

Future Impact Programme Evaluation

June 2023

ConnectMore Solutions & Richmond Baxter Ltd



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Executive summary

The programme has been incredibly successful. Young people left, on average, with a stronger sense of their own abilities and far more than expected experienced their first taste of work. The combination of careers development and personal development gives a strong indication that young people will be able to sustain positive outcomes going forward.

Introduction

This report evaluates the performance of Future Impact which provided long term, person-centred intensive coaching support to 16–24-year-olds who were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and young people aged 15 at high risk of becoming NEET, who had Special Educational Need/Disability (SEND) support when at school. In practice this included supporting young people with young carers, young parents, some with ADHD and on the autism spectrum, and young people with complex and challenging home lives.

The programme combined coaching, careers guidance, practical support (including to families) and motivation, designed to help young people foster the necessary confidence, resilience and problem-solving skills to move forward. It helped address anxieties and negative cycles of behaviour. Together these focused on helping them access and sustain employment, education and training opportunities including volunteering.

The programme was delivered by Futures over a five-year period from 2018 – 2023 and was funded through a Social Impact Bond (SIB) payment-per-outcome model which comprised:

- DCMS SIB, the Life Chances Fund (LCF)
- Nottingham City Council (the City)
- Nottinghamshire County Council (the County) and
- Upfront, repayable investment from Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC).

The programme consisted of three distinct ‘strands’, served by dedicated teams. The City and County strands commenced in August 2018, and a third Youth Justice Service was approved in the County in 2020. The programme was due to end in July 2023.

The evaluation process took place from December 2022 – June 2023 whilst the programme was still live, and was conducted by [ConnectMore Solutions](#) and [Richmond Baxter Ltd](#).

Outcomes

The programme has supported 701 young people, significantly over the 500 contract target:

- 496 young people accessed education or training opportunities
- 208 young people secured an employment outcome
- 121 young people entered volunteering opportunities.¹

¹ as at end May 2023 with 2 months of service delivery remaining

To gain the full benefit of the programme young people typically required support over extended periods of time, most commonly a 12-36 month's timescale.

Employment was one of the key strengths of the programme, and proven to be very adept at getting young people into education and training opportunities, working in partnership with local colleges. The employability skillset of the Coaches was crucial to this success.

Impact on young people

Wellbeing Assessments found young people reported, on average, a 23% increase in their own wellbeing over the course of the programme. They reported amongst the most significant impacts on their Career Development and Life Satisfaction & Happiness. Feedback from Coaches, parents and the young people reinforced these findings, identifying development of problem-solving skills, understanding of employability and improved family relationships.

"[My daughter] seems happier now, she is getting her confidence back, she can talk to [her coach] if she is worried." Parent

Some young people (particularly from the SEND cohort) would have further benefitted from social activities, to overcome loneliness and isolation.

Overall, however, the cumulative effect of these changes meant that many young people were able to enhance their confidence, self-esteem and trust.

"The Coach has really helped me! This has helped me get my foundations right to build up my life."

Value for money

The outcomes associated with the funding model were overwhelmingly positive. The initial investment enabled Futures to set up before outcomes had been achieved, and the broad payment-by-result approach de-risked delivery of an innovative programme for the co-commissioners.

The £3.3m programme was delivered within budget, and generated additional outcomes, beyond the contract with an equivalent of £425k net. The programme will 'pay back' the investment if 188 avoid only one year of unemployment in adulthood.

The evaluation found significant potential to relieve pressure on other partner services including homelessness, criminality and mental health, providing a clear case for a continuation of the programme if the funding can be found.

Success factors and challenges

Across all three strands the accumulated evidence reveals that the Coaches were very effective at engaging young people and providing practical support to help stabilise their wider life circumstances. The Coaches embraced the opportunity to deliver the contract in a person centred way, within a programme that did not mandate young people to undertake prescriptive courses of action. This was a particularly popular aspect of the programme influencing the positive job satisfaction of Coaches.

“The Coaches are really helpful and supportive, they set lots of goals to see what you are able to do and not do. This helps you to achieve different things in life.” Young person

Coaches endeavoured to work in partnership, but frequently acted as advocates for young people and parents overwhelmed by education and training systems that sometimes seemed stacked against them.

“100% take it. It’s been amazing for [my son]. Can’t sing the Coach’s praises enough.” Parent

Challenges for Coaches included accessing or having the skills and confidence to find a pipeline of relevant work opportunities for young people with specific support needs. Whilst the programme enjoyed some success supporting young people into volunteering opportunities, this was a new area for Futures and one of less appeal to young people.

City, County and Youth Justice strands were all able to evidence positive impacts on young people. Coaches adapted quickly to Covid. They also adapted to meet the different local needs and barriers (such as geography and employment options) across the strands. There were some differences in performance, with the City Coaches’ ability to focus solely on Future Impact contributing to outcomes which exceeded targets. The County Coaches’ broader NEET-contract responsibilities constrained their capacity and responsiveness at key points in the academic year.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the programme be continued. At the time of writing Futures, the City and County commissioners were developing proposals and seeking partners. Partners in criminal justice and health warrant particular consideration due to the benefits for these sectors.

Recommendations for any subsequent NEET initiatives designed to support SEND or youth justice cohorts would benefit from adopting the Future Impact model of long-term, flexible support provided by Coaches skilled in trust-building, personal development and employability.

Potential ways to further strengthen such models include:

- Coaches solely focus on one programme, and do not have twin responsibilities for delivery of other NEET contracts which constrain flexibility.
- Coaches are supported by an intentional strategy of opportunity development. This includes a pipeline of entry level employment and training opportunities with advice surrounding reasonable adjustments.
- Coaches are trained on the benefits of, and supported to generate routes into volunteering.
- Young people can access funding to cover travel costs, to access more opportunities.
- Closer partnership working with local colleges, prioritising roles designed to support student wellbeing and pastoral care.
- Development of one-page strength based profiles of young people to help share key information key partner agencies including colleges.
- Development of partnerships to offer young people social and leisure activities to help overcome social isolation.
- Monitoring includes a disengagement flag to understand why young people leave the programme and a more user-friendly Wellbeing Assessment.

1 Introduction

1.1 About Future Impact

Future Impact (the programme) was designed to provide long term, person-centred intensive coaching support to 16-24 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and young people aged 15 at high risk of becoming NEET, who had Special Educational Need/Disability (SEND) support when at school.

The programme has been delivered by Futures, an Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' provider with over 20 years' experience delivering Employment, Skills and Career Services to vulnerable young people and adults. The programme was made possible via:

- A DCMS Social Investment Bond, the Life Chances Fund (LCF)
- Nottingham City Council (the City) and Nottinghamshire County Council (the County) match funding
- An upfront investment from Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC).

The programme consisted of three distinct 'strands', served by dedicated teams. The City and County strands commenced in August 2018, and a third Youth Justice Service was approved as an additional strand in the County in 2020. The programme was due to end in July 2023.

The programme goals were to support young people with multiple barriers:

- **Medium-term:** to enter and sustain employment, education or training courses; to develop their wellbeing, independence and stability; and to reduce their risk of re-offending,
- **Long-term:** to achieve personal development, practical outcomes (e.g. independence) and work-readiness,
- **Ultimate:** to achieve their potential, achieving and sustaining EET outcomes and breaking any cycles of negative behaviours.

1.2 About the evaluation

Futures appointed Richard Hazledine of **ConnectMore Solutions** and Claire Baxter of **Richmond Baxter Ltd** to evaluate the programme, addressing:

- Performance - how have young people benefited? (Sections 2 and 3)
- What works - how the operating model has contributed to success or created challenges? (Section 4)
- Value for money and sustainability – were there broader commissioner and partner benefits? (Sections 6).

The research took place in early 2023, whilst the programme was still live. The findings and recommendations will shape Futures', the City and the County's legacy plans for the service.

We would like to extend our thanks to the many contributors who generously gave their time and shared their experiences.

2 Programme Performance

2.1 Young people helped by Future Impact

The programme contract set out a number of outcomes to achieve for young people. These formed the main performance indicators.

At the time of the data extract for this report (April 2023) the programme had 3 more months to run. A number of pending outcomes were expected to be achieved before the end of service delivery. In the data that follows pending outcomes, provided by and tested with service managers, have been incorporated into the analysis.

Since the programme commenced in August 2018 it supported 701 young people, significantly over the 500 contract tribute. These were attributed to the City 45%, the County 38% and Youth Justice 17%.

At least 496 young people will have secured education or training. More than 208 were expected to have secured an employment outcome (125 full time and 83 part time). 121 young people entered volunteering opportunities. Throughout the programme young people completed a total of 2,214 assessments.

Headline outcomes achieve by young people

Outcome	Actual (April 2023)	Pending (by July 2023)	Total projected
Life Chances Fund Participants	701	n/a	701
Education or Training outcomes	496	6	502
Entry to Employment outcomes FT/PT	208	3	211
Entry to Volunteering outcomes	121	0	121
Assessments completed	2,214	23	2,237

Source: Futures data presented at the April 2023 programme steering group, data on pending outcomes collated May 2023

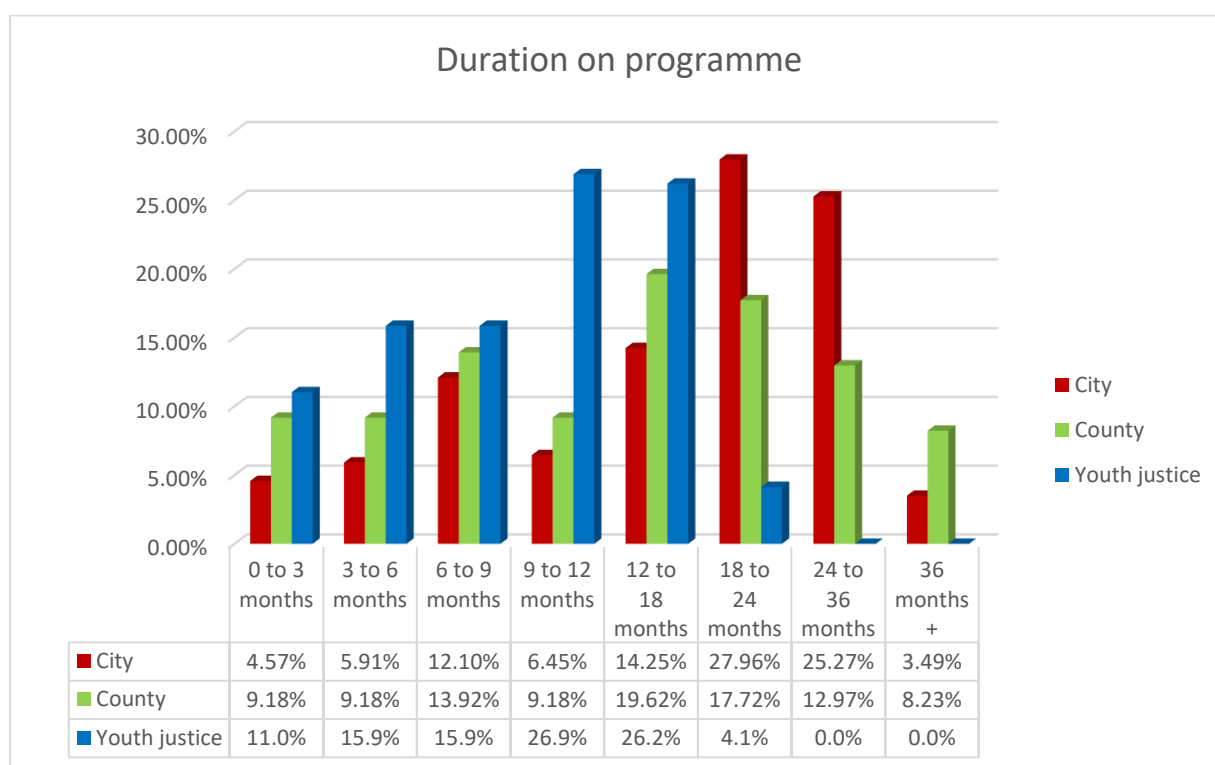
A review of the SEND characteristics of young people accessing the programme reveals that 48% of participants are facing Behavioural, Emotional and Social difficulties. This includes Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and anxiety disorders. 31% participants also have autistic spectrum disorders. A closer inspection of the data also reveals that around 18% of participants have two or more SEND conditions.

In terms of the ethnic diversity of the project 67% of participants are classified as white. For the purposes of government monitoring this figure includes both white British, white European and white other cohorts. Minority ethnic groups accessing the programme have been split as follows. 15.1% dual heritage, 4% black Caribbean, 2.1% Pakistani, 1.1% black African, 0.2% Indian. Other known ethnicities equated to 1.2% and 8.4% of ethnicities were 'not known/refused to disclose'. The gender split of participants on the programme equated to 66% male, 34% female.

The programme also worked with a number of young people who might experience additional challenges in addition to SEND support. Coaches estimated working with at least 30 Looked After children and 25 care leavers, 36 young carers and 28 young parents.

2.2 Duration of support

The programme was to support young people over extended periods of time. In the City 70% of young people engaged between 12-36 months. In the County the 12-36 months engagement profile was lower (58.5% young people engaged over this time). The engagement profile for Youth Justice was markedly different with over 95% young people engaged for 0-18 months, in part reflecting the relative infancy of this strand, the smaller sample size and a different set of needs (see Section 5).

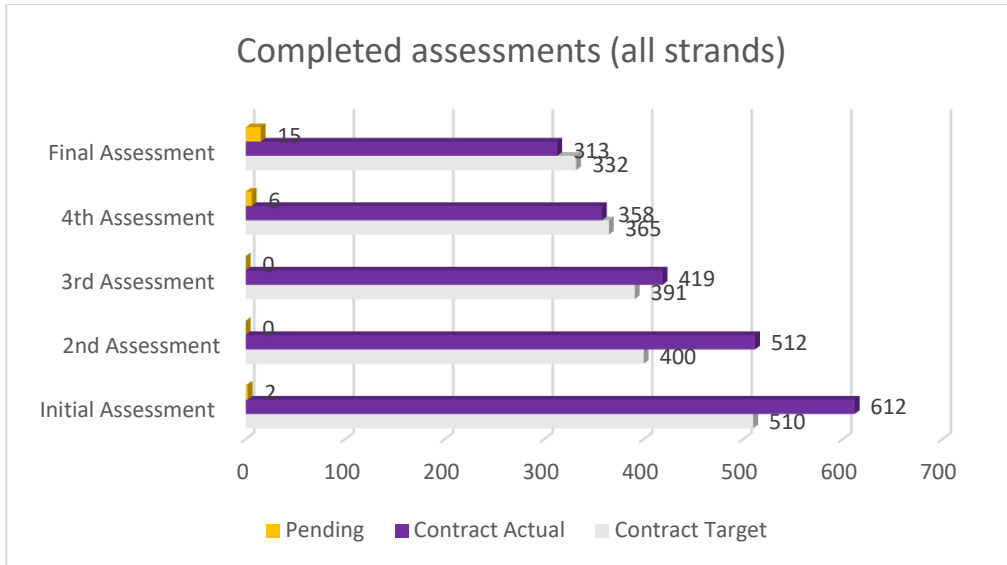


2.3 Outcomes achieved by young people

Combined progression rates of young people across the City, County and Youth Justice strands are presented below. City, County and Youth Justice strand performance can be found in Section 3 and analysis in Section 5).

2.3.1 Assessment outcomes

The programme allowed for a maximum of 5 assessment points, to encourage young people to reflect on their own progress (see Wellbeing Assessment section, below) support planning and as a mechanism to build the young person / Coach relationship. The programme successfully exceeded targets for initial, 2nd and 3rd assessments and came close to delivering 4th and final targets.

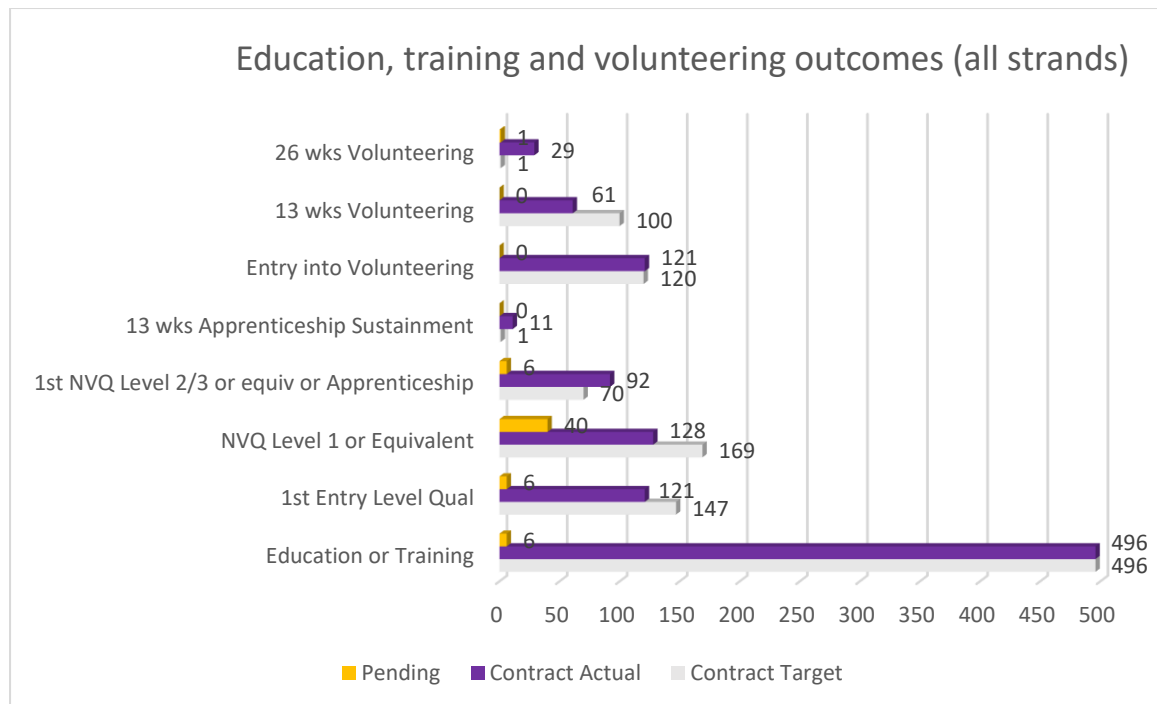


The programme engaged over an additional 100 young people vs target in initial and 2nd assessments, with a more modest over-performance (28 young people) for 3rd assessments.

4th and final assessment were more challenging to achieve. At the time of writing these were marginally behind target (by 7 and 19 respectively), but with pending outcomes expected to nearly close the gap (by 6 and 15 respectively).

2.3.2 Education, training and volunteering outcomes

The programme met the contract target to engage young people in education and training, as shown in the chart below. The programme out-performed targets for 1st NVQ level 2/3 or equivalent apprenticeship, and 13 weeks apprenticeship sustainment. A further 6 pending outcomes for this measure were set to enhance performance further.



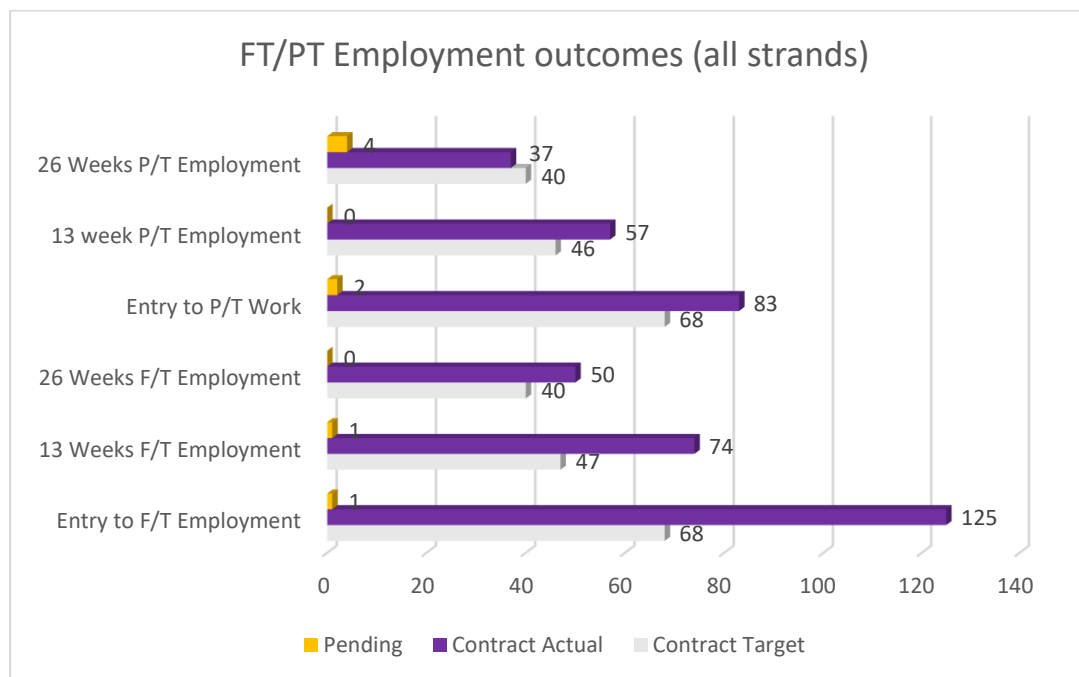
Targets were more challenging to attain in 1st entry level qualifications, and NVQ level 1 or equivalent (although a further 40 NVQ level 1 or equivalent outcomes pending the close of the academic year were expected to leave a final shortfall of only 1 outcome vs target). Feedback attributed this pattern to young people joining the programme with higher than expected qualifications, especially in the County.

The entry into volunteering targets and 26-week volunteering targets were both met, whilst the 13-week volunteering target was more challenging. Feedback indicated this was a developmental area for the programme and to some extent an exploratory exercise, and so the targets at 13 and 26 weeks may not have been as well calibrated as in other areas of work.

2.3.3 Employment outcomes

Employment support was a clear strength of the programme and reflecting Future’s expertise in this field. It supported significant numbers of young people into employment opportunities, and met or was projected to meet all related outcomes.

All full-time employment targets were achieved at entry, 13 weeks and 26 weeks sustainment. The programme also met part time entry level and 13 weeks, and was expected to meet the 26-week target pending 4 outcomes over the summer. Outcomes, associated with this measure are set to be achieved before the programme is concluded. This is a significant achievement given part time outcomes were incorporated mid-programme.



2.4 Wider benefits experienced by young people

2.4.1 The Wellbeing Assessment

During the programme young people recorded their progress using a **Wellbeing Assessment** of 12 areas, grouped into 4 categories:

Category	Area
Personal Development (abbreviated in charts to PD)	Life and Independence Skills Behaviour Management Time Keeping
Career Development (CD)	Interview/ Application Readiness Achievements Experience of Work
General Needs (GN)	Home life and Relationships Money Physical and Mental Wellbeing
Life Satisfaction & Happiness (LS&H)	Safety Leisure Confidence

Each area comprised 10 Statements against which the young people assessed themselves as meeting this behaviour, feeling or aptitude:

- 'Never' (scoring 0 points)
- 'Sometimes' (scoring 0.5 points) and
- 'Always' (scoring 1 point).

This meant a young people could score a maximum of 10 points per area and theoretically 120 in total. The Wellbeing Assessment took place up to 5 times, although some left the programme early and all Statements were not always covered.

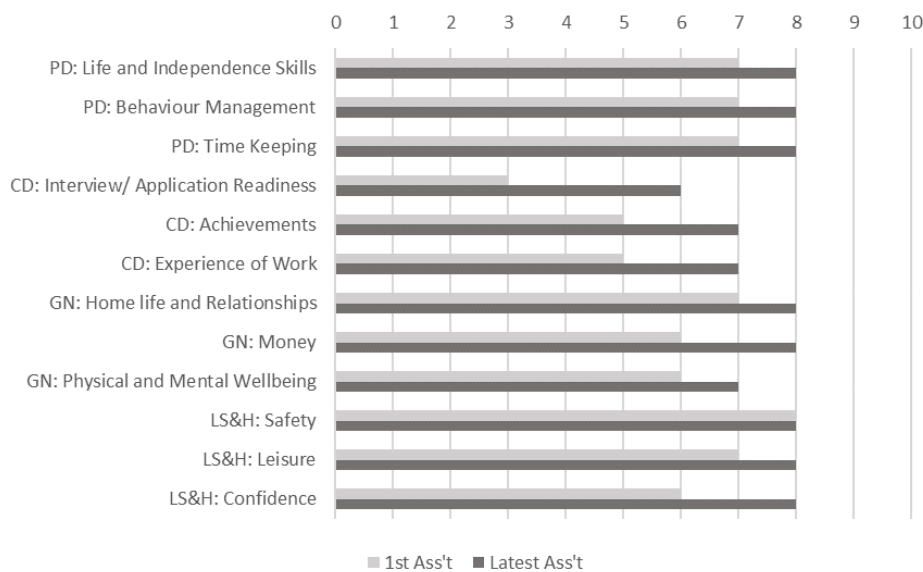
The data shows young people's wellbeing increased, from an average score of **74 out of 120 on 1st assessment to 91 at their latest assessment, an increase of 17 points (23%)**. Young people reported progression across each area bar one (Safety, which had the highest 1st assessment score and remained unchanged).

At the programme start, Young People assessed themselves lowest in *Career Development Category*. These scores increased significantly, particularly in the Area of Interview / Application Readiness which doubled.

Other notable improvements included in the areas of Confidence within *Life Satisfaction & Happiness*, and Money within *General Needs* (both rising from 6 to 8 points, a jump of 33%).

Young people commenced the programme most confident in their level of *Personal Development* (i.e. Life and Independence Skills, Behaviour Management & Timekeeping). These remained highly rated areas.

Average change in Wellbeing Assessment scores, all programme strands



Source: Futures, January 2023

Notes: YP receiving reaching 2nd assessment or further, as at January 2023, n=495

3.3.2 'Soft' benefits

The simple scoring approach had the benefit of leaving less room for interpretation, minimising the likelihood of scores being skewed by a young person or Coach's interpretation. However, this method was liable to have under-reported progression as the scores were not sensitive to small changes. The evaluation therefore tested these findings with Coaches, parents and young people themselves. The following were strong themes.

Personal Development

Young people became more self-aware and better equipped to resolve problems themselves:

- **Skills for adulthood.** Young people developed the necessary skills and experience to transition further into adult life, developing independent living skills such as budgeting and using public transport.
- **Self-reflection and on-going learning.** The evidence revealed Coaches were adept at diplomatically challenging unhelpful behaviours which may frustrate progress. The process of self-reflection represents a key building block of the programme.
- **Enhanced problem-solving skills.** The access to a trusted confidante (Coach) helped them consider how to respond to a variety of pressing life challenges. As these challenges were addressed young people had a greater capacity to access and sustain EET opportunities.

Career Development

Young people were supported with understanding how to enter work and what this might look like for them. In common with the Wellbeing Assessment scores, interviews identified this as a 'stand out' strength of the programme which the management team attributed this to the employment of Coaches who were careers specialists.

- **Awareness of the concept of employment and employability.** Coaches act as role models to help young people understand what it meant to be employable, and that employment is an attainable lifestyle.

“I’m more comfortable to give interviews a go now.” A young person

- **Awareness of available Employment, Education, Training (EET) and volunteering opportunities.** In the absence of specialist Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) support young people and their parents feared that they would be continually ‘going round in circles’.
- **Improved ability to engage with large organisations.** Coaches are adept at providing advocacy support to young people to help them engage with large organisations that might otherwise struggle to understand and respond to their needs eg DWP and large colleges. In the view of one parent this support was crucial to help their young person avoid mandated courses of action that might be inappropriate or counterproductive.

“Without his Coach being there my concern would be [my son] would keep going around in circles with JCP.” A parent

- **Improved aspirations.** Young people securing their first ever employment outcome realised that employment was an attainable goal, avoiding the debilitating effects of ‘scarring’ where they associated the recruitment process with an on-going outcome of rejection.

General Needs

The improvement in this area was less pronounced in the Wellbeing Assessment average scores. This may be because the benefits were often felt strongly by family members:

- **Improved family dynamics.** There was evidence of reduced levels of stress and conflict with parents and carers at home.
- **Stability.** Coaches provided practical assistance to stabilise young people’s lives (e.g. sustainable housing), essential to enable them to focus on education or work.
- **Resilience.** Enhanced mental wellbeing and resilience to resolve challenging situations.
- **Self-awareness and coping strategies.** Young people accessing the programme gained an enhanced level of self-awareness around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This has been helpful to assist young people and their parents understand more about ‘trigger factors’ and appropriate ‘coping strategies’, maximising the likelihood of sustainable outcomes.

Life Satisfaction & Happiness

Confidence was the most commonly reported benefit:

- **Enhanced confidence, self-esteem and trust.** The Coaches endeavoured to offer an empathetic and non-judgemental source of support. Their ‘asset-based approach’ empowered each young person to focus on their strengths rather than their existing skills gaps or ‘deficits’.

“We can say it, but sometimes you need to hear it from somebody else.... positive comments from somebody who isn’t a family member” A parent

- **Social inclusion.** The programme helped to re-engage young people that might otherwise have felt disengaged from society or be at risk of a long-term NEET lifestyle, although for some a lack of social activities meant this remained an unmet need.
- **Positive self-identify.** This allowed young people to understand how they could make a positive contribution to society and the communities in which they resided.

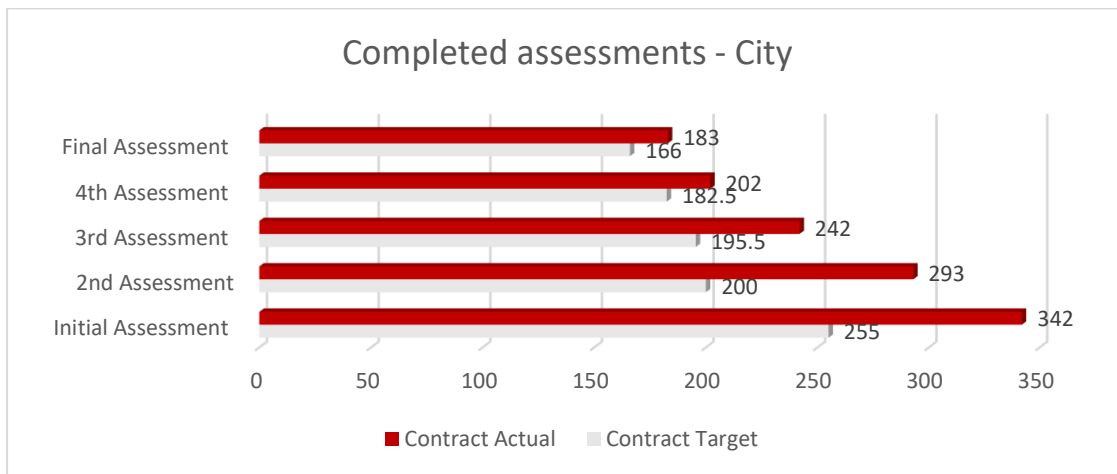
3 Strand Performance

This section sets out the performance by each strand (see Section 2 for data notes). Analysis of the underlying factors behind this performance follows in Section 5.

3.1 Comparative assessment outcomes

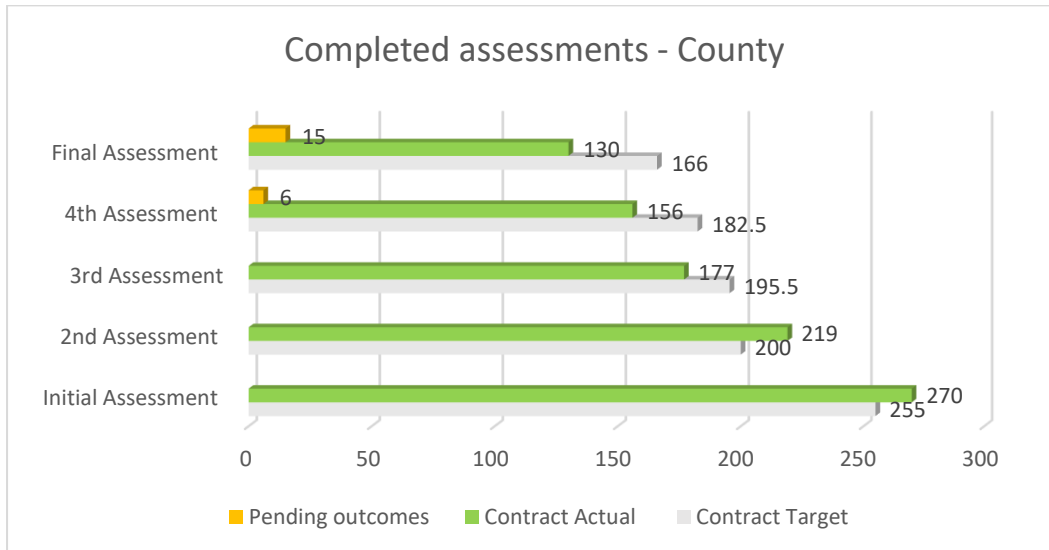
3.1.1 Assessment outcomes - City

City assessment targets were met at every stage. Significant over-performance has been recorded in the initial and 2nd assessment.



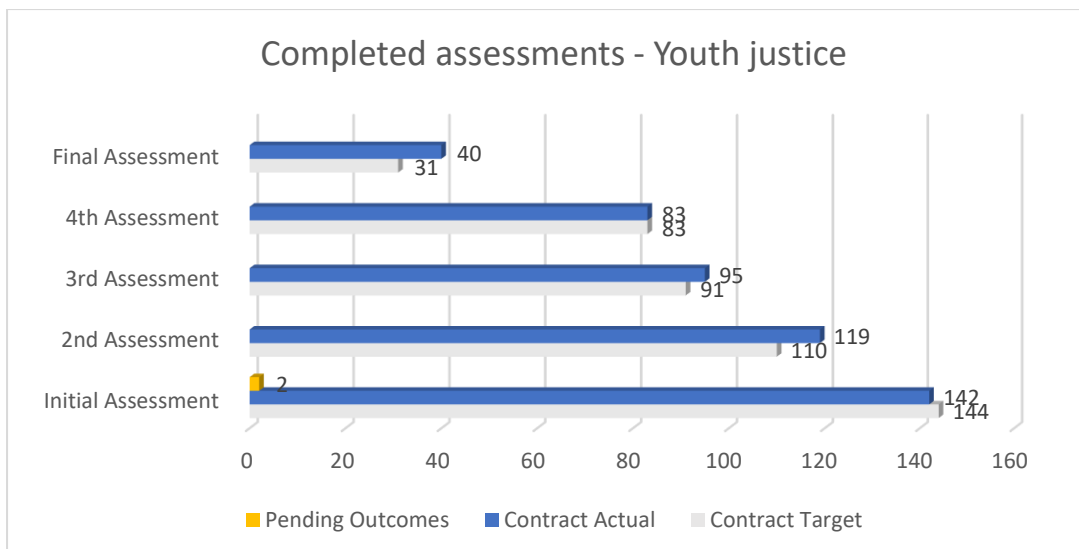
3.1.2 Assessment outcomes – County

County targets for the initial and 2nd assessments were comfortably exceeded. By comparison 3rd, 4th and final assessment targets proved to be challenging to achieve. At the time of writing 15 final assessments and 6 4th assessments were pending.



3.1.3 Assessment outcomes – Youth justice

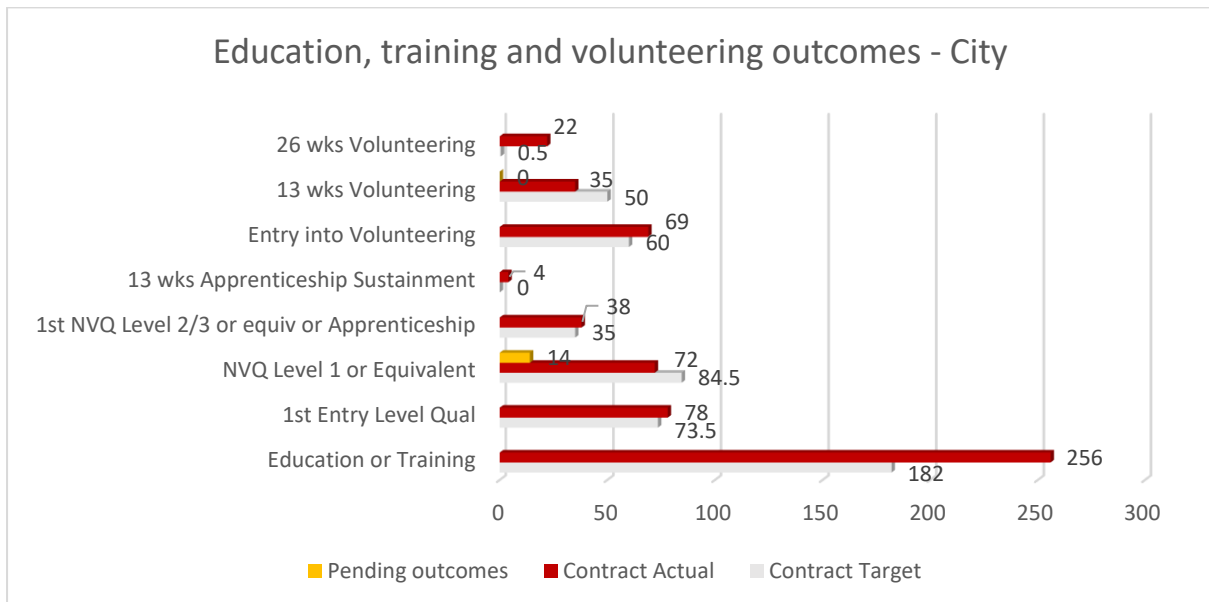
The Youth Justice strand was officially approved at the end of 2020 with service delivery commencing in 2021. It is testament to the team that all assessment outcomes were exceeded, met or were projected to be met by programme end.



3.2 Comparative education, training and volunteer outcomes

3.2.1 Education, training and volunteering outcomes – City

The City significantly over performed in the number of young people engaging with education or training opportunities (74 above the original contractual targets). All outcome targets in the City were met or were projected to meet the education targets.



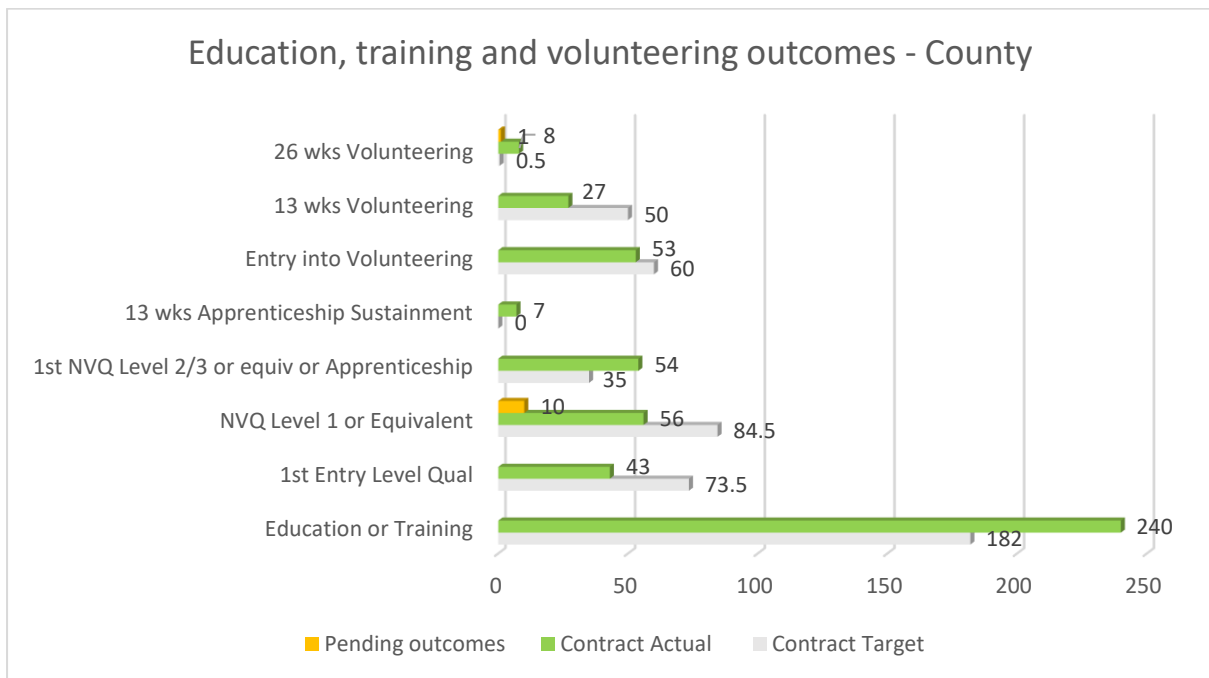
At the time of writing the City had already exceeded targets for 1st entry level qualifications, and 1st NVQ level 2/3 equivalent or apprenticeships. Four 13-week apprenticeship sustainment outcomes were achieved against a target of zero. NVQ 1 level or equivalent targets were due to be met pending 14 additional outcomes by the end of the academic year.

69 young people entered volunteering opportunities exceeding the target of 60. The 13-week target proved to be challenging to achieve, however 35 young people did manage to volunteer at this stage. By comparison the small 0.5, 26 week target was comfortably exceeded by 21.5 young people where long term volunteering was viable for their current situation. The programme has found it challenging to appropriately record volunteering when young people engaged in intensive bursts of volunteering for 60-90 hours over a small number of successive weeks.

3.2.2 Education, training and volunteering outcomes – County

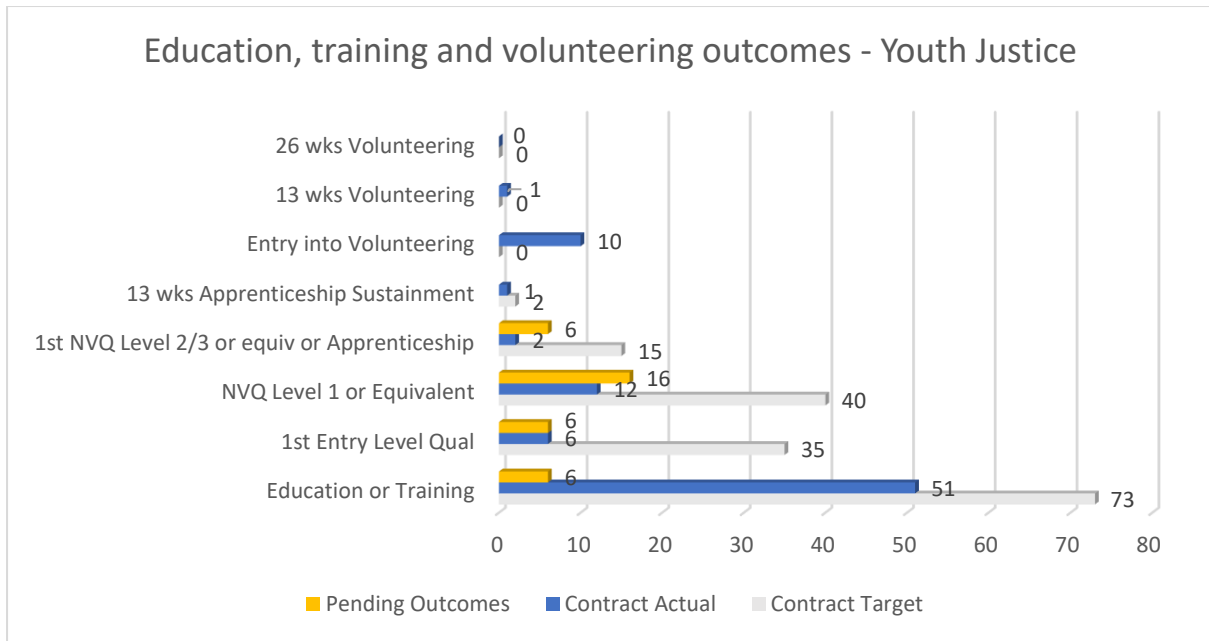
The County data reveals this strand of the project exceeded the target for the number of young people engaging with education or training opportunities (by 58). Performance was strong for 1st NVQ level 2/3 or equivalent or apprenticeship. By contrast some of the lower-level education and training targets were harder to meet, notably 1st entry level qualifications, and NVQ level 1 or equivalent.

The target for entry into volunteering was only narrowly missed by 7 outcomes with 53 young people signing up out of target of 60. At 13 weeks a total of 27 young people were sustaining their volunteering which fell 23 outcomes below the intended target. A further 8 young people sustained their volunteering by 26 weeks



3.2.3 Education, training and volunteering outcomes – Youth Justice

The YJ strand struggled to meet the education, training and volunteering outcomes. The young people supported showed the capacity to engage in these learning opportunities, but in smaller numbers than expected. 51 young people did engage with education and training opportunities, but this was 22 below target.



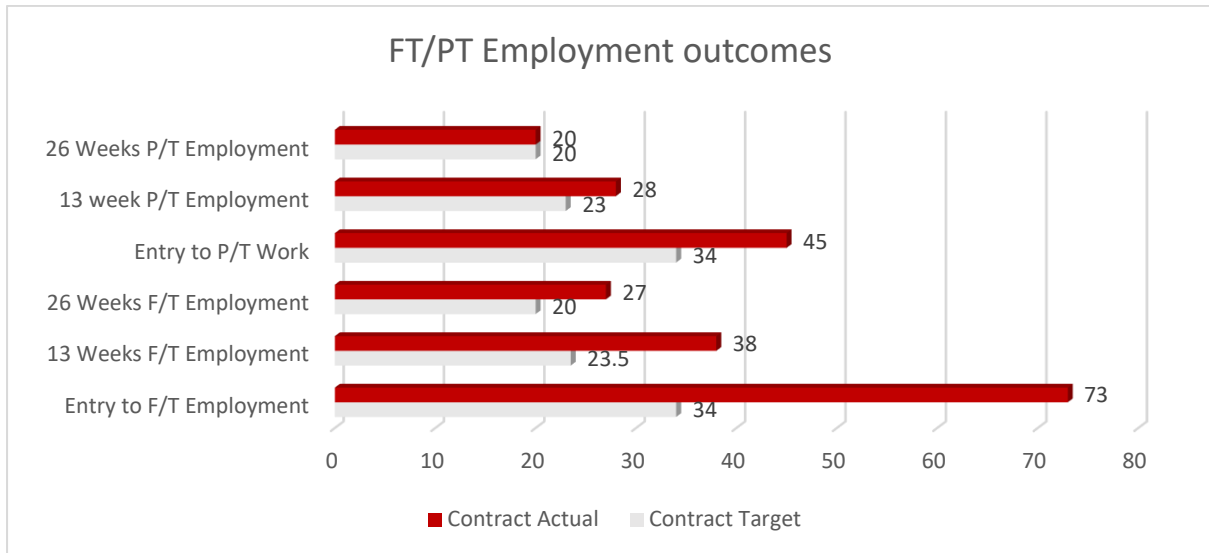
Pending outcomes were expected to close the gap for 1st entry level qualifications, NVQ level 1 or equivalent, and NVQ level 2/3 or apprenticeship outcomes. In particular 28 young people were expected to achieve an NVQ level 1 or equivalent by the end of the programme.

Although it was expected that the Youth Justice cohort might not have wished to engage with volunteering opportunities encouragingly 10 young people entered into volunteering positions.

3.3 Comparative employment outcomes

3.3.1 Employment outcomes - City

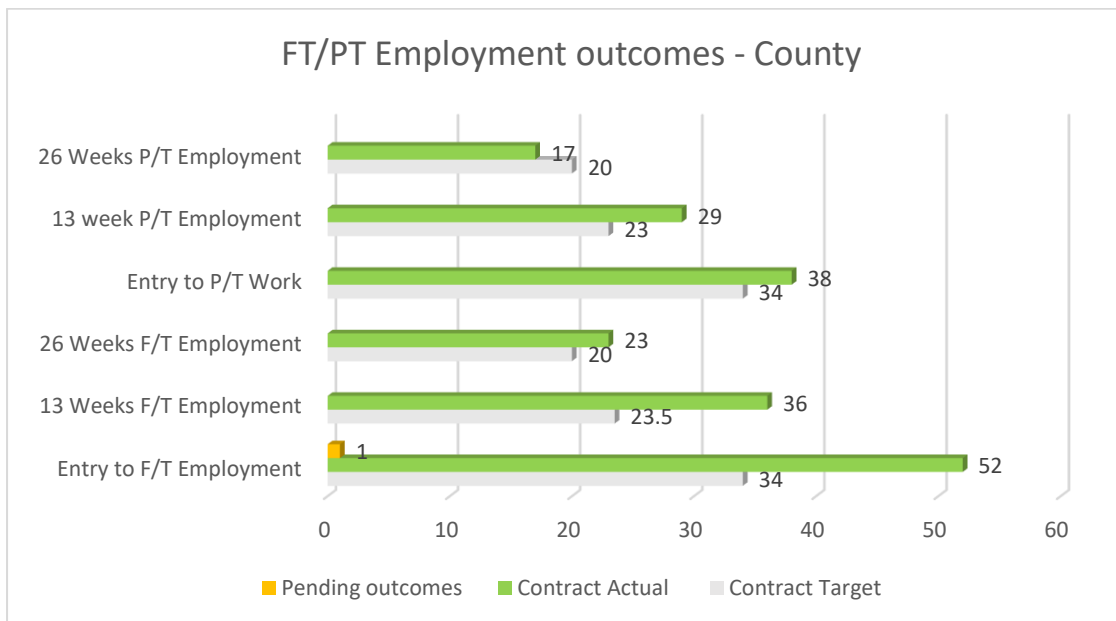
The City strand consistently exceeded its employment targets. More than double the expected number of young people entered full time employment. This was complemented by the ability of the programme to help young people sustain employment outcomes at 13 weeks and 26 weeks.



The strong full-time employment outcome performance was also matched in part-time employment outcomes which were subsequently established part way through the programme. As the bar chart illustrates all part-time employment targets were met. In this respect it is evident the part-time employment provides valuable progression opportunities for young people who for whatever reason are not yet ready for full time employment.

3.3.2 Employment outcomes - County

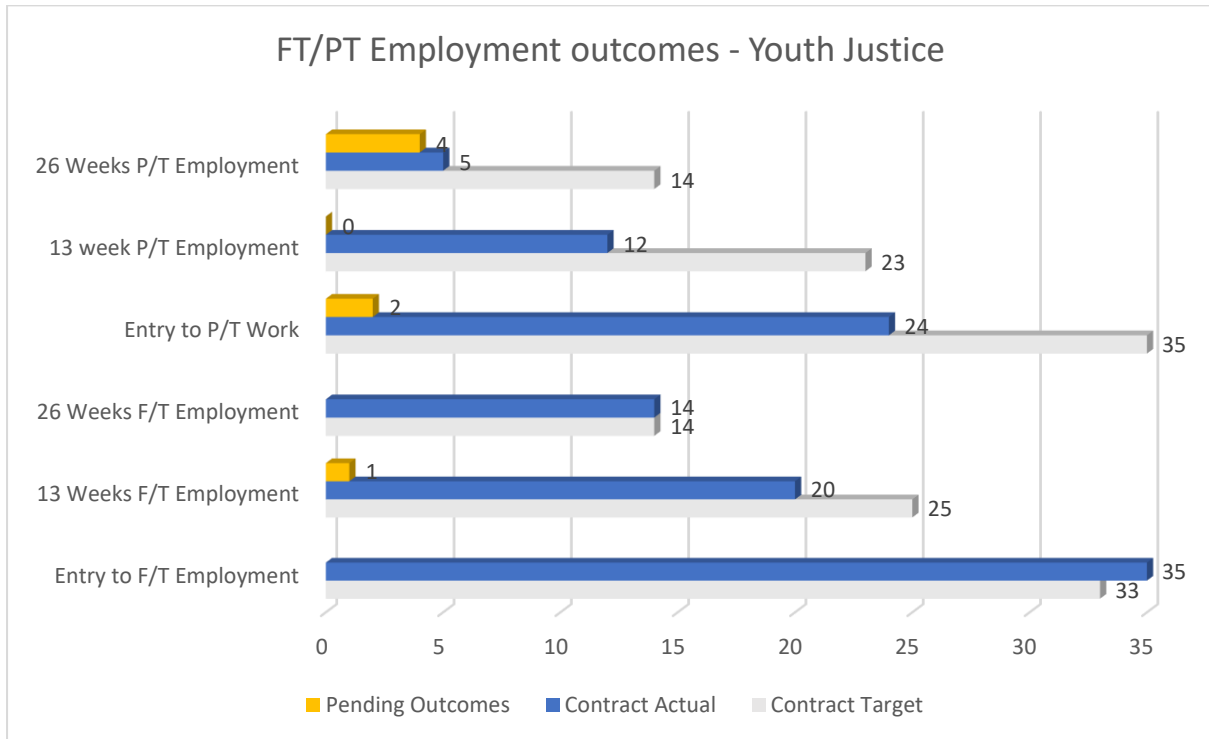
Nearly all employment targets were exceeded in the County, again underlining the programme strength in employment support.



The only area of performance which was narrowly tracking behind target was 26 weeks part time employment. Since the monitoring of part-time employment outcomes was implemented, it is evident that part-time employment provides a valuable progression route for young people who, for whatever reason, are not ready to consider full time employment. This matches the experience of City cohorts.

3.3.3 Employment outcomes – Youth Justice

Youth Justice data revealed the underlying preference for this cohort to access salaried employment opportunities; performance here was far stronger than in the attainment of education, training and volunteering outcomes.



The Youth Justice strand was particularly effective at supporting young people into full time employment, and to sustain this. Although the programme was projected to be 4 participants short of the 13-week target, 20 young people reached the milestone. By comparison the 26-week full time employment outcome of 14 matched the target. Performance in terms of part time work was not quite as strong as full time, although 24 young people had found part time employment with a further 2 expected to do so.

3.4 Comparative Wellbeing Assessment progress

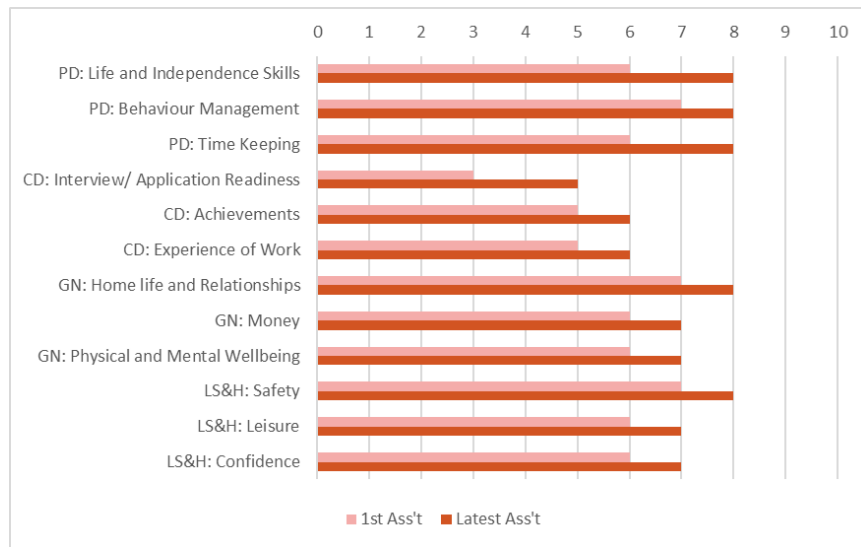
It is notable, and to the programme's credit, that the average score of every area improved in all strands – County, City and Youth Justice. As with other sources, the Wellbeing Assessment showed differences across the strands. Despite the small numbers, the broad findings were consistent with the interviews and outcomes data.

City young people assessed themselves at a comparatively lower start point than those in the County, and also a lower end score (**from 70 to 85, a 21% improvement**). There was good progress in Life and Independence Skills (Personal Development) and Interview / Application Readiness (within Career Development).

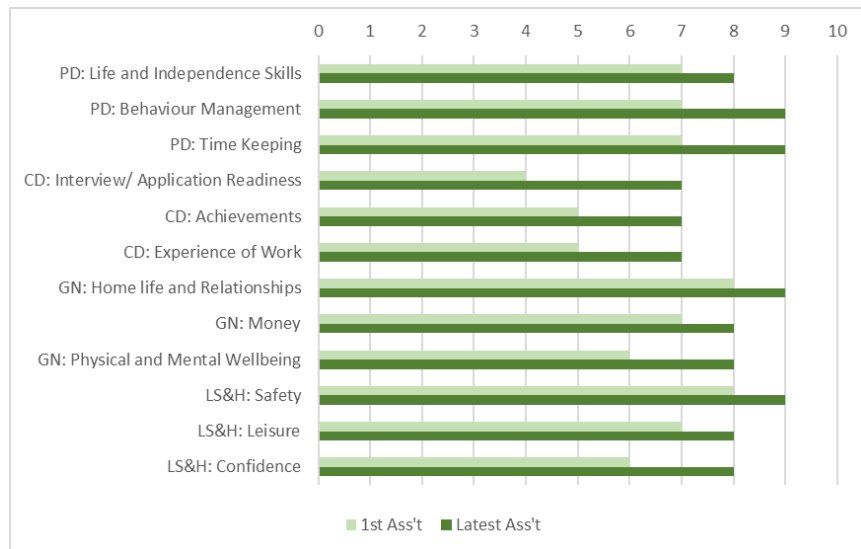
County young people assessed themselves highest of all the strands at their 1st assessment that and at their last one (**from 77 to 97, a 26% increase**). The management team felt this was consistent with their experience, as young people who joined the County programme were less likely to need entry level support than in the City. Again, young people reported getting better at aspects of Personal Development and Career Development.

Youth Justice participants joined with the lowest assessment of their wellbeing reflecting the challenges faced by this group. The management team considered this an accurate reflection of the complex challenges facing this cohort. Young people viewed their own progress as comparatively strong (**up from 66 to 82, 24%**). They reported above average growth in Achievements (within Career Development) and Home Life and Relationships (within General Needs), the latter highlighting the significance of their behaviours and the family tensions these created.

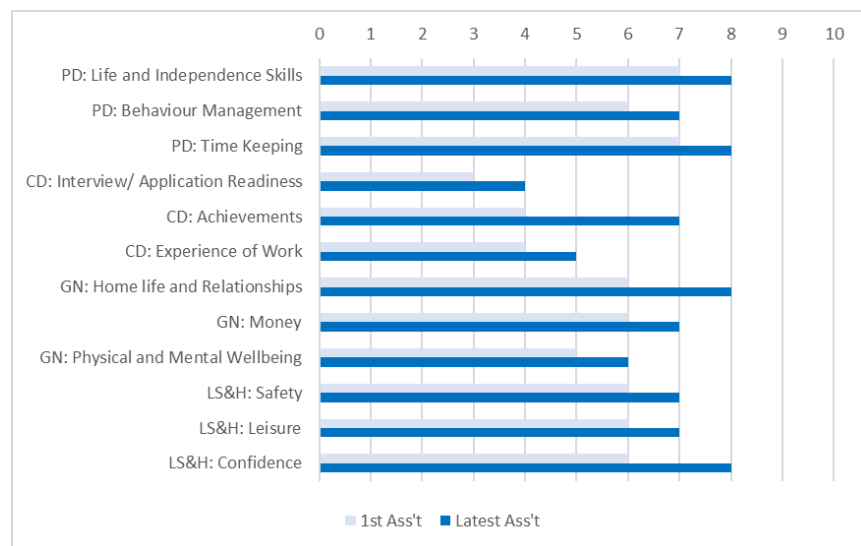
X: Average change in Wellbeing Assessment scores - City



X: Average change in Wellbeing Assessment scores - County



X: Average change in Wellbeing Assessment scores – Youth Justice



Source: Futures, February 2023
 Notes: YP receiving reaching 2nd assessment or further, n=495

4 The Operating Model

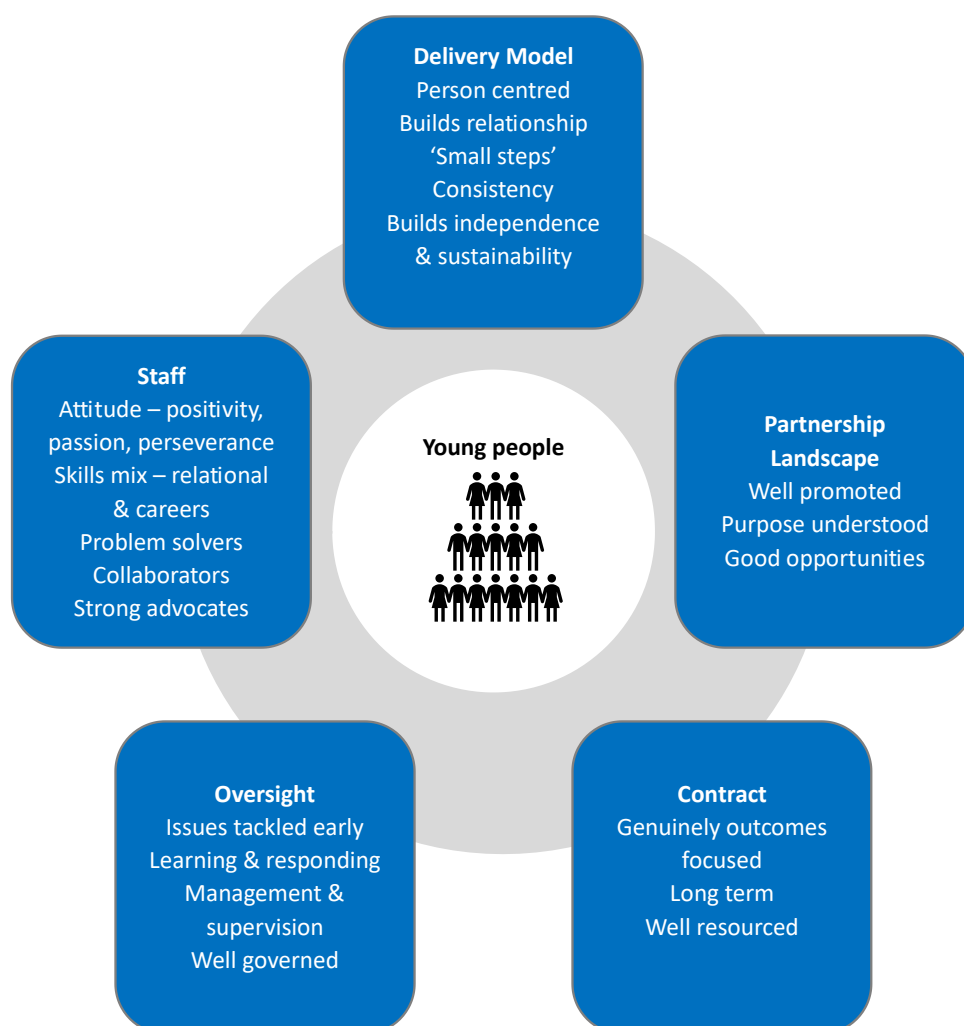
4.1 How has the model achieved the outcomes (or presented barriers)?

The programme worked because a number of complementary factors enabled Coaches to:

- **engage** the young people, by getting to know them and building trust
- **support** young people, by stabilising their home circumstances, providing practical EET advice and by 'rooting for them'
- increase the likelihood of **preventing long term NEET**, by tailoring plans to their interests, overcoming 'scarring' and developing their own problem solving, advocacy and life skills.

These ingredients are captured below in an operating model, which when working at its best, the Future Impact programme demonstrated and which other programmes could helpfully adopt.

Future Impact operating model – why it works



4.1.1 The staff

Worked well. It was important that young people could see Coaches were ‘on their side’ requiring a mix of positivity, passion and perseverance. They drew on a range of skills and knowledge – notably the ability to form good relationships and solve quite practical problems (missing qualification certificates, travel planning) alongside employability advice. They quickly shifted to remote and doorstep working during Covid.

“They [Futures] have good staff, people seemed genuinely interested in the work that they do”

Steering Group member

As well as being able to engage young people they needed to work well with partners, collaborating with education providers, employers and those offering volunteering to help a young person adapt and stay with an opportunity. More often, this required strong advocacy skills, to champion the young person in the face of partner organisations being poorly equipped to support those with multiple and complex needs.

4.1.2 The delivery model

Worked well. Coaches were encouraged to get to know the young person, their circumstances, often their family and their interests. This meant Coaches were able to tailor plans and raise wider barriers to EET (substance misuse, health concerns), and sometimes draw on the support and contacts of the parents. Consistent, regular contact appeared critical, breaking down plans into bite size steps so that young people could experience progress and overcome setbacks. This provided young people with the confidence and aspiration known to maximise the likelihood of sustainable outcomes.

“Our contract is different - it isn’t about getting them into work if that isn’t right for them, it is about improving quality of life” A Coach

“Our relationship with the parent / carer is almost as important as with the young person” A Coach

Challenges. Some young people found discussions about home life intrusive. This seems particularly so where a Coach had not been able to build rapport, itself related to frequency of contact. There was evidence that providing this consistent and frequent contact between Coach and young person was harder in the County (see Section 5).

Young people and parents were uncertain as to the long-term plan. This may have been skewed by interviewees coming from current participants, but is time critical given the propensity for young people to not want further help once in work.

4.1.3 Partnership landscape

Worked well. The programme needed the ‘right’ referrals to find young people who might benefit and address the gap in provisions between universal and targeted SEND support. Most referrals came established relationships with partners including schools, colleges, training providers and SEN teams. Where necessary this approach was complemented by Steering Group members, who were also able to promote the programme. Those Coaches who felt confident working with employers were better able to access relevant opportunities for young people.

Challenges. Finding opportunities was one of the biggest challenges for the programme. Despite the alignment of various employability programmes within the City, Coaches from all teams reported a lack of jobs with appropriate reasonable adjustments. This seemed to depend on an individual Coach's confidence in approaching employers and parental connections. Both struggled to find volunteering opportunities, and those available were often shorter in duration than the outcomes set. Similarly, there were challenges finding social activities to provide young people with much needed companionship. Connection to apprenticeships was also challenging, which some attributed to a lack of Government targets and measures.

4.1.4 The contract

Worked well. The outcomes-focused contract afforded Coaches the flexibility. The journey for a young person was not prescribed and so they could be creative in their approach. The contract was sufficiently resourced to cover long-term support, not restricted to a set time. This enabled them to work at the young person's pace.

"I moved from a role in school where it felt we were just skimming the surface" A Coach

"Being there for us, taking the time and helping us access support." Young person

Challenges. The outcomes payment mechanism generated complex and weighty reporting requirements, including financial reporting (see Section 6) required manual adjustment. Futures introduced their own Wellbeing Assessment, which helped prompt progress discussions between young people and Coaches, but the length meant it was not always used.

There was a hardship fund, but this did not cover travel, further adding to the challenge of connecting young people to opportunities.

4.1.5 Oversight

Oversight. The programme benefitted from strong governance, where providers and the co-commissioners reviewed progress together and took action early. There was strong evidence of learning, with the Steering Group flexing programme design and the contract to better serve young people. Notable examples include the addition of part time employment as an eligible outcome and the introduction of fixed payments during Covid.

"Futures raise issues early and we discuss them... there is nothing urgent" Steering Group member.

There were examples of strong management with some Coaches reporting good supervision and reflective practice.

Challenges. The practice of joint meetings across the teams, to share best practice, waned after Covid, which also coincided with a management restructure for the teams. The County team encountered a very high turnover of managers and staff which appears to have impacted performance (see Section 6). The reason for young people exiting the programme early was not captured, a missed opportunity to learn.

4.2 How the model worked for staff

Throughout the process of evaluation, it was clear that the Coaches positively embraced the flexible person-centred ethos of the programme. There was recognition that the approach of the

programme was valuable and filled a gap in DWP provision that all too often didn't allow the time and space for the many small steps young people need to take to make progress.

The Coaches also appreciated the long-term nature of the programme and that it was possible to work with young people up to the age of 24 if they required a longer package of support. One Coach expressed the view that it was really important for the SEND group that young people were not mandated to find employment when their confidence, self-esteem and wider life factors might not be immediately conducive to this.

“Our contract is different - it isn't about getting them into work if that isn't right for them, it is about improving quality of life. So, you can help them build structure into their week, growing their social circle if this is what they need.” A Coach

The need to avoid mandated courses of action was also a point recognised by a parent who was concerned that previous interactions with DWP professionals might have meant that their son was encouraged to embark on inappropriate or unhelpful interventions. In this respect parental engagement also represented another area of satisfaction from the Coaches that we spoke to. Many Coaches had established a positive dialogue with parents who had been struggling for some time to motivate and guide their young people into constructive endeavours. This was seen to be a significant contributor to job satisfaction.

“As Coaches we get to see the reward and satisfaction from seeing a young person turn their life around. Parents often reflect back and say he/she wouldn't have done this without you.” A Coach

In summary the Coaches consulted as part of evaluation process consistently spoke warmly and enthusiastically about the impact of their work. The role was felt to have high levels of meaning and job satisfaction. The long term, flexible and person-centred nature of the provision was felt to be crucial. This approach meant that the programme could be delivered in a way where the Coaches could get to know each young person before discussing specific courses of action. This was understood to be essential to building the necessary trust and rapport with each young person.

“The minute you say you are not there to get them to college, I'm here to get to know you, they open up to you.” A Coach

As shown above, the model was largely highly successful, but there were challenges and inconsistencies. These were, in part, due to differences in City and County model, but wider factors in terms of engagement with schools and supply and demand for EET opportunities and engagement also had an impact. In terms of schools, it was evident that Coaches found it helpful to understand young people's past involvement of SEND support from their perspective and the school's perspective (at the point of referral). The ease to which this information could be ascertained from schools was to some extent depended on the presence of a local authority Service Level Agreement (SLA) for annual return data. An existing SLA in the City eased this process from the outset of the programme. This was not the case in the County and the agreement of an SLA in 2020 made information sharing easier between schools and Coaches. Dialogue with the Coaches also revealed that their depth of relationship with the relevant schools and the length of time that had elapsed since a young person had left the education system also had a bearing on the ease of access to complementary data and intelligence to inform action planning

Access to appropriate opportunities to help young people access the labour market was also felt to be challenging. For young people with SEND it could be time consuming to find the right employment opportunities. In this respect there was apparent paucity of established programmes willing to provide employment opportunities to young people with SEND. Those programmes which

did exist tended to focus on young people with SEND who had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). This evidently created additional barriers and potential gaps for young people to navigate. For several young people, it was evident that concerned parents had negotiated entry level opportunities through networks of family and friends. This approach appeared to have had some success in the cases which we found.

5 City, County and Youth Justice Analysis

5.1 Overview of strand differences

The different City and County models unquestionably impacted effectiveness. The City team was recruited solely to provide Future Impact, whereas the County team combined Future Impact with a NEET contract offering careers advice and support to a wider cohort. This meant young people sometimes already knew their Coach, but the challenges outweighed this benefit. The County team's statutory requirement to track the NEET status of up to 18,000 young people across year 11/12 coincided with the start of the autumn term, significantly reducing capacity for LCF programme work at a 'make or break' time for young people. By contrast, the City team had a dedicated focus on the LCF contract, meaning they could be responsive to young people's needs throughout the year.

Not all differences are explained by factors easily within team control. Other team factors (such as turnover), the partnership landscape and confidence engaging with it, and the young people themselves all had a bearing on performance.

5.2 Analysis and interpretation of City performance

Over the duration of the contract young people were able to make significant progress with the support of their Coaches, despite joining with a relatively low assessment of their own wellbeing. The City consistently exceeded employment targets, had met or was projected to meet all education targets and fully delivered against all 5 assessment milestones. Consultation, including with City-facing stakeholders, revealed the following factors which had influenced performance over the past five years.

5.2.1 The staff and oversight

- The City team enjoyed relative stability.
- There was on-going dialogue with Coaches regarding the importance of regular outcome assessments - a key focus for Managers. This has been perceived to be particularly important to guide Coaches who were unfamiliar with the additional assessment complexity of the programme.
- A strong focus on each young person's starting point, and that this could vary. Not all young people would require support to achieve entry level qualifications or NVQ's (for they may have already attained this) and for others attainment of an entry level qualification was an obvious starting point for their journey.
- Engaging young people who are ready to embrace opportunities to study for an NVQ level 1 or equivalent has been difficult to achieve. Experience of service delivery suggests there is not an on-going flow of young people ready to engage with this type of opportunity.
- Provision of an on-going focus on getting referral pathways right and relationship building with each young person was crucial to help minimise the potential for disengagement.
- Recognition that not all young people were ready for full time employment and that some young people would prefer to access part time employment to commence their careers.

5.2.2 Supply - the partnership landscape

- Good working relationships with the Princes Trust and Nottingham College supported those young people who are not 'work ready' to access appropriate provision which met their needs.
- There was a greater concentration of more readily accessible businesses for Coaches to connect young people to.
- Provision of Nottingham CVS volunteer training to Coaches was considered helpful to support the attainment of volunteering outcomes. The attainment of volunteering targets was more challenging; however, the evidence suggests volunteering provided a useful stepping stone to help some young people move forward.

5.2.3 Demand - young people and their families

- Young people in the City had been reluctant to enter employment opportunities perceived to be 'insecure' during the coronavirus pandemic. This maintained the demand for education and training outcomes during 2020 & 2021.
- Some parents positively encouraged their children to remain in education post 16+ so that they can continue to claim Child Benefit Allowance, influencing the decision making of some young people towards further education.

5.3 Analysis and interpretation of County performance

County Coaches were able to support the progression of significant numbers of young people to access employment opportunities. There was a strong performance in education, albeit skewed towards higher level qualifications, corresponding with young people joining the programme assessing themselves at a higher level of wellbeing and achievement. Achievement of assessments was mixed, indicative of some operational challenges the county experienced. Consultation with County facing stakeholders revealed the following factors which influenced performance.

5.3.1 The staff and oversight

- For a variety of different reasons the Coaches in the County had been led by five different line Managers over the past five years. This was not conducive to consistency of approach and increased the potential for misunderstanding of programme aims and ethos at each handover. On a contract with the complexity of LCF consistency of line management would have been highly desirable.
- These difficulties were compounded by high absence levels. 1367.5 days were lost to maternity leave (533 days) and sickness (834.5 days).
- These factors in combination with the twin LCF/NEET role meant that these professionals, committed to the development of young people and very experienced in the delivery of traditional careers contracts, struggled to manage the competing demands and to consistently adopt the different operating requirements.

5.3.2 Supply - the partnership landscape

- The close relationships with West Notts College and North Notts College were crucial to support young people who have needed to gain qualifications, particularly NVQ levels 2/3 and apprenticeships.
- There was a perception that whilst some Volunteering outcomes have been attained over the course of the programme further training and support was required to help Coaches fully embrace and understand the potential, particularly where Coaches had no previous experience of in this field.
- These issues have been compounded by the lack of a travel budget to help young people volunteer in different locations across the County.

5.3.3 Demand -the young people and their families

- In terms of educational attainment young people in the County often had a more advanced starting point when compared with City cohorts, and so did not need an entry level qualification.
- The onset of the coronavirus pandemic also presented challenges for the County, particularly in terms of volunteering outcomes. During this time the underlying data set suggests that Coaches concentrated on the attainment of employment, education and training outcomes.
- The County particularly flourished in the attainment of employment outcomes reflecting young person interests and the area where the Coaches had most experience and expertise.

5.4 Analysis and interpretation of Youth Justice Outcome performance

A challenging start-up period and shortened delivery window combined to make it very difficult to meet all outcome targets. The strand found itself supporting young people with some of the highest needs and (by their own Wellbeing Assessment ratings) at the 'lowest' starting point. Despite this, since the Youth Justice strand commenced service delivery in 2021, it has achieved significant impact on young people and provided an invaluable complementary service to wider youth justice activity. Its success in achieving employment outcomes in particular, was notable. Education and training has supported some young people, whilst volunteering has been problematic.

5.4.1 The staff and oversight

- Recruitment difficulties impacted the initial year of service delivery. Coaching capacity was at 50% at the start of the 2021/2022 Academic year commenced. Similar challenges were encountered recruiting the dedicated Service Manager in time for the start of the 2021/2022 academic year. In both cases this made it challenging to engage the necessary numbers of young people at a key point in the year.
- This has in turn meant that it has been challenging meet the intended volumes of outcomes and outputs over the remainder of the project.

5.4.2 Supply - the partnership landscape

- Staff had the specialisms and knowledge to understand limitations on employment for young people involved with the criminal justice system, and the very steps to work through these. This included addressing behaviours.
- For those young people interested in apprenticeship opportunities there was a requirement to have the necessary qualification to proceed further. This proved to be a barrier for some.

5.4.3 Demand - the young people and their families

- Young people appeared to have higher than expected qualifications, and so did not require entry qualifications.
- Many had negative experiences of the education system and had no appetite to engage in further learning.
- In many instances young people from the Youth Justice cohort presented as much more 'streetwise' cohort compared to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) group, potentially much closer to the 'labour market' and interested in developing their own source of income. For many securing employment and a salary was the most attractive option, particularly full time employment.
- By comparison it was often challenging to get young people to understand the value of volunteering, perceived as doing something for 'free'.
- In summary the evidence suggests that the Youth Justice strand of provision was a much needed and complementary element of service provision.

6 Value for Money and Sustainability

6.1 Did the programme delivery value for money?

Future Impact was funded using a Social Impact Bond (SIB). A social investor – SASC – provided upfront capital to be repaid with interest over the programme lifetime. Payments were subsequently made by the co-commissioners – the City, County and LCF. These were linked to outcomes (see Section 2 - different outcomes attracted different rates and were capped at different targets.

The outcomes of this approach were overwhelmingly positive:

- This initial investment enabled Futures to set up the programme before outcomes had been achieved.
- The broad payment-by-result approach de-risked delivery of an innovative programme for the co-commissioners.
- The strong performance by Futures enabled them to repay the principal to SASC with interest.

Futures delivered the programme within budget, with a programme balance of £566k. The contract generated value added for the commissioners as Futures' continued delivery after individual outcome caps had been reached, generating an equivalent of c£425k net activity² unclaimed for.

Contract budget v actual projections (rounded)

Contract investment	Budget £000s	Actual £000s	Variance	
			£000s	%
Income	3,289	3,117	-172	-5
<i>Salaries</i>	2,317	1,889	428	
<i>Operating costs</i>	424	97	327	
<i>Overheads</i>	125	499	-374	
Expenditure	2,866	2,484	382	13
Operating surplus	423	633	210	50
Interest payable	122	67	-55	
Contract balance	301	566	265	

Source:
Futures Chief Executive's Dept,
June 2023

The City generated the most revenue, almost on target. The County came within a small percentage margin. The shortfall in Youth Justice reflects the challenges in set up and recruitment meaning the outcomes had to be delivered over a shorter period than planned. These are covered in Section 5.

² Estimate based on difference between contract and potential claim based on projected outcomes held by Futures Finance Division, end March 2023

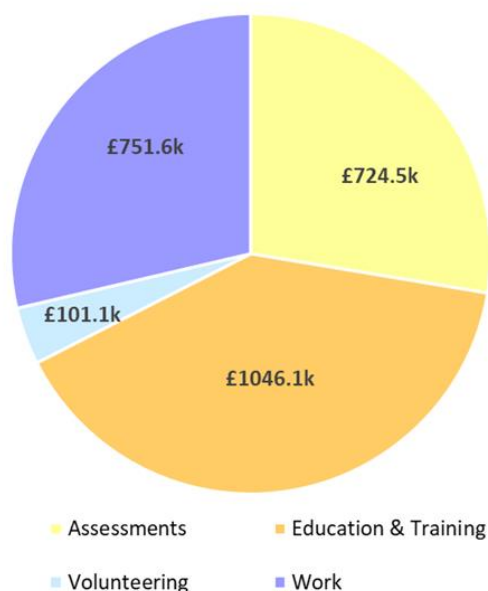
Contract budget v actual projections by strand (rounded)

Contract claims	Budget	Actual	Variance	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	%
City	1,274	1,272	-2	0
County	1,274	1,204	-70	-6
Youth Justice	741	642	-99	-13

Source: Futures Chief Executive's Dept, June 2023

Claimed income by outcome was made available as at end March 2023. At that point nearly 40% came from education & training outcomes, driven by both strong performance and relatively high payment rates per outcome. Similarly, work-related income (29%) reflected a high rates and good performance, and would have been higher had part time employment been eligible from the start. Volunteering claims were below 4%, underlining the difficulties in this area.

Future Impact claims by outcome type



Source: Futures Finance Division, extract May 2023

Note: Actual claims as at March 2023, excludes projections

The strong financial performance required Futures and the co-commissioners to overcome challenges presented by the SIB model approach:

- **Covid risk.** DCMS recognised Covid presented a risk to Futures and its other programme providers. All were presented with alternative payment options – this enabled Futures to maintain services rather than pausing and furloughing staff.
- **Capping by different outcome type.** When some City outcomes reached their ‘cap’, work towards these could have ceased. However, Futures took the admirable decision to continue delivery to the contract end without the prospect of further payments.

A challenge of the SIB model was the complexity of accounting for the programme, possibly reflecting different requirements to recognise income for financial reporting and grant management. Consequently multiple iterations were required to extract reporting data in a format required for the evaluation.

3.2 Partner benefits and potential for continuation funding

There is a clear case for continuing the programme, if the funding can be found.

One way to monetarise this is to look at the scale of achievement required for the programme to recoup its costs or ‘pay back’. **The programme will ‘pay back’ if 188 young people avoid only one year of unemployment** in adulthood.³ It is highly probable this will occur. 211 had or were projected to enter employment or training. Studies have found that by far the highest predictor of gaining employment is ‘ever having worked before’.⁴

This would represent a saving to the Exchequer. The evaluation found significant potential to relieve pressure on other partner services, or connect them to preventative services.

System-wide impact of the programme

<p>Local authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •25 care leavers secured EET •30 Looked After children secured EET •27 within the care system supported to live independently •65 prevented from being homeless •128 received poverty related support 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •271 at risk of exclusion or dropping out who did not •84 given careers advice instead of by college •305 referrals from colleges 	<p>Criminal justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •137 no longer involved in crime •43 on the cusp of crime and stopped •70 no longer at risk of exploitation •38 received domestic abuse / domestic violence advice
<p>Physical health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •51 supported to access health appointments •42 supported with substance misuse •112 received sexual health advice •270 received healthy eating / exercise advice 	<p>Mental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •309 received mental health advice •112 avoided physical health problems causing mental health deterioration •103 parents experienced improved mental health 	<p>Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •106 family relationship breakdowns prevented •29 LGBTQ+ related support / referrals made •273 were supported to access local facilities

Source: Future’s Coaches, April 2023

Data was not available for a comprehensive cost benefit analysis, and developing robust assumptions for a programme of this scale would be problematic. However, the above has been used to give an indicative picture.

³ Contract spend including interest repayments divided by fiscal benefit from a workless claimant entering work in adulthood (GMCA Cost Database ref E&E1.0 JSA). Benefits are discounted to assume they occur in 2 years and inflation exceeds welfare and salary changes by 3% pa.

⁴ University of Nottingham & ConnectMore Solutions (2020). Tackling Youth Unemployment. The need to employ a new approach? An evaluation of the Young & Successful project. Talent Match / Groundwork GN.

- **65 incidents of homelessness prevention could equate to a £124,000 savings** for temporary accommodation and subsequent assessment⁵
- **180 criminal acts avoided** (137 occurring and 43 likely) **could equate to savings of between £71,000 and £627,000**, depending on severity and whether arrest leads to a court proceeding⁶
- **309 short term mental health interventions avoided could equate to between £24,000 with CAMHS and £80,000 with adult services**⁷

Many partners acknowledged the benefit of the programme to their organisation. The stakeholders that we spoke to recognised the valuable nature of the project and voiced concerns about the difficulties that young people would face in the absence of targeted support. These difficulties included premature disengagement from programmes and a sense that young people would get lost in the system without the support of their Coach:

“The Futures Coaches are good at linking up with college to let us know who is coming through. They have good understanding of learners in the area and their specific needs. There would be danger young people falling beneath the cracks if Coaches were not involved. They act as glue to help engage young people and help ensure they don’t get lost in the system.” An Education & Training Provider

“The Futures Coach has been great at letting participants know about provision in the local area. He has worked tirelessly to create a level playing field for disadvantaged learners – this is vital for their self-esteem, confidence and motivation. The Coach’s work is pitched absolutely perfectly in my view. The support there but is not over the top or off putting. This approach has meant that our joint work has been like ‘marriage made in heaven’ in the way support is offered to learners to help them benefit from available opportunities.” An Education & Training Provider

Where young people are unable to meaningfully sustain their involvement in progression opportunities there are inherent risks that they will experience a decline in their mental wellbeing and aspirations. The most likely outcome of this decline is a long-term NEET status and social exclusion with all associated costs for the welfare state and health service.

Together this illustrates the scope for savings. The challenge going forward will be finding ‘cashable’ savings from within over-subscribed services, and funding upfront cost to prevent a higher cost intervention further down the line. This underlines the role social investment or part grant-funding can play in making preventative programmes viable.

At the time of writing a sub-set of the Steering Group were developing a business case, and the City and County co-commissioners were exploring how to extend the programme. If funding is not forthcoming, there may be scope to share good practice to embed in other services, for example the new Wellbeing Mentor roles to support mental health within Notts College.

⁵ 8 weeks temporary accommodation (HO4.0) and homelessness prevention support (HO5.0) at current prices. GMCA Cost Database.

⁶ From adult arrest with no further proceedings (CR7.1) to court proceedings for theft (CR6.4) at current prices. GMCA Cost Database.

⁷ 3 months average NHS cost of NHS mental health support for children & adolescents (HE9.0) to 3 months NHS costs of supporting depression and / or anxiety disorders (HE8.0.1) at current prices. GMCA Cost Database.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Impact

The programme supported 701 young people, significantly over the 500 contract target. The majority engaged with the programme for at least a year, and many for far longer, demonstrating the complexity of challenges young people faced and the trust in their Coach. For the SEND group it is apparent that in many cases autism, anxiety and behavioural and emotional issues have often hampered their progression through the education system. This has often exerted a corrosive effect on confidence, self-esteem and aspirations of young people. The work of the Coaches has often been crucial to begin the process of addressing these deficits and empowering young people to move forward. In addition to special educational needs, the programme supported young people who were care experience, carers, parents and wider family members.

Helping young people experience and enter work was the stand out strength of the programme, reflecting Futures' expertise and setting it apart from other mentoring programmes. All employability targets were met or on track to be delivered. This was remarkable, given career readiness was the area young people had least confidence in on joining the programme, and felt they improved most.

Learning outcomes were also strong, notably entry into education and training. The programme helped fewer than expected into entry level qualifications, and more than expected at a higher level, demonstrating the barriers faced by young people were often social and emotional, not academic.

Volunteering was a relatively new 'offer' which built confidence and skills, but for a relatively small number. This reflected young people's preference for paid work, Coaches' less well-developed knowledge of opportunities and so difficulty setting realistic goals.

The young people themselves recognised their progress, scoring themselves 23% higher on their final self-assessment. They reported growth in confidence and in every other category bar one (safety, which did not apply to all). Some young people, mid-programme, were unsure of their next steps, but the breadth of programme nurtured a range of behaviours, life skills and problem-solving capabilities to equip them to find their way.

The programme also contributed to sustainable outcomes by helping to stabilise young people's housing and financial situation, and for some improving family dynamics and their support. Some were helped to access social activities, although this was, perhaps less of a focus and an area where options were unknown or unavailable.]

As a result wider benefits have been felt by partners 'throughout the system', notably in criminal justice, health and other teams within local authorities. Young people have been supported to remain in education and benefits from pastoral and careers support over and above what some colleges have been able to provide.

Whilst the programme appears, overall, to have achieved its goals, some young people disengaged after their initial assessment. The absence of exit data means we do not fully understand why.

7.2 The model

The programme worked because a number of complementary factors enabled Coaches to engage young people, by getting to know them and building trust, support them with careers and wider advice, and help build skills to minimise the likelihood of long-term NEET. The key ingredients were:

- Coaches that were ‘on the side’ of young people, combining positivity and commitment with their employability knowledge
- A delivery model that enabled consistent, regular contact and breaking down of plans into bite size steps so young people experienced progress and overcame setbacks and ‘scarring’
- Coach knowledge of local opportunities, and the ability to work in partnership and advocate for a young person to access and sustain these
- The outcomes-focused contract that afforded Coaches flexibility to tailor support and be creative over a long period of time
- Strong project oversight brought together Futures and the co-commissioners to address issues early, and flex as they learned more about the client group or faced unexpected challenges (including Covid)
- A financial model that adequately resourced the work and de-risked set up of an innovative programme, ultimately repaid the social investor and delivered value added for the City, County and LCF co-commissioners.

“[My Coach] is friendly towards me, and we can have a laugh. It makes it less formal and less stress-inducing.” Young person

Finding opportunities for young people was perhaps the biggest challenges for the programme. Coaches from all teams reported a need for jobs with appropriate reasonable adjustments and, for some, support brokering these.

7.3 The City, County and Youth Justice

The programme’s three strands all enjoyed successes, and had different experiences. This has generated valuable insight into local need and shown Futures’ ability to adapt.

The City young people joined with relatively low self-assessment scores, but the strand consistently exceeded its employment targets, and met or was projected to meet all education targets. Factors behind this success included a team solely running the Future Impact programme (giving them flexibility and capacity throughout the year), relatively stable management and a concentration of local employment opportunities.

The County young people assessed themselves highest on their first assessment, and felt they had made the most progress of the 3 cohorts. They were less likely to need entry level qualifications, but targets to support them into higher level education and nearly all employment outcomes were surpassed. Success factors included good relationships with colleges and a knowledge of local areas. Challenges included the capacity problems caused by the teams’ additional NEET responsibilities and a high level of management turnover.

Despite a delayed programme, and young people joining with the lowest self-assessment scores, the **Youth Justice** programme team made up for lost time and was on track to engage the numbers planned. Entry into employment targets were exceeded. There was more success supporting young

people into full time than part time employment, and difficulty meeting education, training and volunteering outcomes. This was attributed to negative experiences of school and a desire to earn a salary, and Coaches' ability to support those in the criminal justice system.

The programme has been incredibly successful. Young people left, on average, with a stronger sense of their own abilities and far more than expected experienced their first taste of work. The combination of careers development and personal development gives a strong indication that young people will be able to sustain positive outcomes going forward.

8 Recommendations

8.1 Continuation

It is recommended that the programme be continued. At the time of writing Futures, the City and County commissioners were developing proposals and seeking partners.

To support this aim it is recommended that:

- Partners in criminal justice and health are considered.
- Partners consider social investment or part grant funded to part-mitigate the challenges partners face moving investment from high end to preventative activity.

And if continuation is feasible:

- The delivery team is solely focused on its delivery, and does not have twin responsibilities for delivery of other NEET contracts.
- The delivery team is supported by an intentional strategy of opportunity development. This could be achieved via a specialist business development role or better connections to teams able to generate a pipeline of employment and volunteering opportunities, and advice on reasonable adjustment.

If continuation is not feasible:

- Good practice could be shared with partners who may be able to embed some of the practices and competencies within their core teams.

8.2 Future design

If continuation is successful, the following programme design changes may help strengthen impact. These are relatively minor in the context of a strong programme. A number might usefully apply to other NEET programmes:

8.2.1 Supply of opportunities

- The sustainment of necessary Service Level Agreements (SLA's) agreements with local secondary schools to avoid the requirement for Coaches to contact schools individually to assess past SEN support is crucial.
- Develop closer working relationships with local schools to help Coaches understand the context of each young person's reasonable adjustment history and SEND diagnosis from the outset of support. This could enable a one-page, strengths-based profile to share with other partners, subject to consent.
- Develop closer partnership working with local colleges, prioritising roles designed to support student wellbeing and pastoral care.
- Promote the development of employment and training opportunities to support SEND and Youth Justice cohorts in line with the 'Corporate Social Responsibility' agenda.
- Develop contacts with local organisations able to offer young people leisure activities, to overcome loneliness, isolation and strengthen their social support networks.

- Closer partnership working links with local initiatives or employers who are willing and able to provide employment progression pathways to young people with SEND.

8.2.3 Oversight for monitoring and programme development

- Improve understanding of programme effectiveness by introducing a disengagement flag, with reason and date.
- Make the Wellbeing Assessment more user-friendly and a better aid to Coach-young person discussions by shortening it and reviewing the question relevance.
- Use the insight from this programme to recalibrate education targets, bespoke to different cohorts and geographies.
- Use the insight from this programme to set realistic volunteering targets, including sustainment at 13 and 26 weeks. If hours volunteered is adopted as a metric, consider the practicalities of data collection.
- Formal collation of likely issues avoided in adulthood to support the development of future business cases.
- The programme would benefit from access to an independent trended database to help assess its impact on the prevalence of young people classified as NEET from either SEND or YJ cohorts. Department for Education (DfE) NEET scorecard data could be one source that has the potential to be utilised for this purpose, although the current database is not maintained in a trended format. Ideally, a trended database is required to help interpret impact over a five-year period.

8.2.3 Maximising Coach Impact

- Celebrate the achievements of young people, outside of the self-assessment process, for example with award certificates or celebration events.
- Ensure hardship/personal budgets can be used to address transport barriers to progression and fund refreshments where necessary to underpin the development of the Coach-young person relationship. The existing use of the budget for uniforms and equipment was deemed to be helpful and necessary.
- Reintroduce cross-team meetings to share best practice.
- Development of internal processes to consistently identify potential good practice case studies, to aid learning and promote the programme, as opposed to reactive identification, (examples are included in Appendices C and D).
- Develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pathways to ensure all Coaches are able to promote volunteering to foster confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing.

Appendix A Methodology

Methodology

The research questions were agreed with a small group of staff independent to the programme, who continued to provide oversight and practical support to for the evaluation. These formed the framework for the analysis, which was based on:

Desk based research. A review of reports including, but not limited to the original proposal, Steering Group papers, details of the SIB mechanism and existing case studies.

Qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone with 7 young people and 6 parents, and online with 11 Steering Group Members (past and present) and 5 representatives of partner organisations. Two focus groups were held with Coaches.

Data analysis. Data extracts were provided from the 3 programme management information sources.

- The Wellbeing Assessment is a self-assessment young people complete to track and discuss their development across a range of behaviours, aptitudes and competencies.
- The Outcomes Database which records the interactions and education, employment and volunteering achievements which triggered payments.
- The Finance System which holds contact claims, receipts and expenditure (supplemented by financial reporting data provided by the Chief Executive's Department).

Wherever possible data was for programme start date to end March 2023, but in some cases projections to programme end were available.

Emergent findings were tested with the programme management team, the Steering Group and (for the data extracts) the strand managers.

Appendix B Contributors

The evaluators would like to thank the following individuals who were consulted as part of the evaluation process.

Stakeholders and partner organisations

Darren Cashin, Employability & Volunteer Manager at the Toy Library

Margaret Lane, Head of Additional Learning Support at Nottingham College

Neil Whittemore, Tutor at Stapleford Young Peoples Centre (SYPC)

Nicola Wharam, Managing Director at 3iii (training provider)

Sonya Kumar, Senior Youth engagement manager, Volunteer It Yourself (VIY)

Young people and parents

7 young people and 6 parents were also consulted as part of the evaluation process.

Future Impact Coaches

Adrian Richter, Youth Justice Team, Futures

Deana Goode, City Team, Futures

Debs Pearson, County Team, Futures

Marie Hammond, City Team, Futures

Naomi Kemp, County Team, Futures

Future Impact/Life Chances Fund steering group members

Andrew Pearson, Funding Officer, the National Lottery Community Fund

Denis McCarthy Service Manager, Family Service, Nottinghamshire County Council

Esther Murray, Contract Manager (City), Futures Group

Janine Walker, Head of SEND and Vulnerable Pupils, Nottingham City Council

Joanna Key, Business Manager (City), Futures Group

Junior Wright, Senior Practitioner Education, Training & Employment Coordinator, Youth Justice Services, Nottinghamshire County Council

Louisa Downing, Contract Manager (County), Futures Group

Louise Benson, Service Manager, Integrated Children's Disability Service, Education, Learning and Inclusion, Nottinghamshire County Council

Matt Alvey, Outgoing Community Partnership and Programme Development Manager, Nottingham City Council

Michelle Brown, Business Manager (County), Futures Group

Paul Crookendale, Community Partnership and Programme Development Manager, Nottingham City Council

We are especially grateful to Jo Key and Esther Murray for going 'above and beyond' to co-ordinate information requests and clarifications.

We would also like to thank Mark Pearson (Head of Quality) for programme oversight and support, Imran Kassam (Head of Finance), for providing financial data and Duncan Brown for providing customised data extracts.

Appendix C Case Study - Dan's Story

Dan* first became aware of the Future Impact (FI) programme April 2022. At this time, he was under Police investigation for an offence and was awaiting a court appearance.

His Coach first visited Dan and his Mum at their home in Nottingham. At first Dan was withdrawn and struggled to make eye contact. His Coach worked hard to engage Dan in conversation and discovered that had previously worked in a clothing company warehouse.

Dan and his Mum were interested in how Dan could be supported into employment, but were very worried about his pending court appearance. Dan's Coach understood the situation and helped him consider how to find work whilst also thinking through how his existing behaviours might affect his employability. At this time Dan was keen to get back in warehousing work, ideally for a large corporation.

"I was just glad Dan got someone other than myself to help. I'm a single parent, Dan has nothing to do with his Dad. I thought the male input would be more helpful for him. I think I was driving him mad as his Mum! ... Someone regularly checking in on him has been helpful." Dan's Mum

Early interactions involved taking Dan to careers fairs, working on his CV and helping him prepare for interviews. With time his Coach felt it was important to tentatively explore with the Dan the differences between 'Cash in Hand work' and official employment, prompting Dan to consider the additional stability and security that a job with a contract offered for the first time.

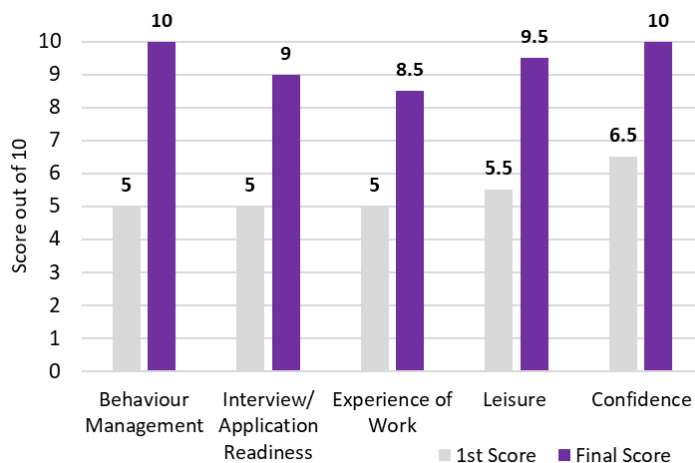
As the relationship developed, the Coach was also able to ask Dan about his desire to smoke weed. Through a series of interactive questions Dan was supported to understand how this habit might affect his long term life chances. In his own words this approach helped to Dan *"see a different way to see things"*. As a result his smoking habits have changed and he has stopped smoking weed.

In September 2022 his Coach asked if he would be interested in a two week work trial organised by the Princes Trust. As fate would have it this opportunity would be based in a warehouse associated with a large well known organisation (which was Dan's vision to move forward!). After a successful work trial Dan was offered a seasonal contract in the run up to Christmas. Dan flourished, so much so that he was even encouraged to take on some supervisory duties which further boosted his confidence.

Throughout this time the pending court case had been playing on Dan's mind and with some trepidation he attended the hearing in late 2022. Dan wrote to the Judge to explain his remorse and desire to hold down a responsible job, and acknowledged the pressure that the situation had exerted on his Mum. Given the sensitive nature of the court proceedings both Dan and his Mum were appreciative of the moral support from Dan's Coach who sat through the case with them. Dan was issued with a Community Order to carry out a prescribed number of hours of Community Service, enabling him to undertake his order without leaving his job.

As his warehousing contract came to an end in January 2023 Dan has been supported by his Coach to consider employment opportunities in other sectors. This ultimately led to Dan independently finding work as a shop assistant for a vaping retailer. This is providing him with a different type of challenge and opportunity to warehousing and he is enjoying the regular income.

How Dan assessed his progress over the programme



“Working with my Coach it’s nice to get a second view on things. He understands how it is. He doesn’t come and judge you. It was not an issue that I had an arrest on my record when we started working together. He has shown me I’m better off staying out trouble and getting a legal job... He helped me to see a different way to see things. This has made me change my ways... He is someone I trust and respect.” Dan

Source: Wellbeing Assessment, Futures 2023

“It’s obvious a mutual trust and respect has been established between them both... As with all activities he’s looked at his Coach has told him that if this doesn’t work out we will look at other things instead. This has been reassuring for Dan.... I can’t sing the Coaches praises enough!” Dan’s Mum

“Both Dan and his Mum were open to help and receptive to the support on offer. They were constantly asking questions about the way forward to help Dan find work. This meant that all three of us established a good team effort to help him move forward... The ultimate outcome of sessions with Dan means that he can go for interview now by himself and talk about his own experience of work. He’s worked hard to put himself back on a viable life path.” Dan’s Coach

Investment and potential costs avoided

Commissioner investment in Dan’s support	£8,100	
Savings if the following events were avoided	>£11,000?	
Court event for drug offences	£3,292	Criminal Justice Service
Benefit support for a NEET 18-24 year old	£4,104	DWP
Taxation lost for a NEET 18-24 year old	£1,325	HMRC
Statutory homelessness application	£3,189	Local Authority & Registered Provider

Sources: Outcome Payments, Futures; GMCA Unit Cost Database 2023 (cost refs CR5.7, E&E9.0.1+2, HO3.0)

Note *savings are indicative only* because:

Investment excludes contributions of supporting agencies

Savings are at current prices – the saving decreases the longer they take to be realise due to inflation

Potential costs avoided are based on average national costs of possible next events (i.e. they exclude longer term, higher cost interventions)

*this case study has been anonymised to protect participant confidentiality.

Appendix D Case Study – Kayleigh’s Story

Kayleigh* was referred onto the Future Impact (FI) programme over the summer of 2022. At this point she was estranged from her family and struggling with anxiety. At school Kayleigh had received a dyslexia diagnosis and although support had been extended, she had often struggled to engage in a classroom setting.

Since leaving school it became apparent that Kayleigh had been facing multiple life challenges which meant that education, employment or training (EET) opportunities were low down on her list of priorities. Following a recent family breakdown, Kayleigh moved in with her Gran and was sleeping on a sofa.

To help Kayleigh move forward, and navigate the myriad of challenges that she was facing, a multi-agency approach was necessary. Her Coach worked with other agencies on a joint action plan to stabilise her housing situation and financial circumstances.

From the outset, Kayleigh’s Coach worked hard to build a friendly and professional rapport with her, enabling her to encourage Kayleigh to consider appropriate EET opportunities. This early dialogue involved discussions about the emotional and financial benefits of engaging with the support on offer. This message was well received and it was agreed that she would attend an open day at a local college to explore retaking her Maths and English GCSE’s alongside a range of personal and social care sector awards.

In September 2022 Kayleigh began attending her local college, but it became apparent that anxiety would prevent her use of public transport. Her Coach provided ‘travel training’ on the bus. This proved to be a good investment of time as Kayleigh developed the necessary confidence and understanding to use public transport, enabling her to attend college three days a week.

“Throughout her journey she has been open to suggestions and ideas and this has helped her build a sense of confidence and achievement.” Kayleigh’s Coach

Wider partnership work also took place to find suitable long-term accommodation for Kayleigh. To help facilitate this process her Coach was in regular dialogue with other agencies and her College to ensure this on-going challenge did not derail her progress.

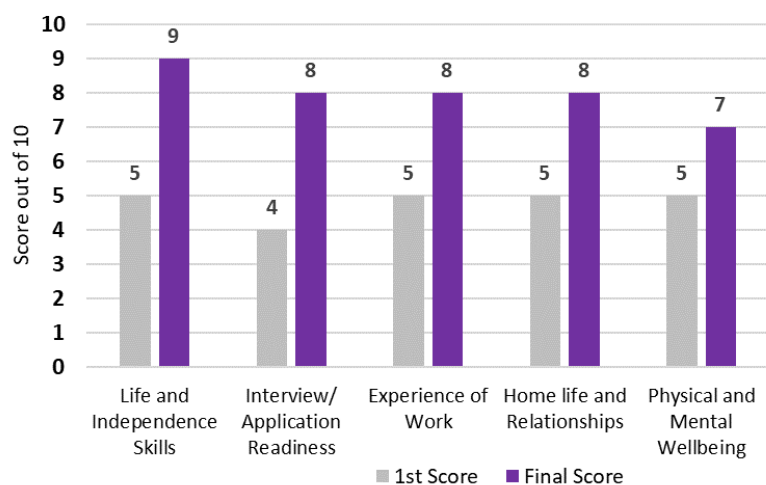
As Kayleigh benefitted from the routine and structure from her studies she could be supported to explore the idea of finding part-time employment. After a short period of time Kayleigh found part time work in a local café via a family friend. This proved to be another key stepping stone on Kayleigh’s journey to build her independence and confidence. To help make this arrangement work with her College commitments her Coach maintained a regular dialogue with her Tutor.

Eventually, Kayleigh’s housing situation also improved after an offer of a tenancy with a local housing association. This has provided Kayleigh with an increased sense of independence. Looking towards the future Kayleigh is now considering whether she would prefer to pursue a career in catering or the beauty industry.

“My Coach has helped me to become more independent and has helped me getting my own house. I’m still learning about budgeting and paying the bills. My Coach has definitely been different [to other professionals] I feel like I can talk to her about anything and she is easy to see and contact.”

Kayleigh

How Kayleigh assessed her progress over the programme



"I feel far more confident in myself. I feel like I am able to talk to an employer. I feel like I have plans to move forward with my life. I have choices to consider. My Coach has really helped me. This has helped me get my foundations right to build up my life!" Kayleigh

Source: Wellbeing Assessment, Futures 2023

"Without Coaching support I'm concerned that Kayleigh would have been sofa surfing for a long time and perhaps just waiting to register for benefits at 18 years of age. Knowing her circumstances I think there is also a real concern that she could have been exposed to some form of financial exploitation. Partnership working has been a key factor underpinning Kayleigh's progression and helping to address some of the underlying causes of her anxieties. This approach has offered her stability, knowing that there is someone to talk if she's struggling with something..." Kayleigh's Coach

Investment and potential short term costs avoided

Commissioner investment in Kayleigh's support	£11,900	
Savings if the following events were avoided	c£12,000?	
Benefit support for a NEET 18-24 year old	£4,104	DWP
Taxation lost for a NEET 18-24 year old	£1,325	HMRC
Health-related aspects of unemployment	£1,329	NHS
Statutory homelessness application	£3,189	Local Authority & Housing Provider
Average cost of an incident of crime	£1,132	Criminal Justice
Support for anxiety & / or depression	£1,125	NHS & Local Authority

Sources: Outcome Payments, Futures; GMCA Unit Cost Database 2023 (cost refs E&E9.0.1+2, E&E2.0.3, HO3.0, CR8.0, HE8.0)

Note *savings are indicative only* because:

Investment excludes contributions of supporting agencies

Savings are at current prices – the saving decreases the longer they take to be realised due to inflation

Potential costs avoided are based on average national costs of possible next events (i.e. they exclude longer term, higher cost interventions)

*this case study has been anonymised to protect participant confidentiality