

Evaluation of VOW and Turn Your Life Around – CashBack Phase 5 (Year 1, 2021-22)

A Report for Police Scotland



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

August 2022



1. Introduction

This section introduces the CashBack for Communities programme, the CashBack VOW and TYLA programmes and provides an overview of the research.

Police Scotland

Police Scotland, the second largest police force in the UK, was established in 2013 and is responsible for policing across the whole of Scotland. It employs around 23,000 officers and staff.

Police Scotland’s purpose is to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland.

Police Scotland currently operates the VOW Project and Turn Your life Around (TYLA) programmes. These programmes will be funded by CashBack for Communities Phase 5 funding for two years (2021/22 and 2022/23).

Social Value Lab

Social Value Lab is the national hub for social impact research, strategy, and evaluation. Our mission is to produce the evidence and ideas that support stronger, more effective projects, programmes and communities in Scotland.

Social Value Lab has been the evaluation partner for three programmes delivered under CashBack for Communities Phase 4 and is evaluation partner for five Phase 5 programmes.

CashBack for Communities

CashBack for Communities, established in 2008, is a Scottish Government initiative that takes money seized from criminals under the proceeds of crime legislation and invests them in programmes and services for young people.

The programme is currently in Phase 5 and has committed £110 million to community initiatives since 2008. For Phase 5 £19million has been distributed through 24 organisations to improve the quality of life of young people across Scotland.

In Phase 5 there are six mandatory outcomes that projects must support delivery of:

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- Outcome 1: Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk-taking behaviour

-
- Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills
-
- Outcome 3: Young people’s health and wellbeing improves
-
- Outcome 4: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (Positive Destinations)
-
- Outcome 5: Young people contribute positively to society
-
- Outcome 6: Young people are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system
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VOW and TYLA

VOW

The VOW Project was set up in 2013 with the aim of reducing offending and harm to people in Edinburgh. This is done by building positive relationships with those caught up in the offending cycle, building skills, resilience and hope that they can improve their life.

VOW is run by a team of police officers and peer mentors, seconded from Aid & Abet, with lived experience of criminal behaviour.

VOW works with young people for up to 18 months, depending on individual need, and helps them to make positive life choices and reduce offending behaviour. This is done through working in partnership with agencies across statutory, voluntary and private sectors, to help young people negotiate pathways out of offending and achieve positive outcomes.

TYLA

TYLA was set up in 2016, informed by research on mental health, trauma and resilience.

The TYLA programme recruits and trains volunteers with adverse childhood experiences to share their stories with school pupils, families and staff.

Following an initial visit, volunteers revisit schools a number of times to do additional work with pupils.

The programme aims to increase awareness of childhood trauma, how it impacts on learning, what helped volunteers build hope and resilience and to convey the key message that it is never too late to turn your life around.

Research methodology

This report is intended to track progress in Year 1 of the programme. This is for information purposes only and has been produced in addition to the minimum reporting requirements for CashBack Phase 5.

An end of programme report (produced in June 2023) will fulfil the CashBack reporting requirements and will be more extensive in nature – incorporating not only survey data, but also qualitative data from young people and consultations with key stakeholders.

Consultation for this report took the form of:

- A self-evaluation survey completed by **19 VOW participants**
- A survey for ‘significant others’ of VOW participants (e.g. parents/carers/support workers) – **10 respondents**
- A self-evaluation survey completed by **115 school pupils** who have taken part in TYLA
- A survey for school staff whose pupils had taken part in TYLA – **10 respondents**

2. Impact Summary

	VOW		TYLA	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Outcome 1: Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour				
Young people report their confidence increasing	67%	100%	50%	96%
Young people feel able to do new things	67%	100%		
Young people feel more resilient	40%	100%	50%	93%
Other stakeholders report perceived increases of confidence and resilience	60%	100%	50%	100%
Young people report positive, supportive networks	55%	100%	50%	98%
Young people report positive changes in their behaviour	60%	100%	50%	96%
Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in the behaviour of participants	60%	100%	50%	100%

Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills				
Young people gain accreditation for learning and skills development	10%	Data collected by Police Scotland		
Young people report their skills are increasing	30%	100%		
Other stakeholders report young people’s skills are increasing	25%	100%	50%	100%

Outcome 3: Young people’s health and well-being improves				
Young people report increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	67%	100%		
Other stakeholders report perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%	100%		

	VOW		TYLA	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Outcome 4: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)				
Young people progress to a positive destination	25%	94%		

Outcome 5: Young people contribute positively to their communities				
Number of participants going on to volunteer, coach, mentor, support or take a leadership role in community organisations	7%	Data collected by Police Scotland		
Number of hours of volunteering contributed by participants	208	Data collected by Police Scotland		
Young people feel their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	40%	89%		
Other stakeholders perceive that young people’s contribution, links and social interaction are improving	40%	90%		
Participants’ perception of their neighbourhood improves	25%	68%		
Participants have a heightened sense of belonging to a community	40%	68%		
Participants have increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	33%	58%		

Outcome 6: Young people are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system				
Reported antisocial behaviour and/or criminal behaviour may reduce in the area concerned	67%	100%		
Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	67%	100%		
Young people feel less inclined to participate in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour	50%	Data gathered in final year		

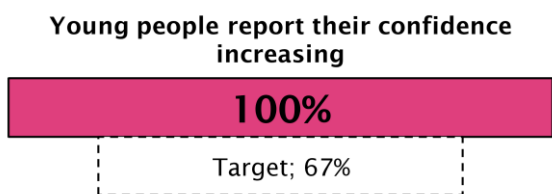
3. VOW Programme Impact

This section describes the impact of the VOW programme so far. The data in this section is taken from self-evaluation questionnaires completed by participants and other stakeholders.

Outcome 1: Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour

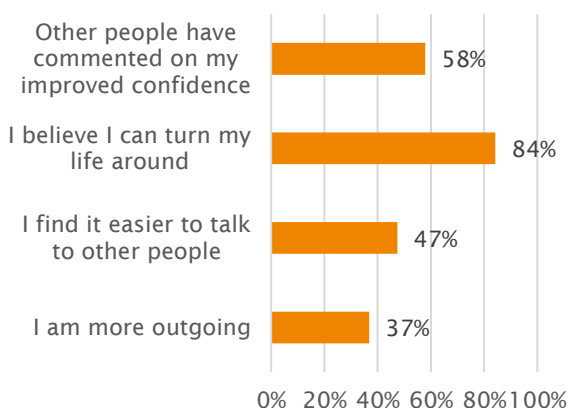
Young People

All young people said that, as a result of taking part in the programme, their confidence had increased – well exceeding the 67% target.



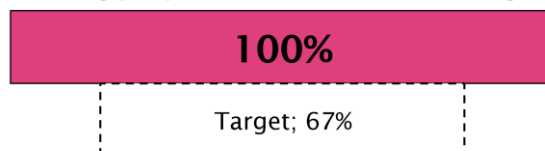
To assess the ways in which young people had become more confident they were also asked to agree or disagree with a range of statements. As Fig 3.1 demonstrates, improvements to confidence were experienced by young people in a variety of ways.

Fig. 3.1: Confidence - % of young people responding positively



All young people indicated that they now feel more able to do new things.

Young people feel able to do new things



The programme has had a significant impact on the resilience of those taking part. All survey respondents agreed with at least one of the given statements relating to improved resilience (see Fig.3.2)

Young people feel more resilient

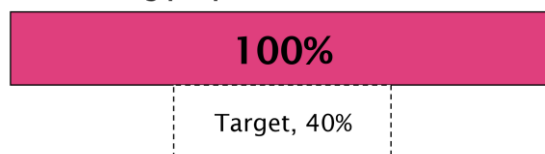
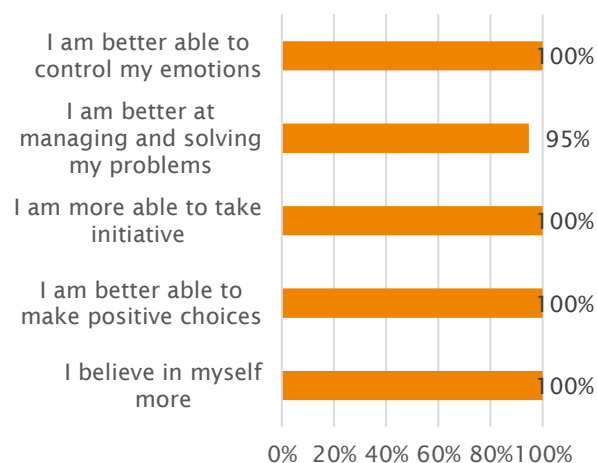
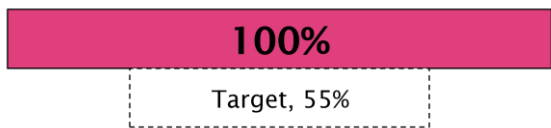


Fig 3.2: Resilience - % of young people responding positively



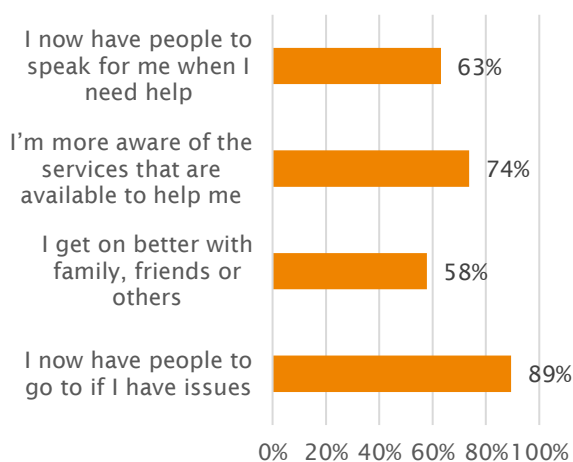
All young people indicated that their support networks had been enhanced in some way through taking part in the programme.

Young people report positive supportive networks



As Fig. 3.3 demonstrates, most young people said that, as well as adding new people to their support networks, taking part in VOW had also helped to improve relationships with those already close to them.

Fig 3.3: Support networks - % of young people responding positively



"The VOW reach out to me and offer me help but I know it's not a one way street and I can call them when I need the support too."

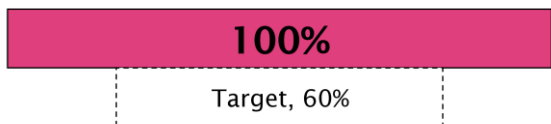
Young Person

"He is definitely happier now and because he has someone (VOW) other than me to speak to. He is happier talking to me about normal stuff and not just problems."

Parent

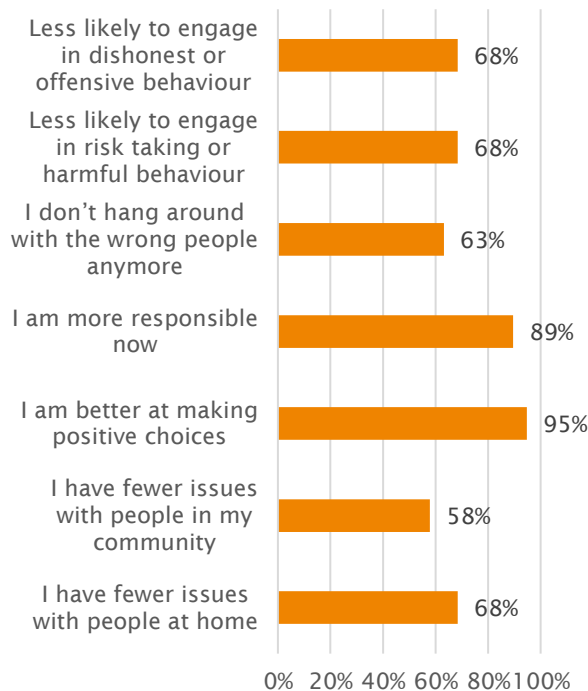
All young people said that their behaviour had been positively influenced by participating in the programme.

Young people report positive changes in their behaviour



The ways in which young people reported positive changes to their behaviour are shown in Fig. 3.4.

Fig. 3.4: Behaviour - % of young people responding positively



"I feel a lot better and look at my options before acting out."

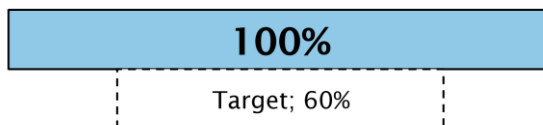
"I think I have the ability to say no to anything that will put myself at risk or anything that will get me into trouble as before I would have went along with whatever was happening."

Young people

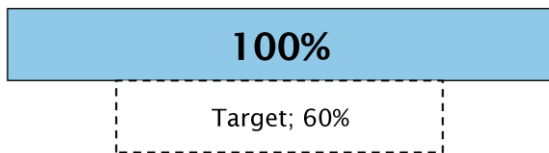
Other stakeholders

All other stakeholders (e.g. parents/carers/support workers) reported improvements in the confidence, resilience and behaviour of young people as a result of taking part in the programme.

Other stakeholders report perceived increases of confidence and resilience among young people



Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in the behaviour of young people



He wants to stay away from his old pals that are still up to no good. He definitely makes better choices. He's thinking about his daughter and being a good dad to her too."

"He seems to understand there are consequences now."

Parents

Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills

Young People

All young people have been able to add new skills or develop existing skills as a result of taking part in the programme.

Young people report their skills are increasing

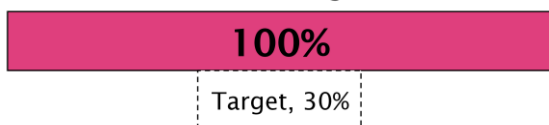
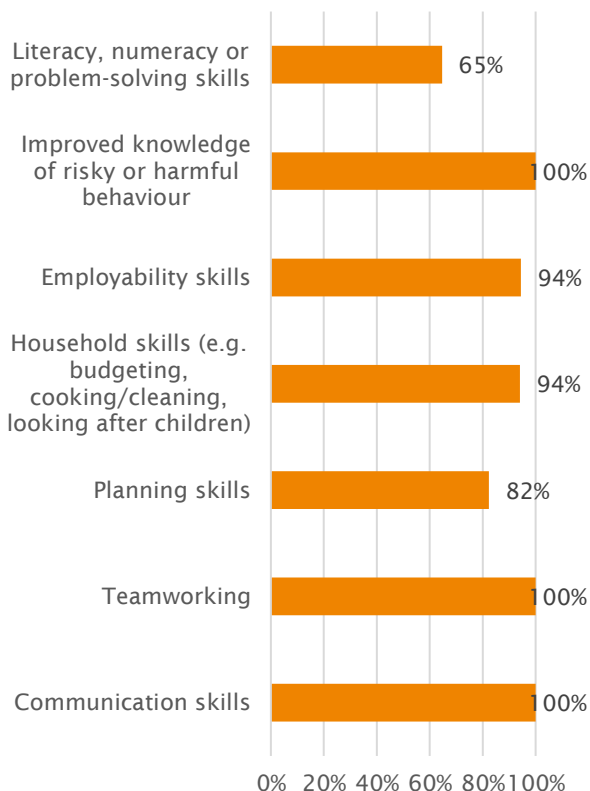


Fig. 3.5: Skills - % of young people responding positively



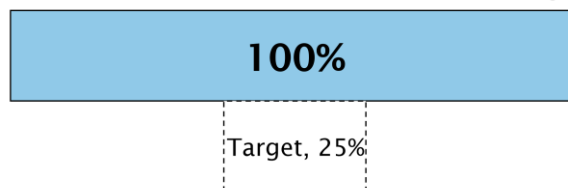
"I'm a lot more relaxed when communicating now. I've also started to make plans by writing out what I want to do like holidays and keep record of things I need to do around the house."

Young person

Other stakeholders

All other stakeholders reported an improvement in the skills of young people as a result of the programme.

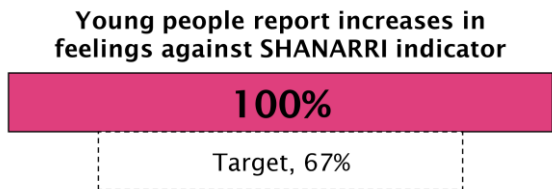
Other stakeholders report skills increasing



Outcome 3: Young people’s health and well-being improves

Young people

All young people reported feeling more positively against at least one of the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included).



The breakdown of responses to this question is shown in Figs. 3.6 and 3.7.

Fig. 3.6: Wellbeing - % of young people responding positively

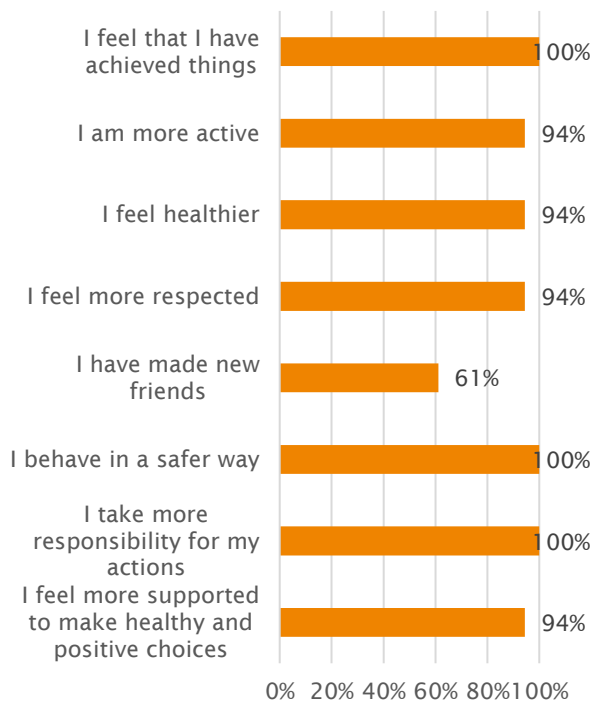
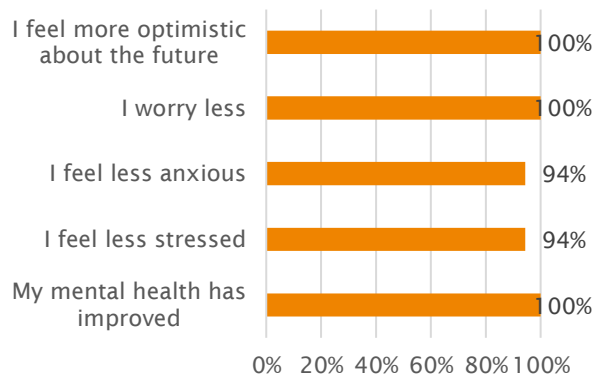


Fig. 3.7: Mental health - % of young people responding positively



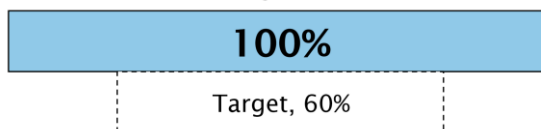
“I’m definitely more responsible and make better choices than I did before I worked with VOW.”

Young Person

Other Stakeholders

All other stakeholders reported improvements in the wellbeing of young people owing to their participation in VOW.

Other stakeholders report perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people



“VOW have helped him so much; he feels listened to by VOW and he feels you understand him better.”

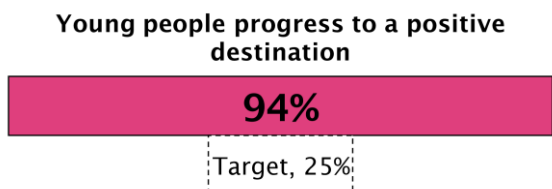
“He still suffers from anxiety and gets down, but he talks about it more. He hasn’t self-harmed for a while now so that’s a really big thing.”

Parents

Outcome 4: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability and employment options (positive destinations)

Young People

Most young people (94%) reported progress towards a positive destination.



To measure this indicator, young people were asked to agree or disagree with a range of statements about the programme’s influence on their progress or intention to progress towards positive destinations (see Fig. 3.8).

Fig. 3.8: Positive destinations - % of young people responding positively



“VOW have helped him get a job. He’s like a different laddie. He’s off the drugs and really enjoying the job. He even does some overtime!”

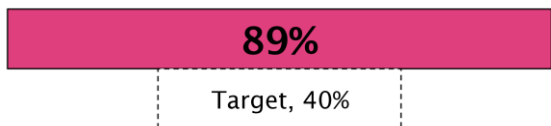
Parent

Outcome 5: Young people contribute positively to their communities

Young People

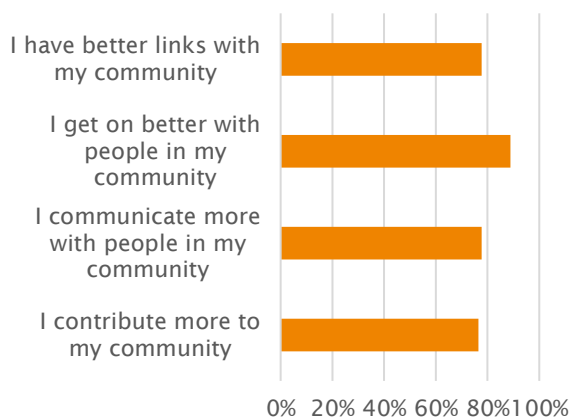
Most young people (89%) reported that their contribution, links and social interaction with community had improved through taking part in VOW.

Young people feel their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving



The breakdown for this indicator is shown in Fig. 3.9.

Fig. 3.9: Community contribution, links and social interaction - % of young people responding positively



More than two-thirds of young people (68%) said that taking part in the programme had positively changed their perception of their own neighbourhood – well exceeding the target of 25%.

Participants' perception of neighbourhood improves

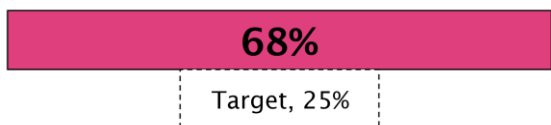
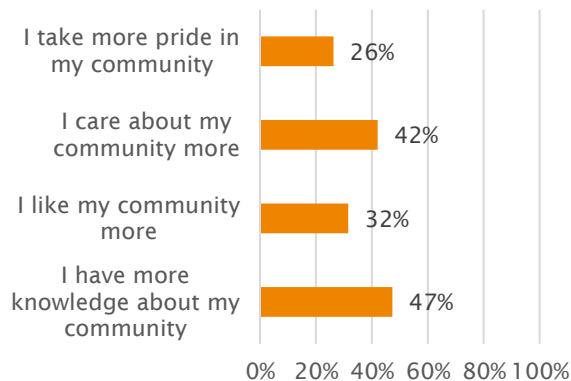


Fig. 3.10 shows the breakdown of responses for this indicator.

Fig 3.10: Perception of community - % of young people responding positively



Young people’s sense of belonging to a community was also positively impacted by the programme, with around two-thirds (68%) of young people indicating that they feel closer to their community.

Participants have a heightened sense of belonging to a community

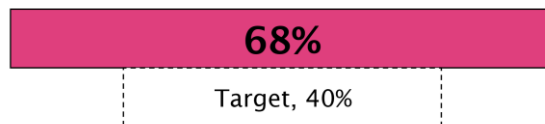
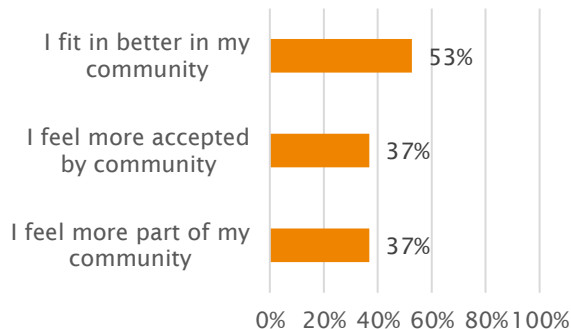


Fig. 3.11: Belonging to community - % of young people responding positively



Motivation to positively influence their community also increased for more than half of participants (58%).

Participants have increased motivation to positively influence their community

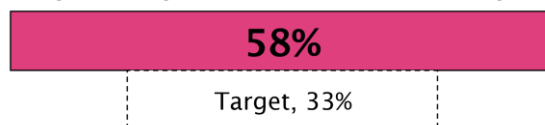
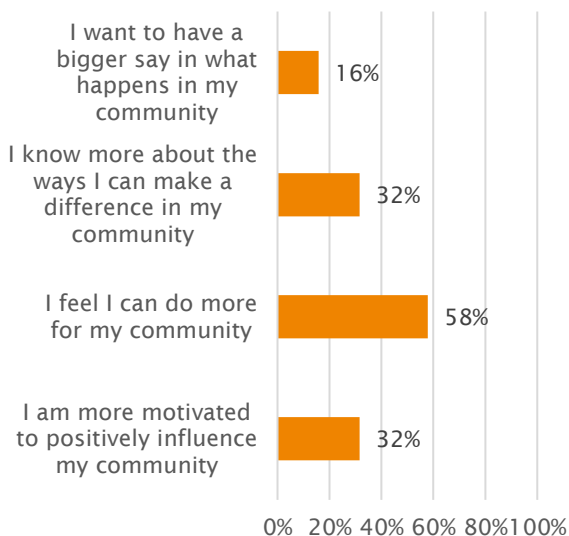


Fig. 3.12: Motivation - % of young people responding positively



Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced

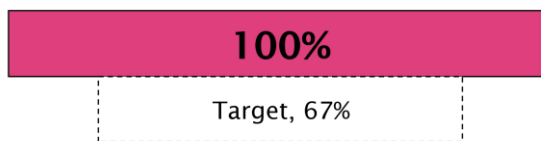
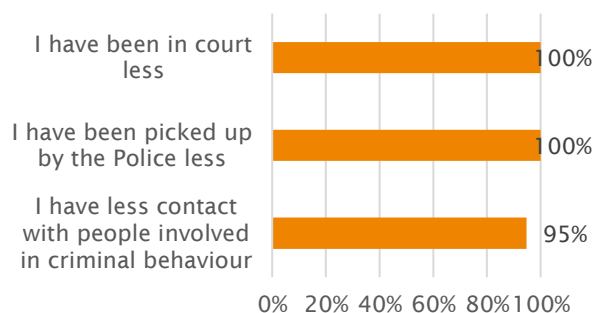


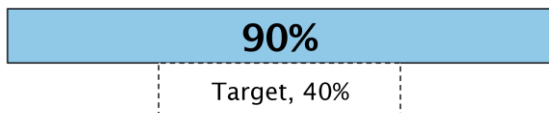
Fig. 3.13: Anti-social / criminal behaviour - % of young people responding positively



Other Stakeholders

Most other stakeholders (90%) reported that young people’s contribution, links and social interaction with the community had improved as a result of VOW.

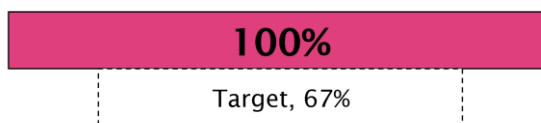
Other stakeholders perceive that young people’s contribution, links and social interaction are improving



“He gets on better now because he isn’t committing crime on his doorstep.”

Parent

Young people feel less inclined to participate in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour



“My son is definitely in a much better place than he was before he signed up with VOW. He’s not out committing crime like he was before.”

“He makes better choices than he did before. He doesn’t want to go back to prison and VOW have helped him stay out of prison.”

Parents

Outcome 6: Young people are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system

Young People

All young people reported that they had reduced their involvement in anti-social/criminal behaviour and were less inclined to take part in this kind of behaviour in future.

4. VOW Case Study

This section describes the experience of a young person who has taken part in the VOW programme and the difference it has made to them. The participant's name has been changed.

Jack's Story

Background

For several years, Jack had been becoming more and more involved in anti-social and criminal behaviour. Charges against him were becoming more frequent, with his activities including shoplifting, stealing bike/motorbikes, dealing drugs, and assault.

Underlying all of this was Jack's frequent and increasing drug use which was mainly in the form of cocaine and marijuana. As well as impairing his decision making, Jack says funding his drug use was often the motive behind some of his criminal behaviour.

Jack's behaviour was beginning to catch up with him. Because of the charges being brought against him and the associated drug use, he had lost his job and his driving license. His van, which he was now regularly living in, was also seized. Though he had so far avoided a jail sentence, he had been warned that, were this pattern of behaviour to continue much longer, he would almost certainly end up in prison.

VOW Involvement

While sitting in a holding cell at the Sheriff Court, waiting to have his latest charge heard, Jack was visited by staff from the VOW project. Jack had not been expecting the visit but, coincidentally, one of the police officers with VOW had previously been the in-school police officer at Jack's high school and recognised his name on the court list.

The VOW team listened to Jack about his situation and explained the ways they might be able to help him. Jack says that the impact on him was immediate as, faced with homelessness upon his release from court, VOW helped him secure hostel accommodation for that night.

Thereafter Jack would meet up with the VOW team weekly to talk about how he was doing and be in contact with them if any particular issues arose.

Positive changes in behaviour

Jack had been told by others where his behaviour was leading, but previously this had little success in making him think differently about it. He says that there was something unique about the VOW approach – and particularly the lived experience of the Peer Mentors – that resonated with him.

"It's useful to have someone like that talking to you because you can kind of understand them a bit more and they understand what you're going through more with addiction and all that."

Part of the problem for Jack, he says, was that his negative behaviour had become normalised. The types of things he was getting involved in and the choices he was making were usual and he could rationalise them to himself.

"I kept thinking I'd get away with everything. I kept doing it and thinking I won't get caught this time. And time and time again I would...you don't see them as problems at the time and it takes someone else coming in and looking at what you're doing to tell you."

It was this influence from VOW and the advice Jack received from people who had been in his position that helped him to reflect more on his choices and what direction he wanted to take. Though Jack admits it didn't happen overnight and his changed mindset occurred over several months, he credits VOW with reducing his offending and has now gone a full year without accruing any additional charges.

Improved health and wellbeing

At the time he became involved with VOW, Jack was smoking marijuana on a daily basis and regularly using cocaine. Crucially for Jack, VOW didn't require him to pursue any particular form of treatment but instead talked to him about why he was doing it and what his drug use was affecting. This helped him to come round to the idea of doing something about it in his own time.

“They didn’t force anything on me, they didn’t say ‘you need to stop’. They just told me why it was a good idea [to stop using drugs] and showed me what I wasn’t seeing.”

Though the VOW team suggested treatment options and addictions services to Jack, they respected his decision to try and tackle the problem in his own way and gave him advice and encouragement as he did so. As a result, Jack says, he has reduced his drug use significantly and it no longer interferes with his day-to-day life.

“[VOW] wasn’t a rehab but it did the job of a rehab.”

This has also had a knock-on effect for Jack’s physical and mental health. As he is no longer habitually using drugs, he has become more inclined to take better care of himself. His diet has improved (helped in part by less of his money being spent on drugs) and he has started going to the gym. The anxiety, depression and paranoia that would accompany Jack’s drug use in the past have also improved, giving him a much more positive mindset in general.

Improved relationships

Partly because of his offending and drug use, Jack’s relationship with his father had broken down. He had been kicked out of his family home and didn’t see his brothers as a result.

When they would meet up, VOW staff would talk to Jack about the benefits of positive, supportive relationships and encouraged him to think about who those people were in his life.

“They just made me realize the importance of having a relationship... Most of the people causing trouble are the people with no parent telling them what to do. Or they’ve just got no support at all. So, they’ve got no advice coming in - it’s just them listening to their own head. So, they just end up getting themselves in trouble”

VOW supported Jack as he took the first steps in repairing the relationships with his family, helping him to re-establish contact and make arrangements to meet up.

The first few meetings between Jack and his dad were difficult but VOW staff eased the process by accompanying Jack and at times facilitating the discussion. Without VOW staff attending with him Jack thinks he wouldn’t have made the effort to go but, because he did, he and his dad are now

meeting regularly on their own and he has been seeing more of his brothers.

Jack also has new, supportive relationships in the form of the VOW team themselves and his experience of the project has been transformative in his perceptions of the police. In particular, Jack thinks that having peer mentors and police working together in this way gives credibility to the police for some people who might previously have viewed them with suspicion.

“I was always brought up to not like them and the life I was living at the time, the police were always seen as the enemy. So having someone like [the peer mentors] who have been on this side as well and had problems with the police, it’s useful [for building positive relationships with the police].”

Jack says he now respects the police more and even counts some of the police officers in VOW among his friends.

Next steps

Jack has recently started attending church and through that has secured employment. This, and the support he received from VOW, have also enabled him to find a more secure housing situation.

Two years on from his first interaction with VOW, he no longer requires as intensive or frequent support as he did previously. However, he does stay in touch with VOW staff on a regular basis and they are continuing to offer him support as he deals with his remaining outstanding charges.

Overall, Jack believes VOW has helped him turn a corner:

“It has helped massively. Without them I’d probably still be stuck in addiction, stuck in hostels, probably in jail, have hurt myself, have hurt someone else. I don’t know what would have happened, but I definitely couldn’t have got to where I’ve got to without them.”

5. TYLA Programme Impact

This section describes the impact of the TYLA programme so far. The data in this section is taken from self-evaluation questionnaires completed by participants and other stakeholders.

Young People

The majority of young people (96%) reported that their confidence had increased as a result of taking part in TYLA sessions.

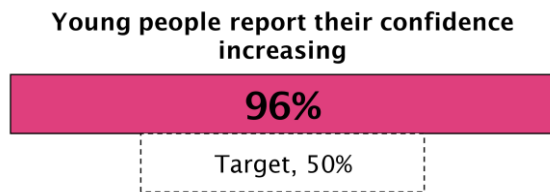
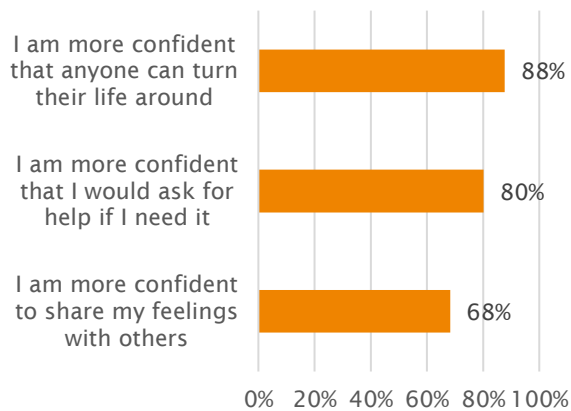


Fig. 5.1 demonstrates how this improved confidence has been experienced by young people.

Fig. 5.1: Confidence - % of young people responding positively



Most young people (93%) indicated that they felt more resilient after taking part in TYLA.

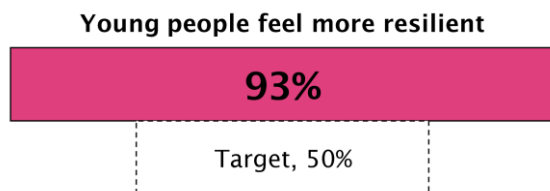
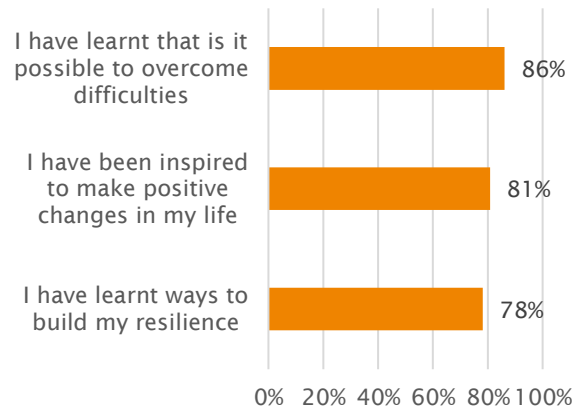


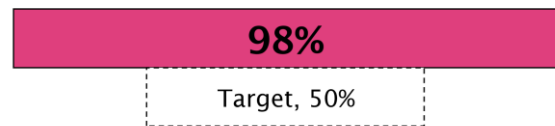
Fig. 5.2 shows the breakdown of responses for this indicator.

Fig. 5.2: Resilience - % of young people responding positively



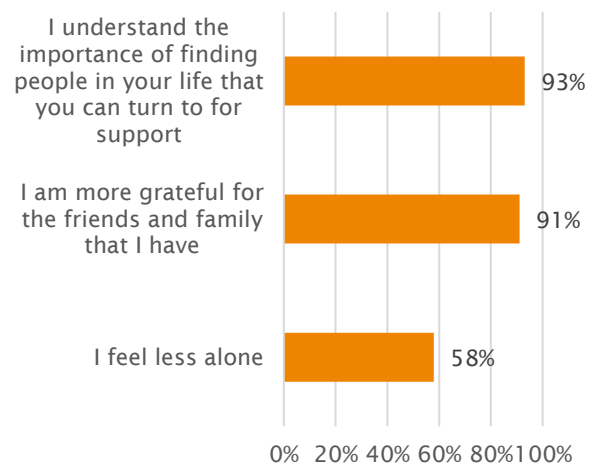
Most young people's (98%) support network has been improved through participation in TYLA.

Young people report positive supportive networks



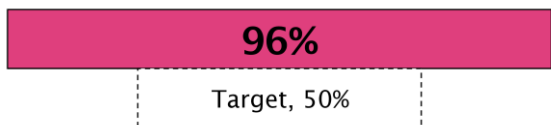
The ways in which young people reported improvements to their support network is shown in Fig. 5.3.

Fig. 5.3: Support networks - % of young people responding positively



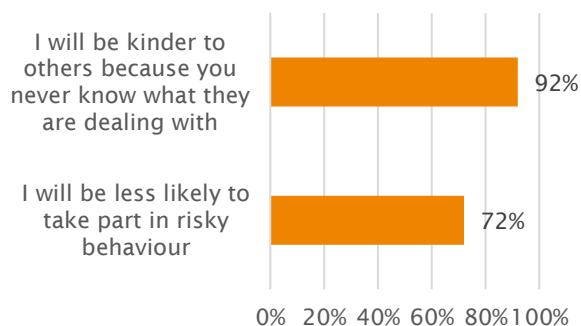
Most young people (96%) said that TYLA had a positive impact on their own behaviour.

Young people report positive changes in their behaviour



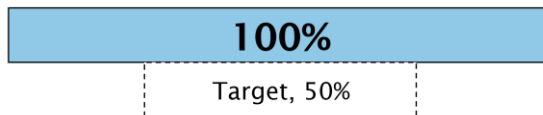
Young people reported improved behaviour towards other people and reduced risk-taking as a result of the programme (see Fig. 5.4).

Fig. 5.4: Behaviour - % of young people responding positively

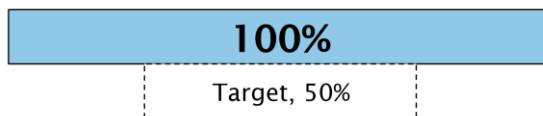


All other stakeholders (school staff) reported improvements in young people’s confidence, resilience, behaviour and skills as a result of their participation in TYLA.

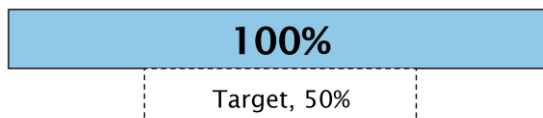
Other stakeholders report perceived increases of confidence and resilience among young people



Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in the behaviour of young people



Other stakeholders report skills increasing



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