Moving on Project</b>	Bereavement	To support bereaved young people in Gosport and Fareham to develop a "Bereavement Buddies" scheme of advocates in schools who have experienced bereavement and are willing to advocate on behalf of others suffering loss.
<b>Let's Talk About Loss</b>	Bereavement	To train bereaved young people who are part of their service in Bristol as spokespeople and to run a social media campaign to raise awareness and advocate for better provision of youth bereavement support.
<b>Total Insight Theatre</b>	Bereavement	Developing a short series of films through an online project, self filmed by young people about their experiences of bereavement during Covid-19 and one year into the grief process, with an additional clip offering professional support and advice to bereaved young people.
<b>Invictus Wellbeing CIC</b>	Bereavement	Training bereaved young people in Yorkshire & the Humber as peer mentors to roll out peer support with other young people in their schools



### Devolved Nations Partners (non-#iwill Funding)

Cancer Fund for Children (Northern Ireland)	Bereavement	To train young people across Northern Ireland who have lost a close family member to cancer to become peer supporters to others via a series of residential training sessions.
Barnardo's (Scotland)	Bereavement	Developing a peer support programme in Scotland, building on informal peer support with the addition of training to complement an existing youth bereavement service.
St. Vincent's Hospice Limited (Scotland)	Bereavement	Training bereaved young people in central Scotland in peer support to break down barriers to talking about death and dying, educating people and developing resources that can be used to help others.
The Glens Community Association (NI)	Bereavement	Supporting a group of young people in Northern Ireland who have been bereaved through suicide to share explore and create responses to grief and develop a youth forum to support others in similar circumstances
Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice (Wales)	Bereavement	Working with young people in Glasgow who have been bereaved or expect to be soon due to a family member or friend suffering from a life-limiting illness, training them in peer support skills to support other young people.
CYCA - Carmarthenshire Youth and Children's Association (Wales)	Bereavement	Delivering accredited resilience and peer mentoring training to bereaved young people in South Wales, so they can set up peer ambassador clubs in schools and colleges to support other young people.

## Appendix B: Data limitations

### Qualitative data

The evaluation scope and scale limit the ability to capture in detail the experiences of all #iwill Fund projects. Interviewers had limited time to interview grant managers and young people with approximately 30-45 minutes for each conversation. This has made it more difficult to consider the diversity of projects and the different delivery journeys of projects when evaluating. The evaluation therefore aims to capture key experiences rather than document all experiences.

### Monitoring form analysis

In their monitoring submissions, projects provided figures for the number of young people who directly participated in YSA and those who have been evidenced to have benefitted in some way from the project. A young person would be considered a direct participant if they had taken part in core project activities, received training or delivered YSA; whereas a beneficiary would be a young person who had benefitted in some way from the activities of the project but were not otherwise involved in the project, for example if they had attended a session organised by the project or received materials produced by the project.

To avoid double counting, these categories were mutually exclusive and each individual young person was counted once regardless of when they participated/benefitted. For example, if a young person was participating in a project at the time of the 0.5 submission and were still participating at the time of the 2.0 submission they would only be counted once in the 0.5 submission. The figures set out in Figure 3.1 are therefore representative of the time at which a young person joined a project, or in the case of beneficiaries, when they first benefitted from a project.

It is possible that a young person could have benefitted from a project and then subsequently became a direct participant, or vice versa. However, as set out above, the categories were mutually exclusive and each young person was counted once. In such instances, it was down to the projects' judgement as to which category to count the young people that they included in their submissions. There was only one project that flagged this occurrence as a caveat in their submission and it related to a very small number of young people (>10), but it is likely that such a dynamic also occurred in other projects. While the figures relating to the two separate categories could be adjusted slightly in either direction depending on interpretation, the combined figure does reflect the total number of young people to have participated in YSA or have benefitted from YSA.

Initially, 45 projects were included in the data provided to IFF Research, but it was decided to remove 9 projects on the basis that they had provided incomplete or unreliable data. The total number of projects included in the analysis reported in this chapter was 36, made up of six Community Spaces projects, 13 School Transitions projects and 17 Bereavement projects.

One project in the Bereavement strand, which has been included in the analysis, provided direct participation and beneficiary figures but did not provide any figures in relation to the seven core outcomes. The project had come to an end before reporting against outcomes was a requirement and they had no way of providing that information in their submission. Because of this, the reporting on averages for outcomes achieved per project in the Bereavement strand is based on 16 projects, not 17.

The monitoring form data included projects' self-reported outcomes for young people and communities at an aggregate level rather than at an individual level of young people. This means that it is not possible to analyse outcomes at an individual level or within sub-groups of young people.

Projects were not required to use the same methods when evidencing the participation and outcomes figures they reported in their monitoring submissions. Projects were free to decide how best to evidence participation and outcomes based on what they felt was most appropriate and achievable for their individual project. For some projects this involved relatively rigorous assessments such as surveying young people longitudinally, whereas other projects reported that they had ‘observed’ differences in the young people participating in their project. The scale of impact achieved by projects and the robustness of the evidence behind the reported impact therefore varies between projects. This is an important limitation when considering the robustness of the aggregated figures presented in this report.

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**IFF Research illuminates the world for organisations businesses and individuals helping them to make better-informed decisions.”**

Our Values:

### 1. Being human first:

Whether employer or employee, client or collaborator, we are all humans first and foremost. Recognising this essential humanity is central to how we conduct our business, and how we lead our lives. We respect and accommodate each individual's way of thinking, working and communicating, mindful of the fact that each has their own story and means of telling it.

### 2. Impartiality and independence:

IFF is a research-led organisation which believes in letting the evidence do the talking. We don't undertake projects with a preconception of what "the answer" is, and we don't hide from the truths that research reveals. We are independent, in the research we conduct, of political flavour or dogma. We are open-minded, imaginative and intellectually rigorous.

### 3. Making a difference:

At IFF, we want to make a difference to the clients we work with, and we work with clients who share our ambition for positive change. We expect all IFF staff to take personal responsibility for everything they do at work, which should always be the best they can deliver.



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