

Evaluation of VOW and Turn Your Life Around – CashBack Phase 5 (2021-23)

A Report for Police Scotland



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

June 2023



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 have been 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 six 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 initiative has committed £130 million to community initiatives since 2008. For Phase 5 (2020-23) £19million was distributed through 24 organisations to improve the quality of life of young people across Scotland.

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

- 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

VOW and TYLA

VOW

The VOW Project was set up in 2013 with the aim of reducing offending and harm to young 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 typically 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 and young people produce creative work (e.g. writing, presentation, performance) based on volunteers' stories.

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

The evaluation was undertaken across both years of the programme, though most of the fieldwork was completed in Year 2. The research consisted of a mixed methodology:

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- A self-evaluation survey completed by **31 VOW participants**.
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- A survey for 'significant others' of VOW participants (e.g. parents/carers/support workers) – **13 respondents**.
-
- A survey for key stakeholders of the VOW project (e.g. referral or delivery partners) - **13 respondents**.
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- In-depth interviews with **5 VOW participants**.
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- Focus groups with **5 police officers** involved in the VOW project.
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- A focus group with **3 VOW Peer Mentors**.
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- A self-evaluation survey completed by **213 school pupils** who have taken part in TYLA.
-
- A survey for school staff whose pupils had taken part in TYLA – **12 respondents**.
-
- In-depth interviews with **4 TYLA volunteers** (two of whom were also VOW Peer Mentors).
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Section 2 of the report summarises both programmes' performance against the CashBack Phase 5 logic model targets. The remainder of the report focuses on VOW and TYLA's impact in Year 2.

2. Overall Performance Against CashBack Targets

	VOW					TYLA				
	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)
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%	40	100%	70	+	50%	570	95%	688	+
Young people feel able to do new things	67%	40	100%	70	+					
Young people feel more resilient	40%	24	100%	70	+	50%	570	94%	678	+
Other stakeholders report perceived increases of confidence and resilience	60%		100%		+	50%		100%		+
Young people report positive, supportive networks	55%	33	100%	70	+	50%	570	96%	692	+
Young people report positive changes in their behaviour	60%	40	100%	70	+	50%	570	94%	678	+
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%	6	17%	12	+					
Young people report their skills are increasing	30%	18	100%	70	+	50%	570	79%	570	=
Other stakeholders report young people's skills are increasing	25%		100%		+	50%		100%		+

	VOW					TYLA				
	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)
Outcome 3: Young people's health and well-being improves										
Young people report increases in feelings against SHANARRI indicators	67%	40	100%	70	+					
Other stakeholders report perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators among young people	60%		100%		+					
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%	15	97%	68	+					
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%	4	6%	4	=					
Number of hours of volunteering contributed by participants	208		150*		-					
Young people feel their contribution, links with communities and social interaction are improving	40%	24	80%	56	+					
Other stakeholders perceive that young people's contribution, links and social interaction are improving	40%		91%		+					
Participants' perception of their neighbourhood improves	25%	15	57%	40	+					
Participants have a heightened sense of belonging to a community	40%	24	57%	40	+					
Participants have increased motivation to positively influence what happens in their community	33%	20	50%	35	+					

	VOW					TYLA				
	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)	Target (%)	Target (No of YP)	Actual (%)	Actual (No of YP)	Performance against target (+ / - / =)
Outcome 6: Young people are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system										
Young people report that their own participation in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour has reduced	67%	40	97%	68	+					
Young people feel less inclined to participate in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour	67%	40	97%	68	+					
Other stakeholders report reduced antisocial behaviour and/or criminal behaviour	50%		100%		+					

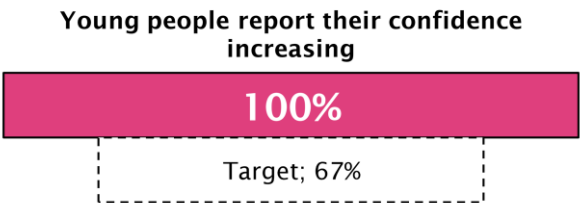
*Difficulty in recording this data, actual figure likely to be higher.

3. VOW Project Impact

This section describes the impact of the VOW project in Year 2. The data in this section is taken from surveys completed by young people, parents/carers, and other stakeholders, as well as discussions with young people and delivery staff.

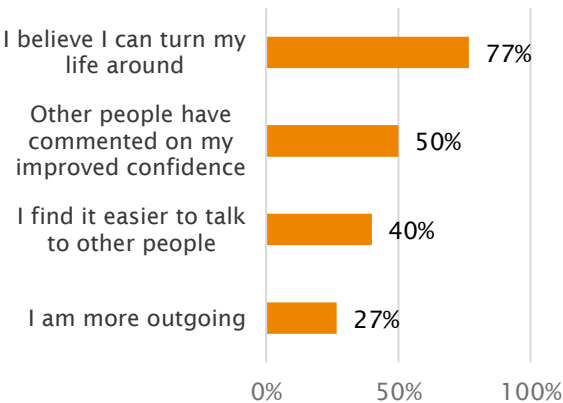
Outcome 1: Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk taking behaviour

All young people reported increased confidence as a result of taking part in the project, exceeding the target of 67%.

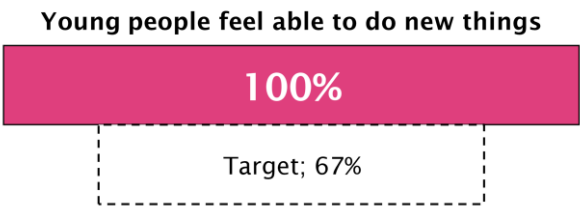


Young people’s survey responses captured some of the ways they felt their confidence had improved (see Fig 3.1). Most commonly young people reported more confidence in their ability to make a positive change in their life.

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



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



All young people saw improvements in their own resilience, with most reporting improvements across multiple indicators of resilience (see Fig.3.2).

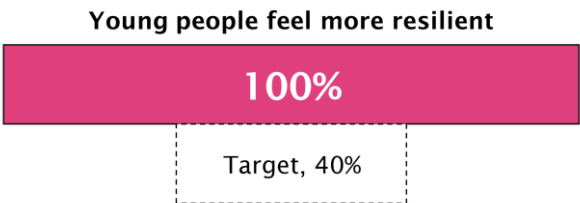
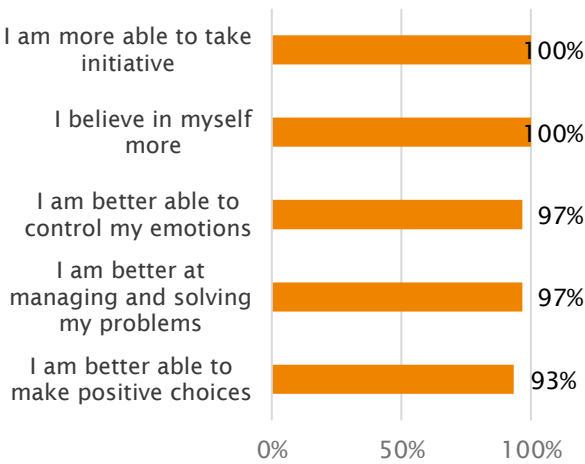


Fig 3.2: Resilience - % of young people responding positively



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

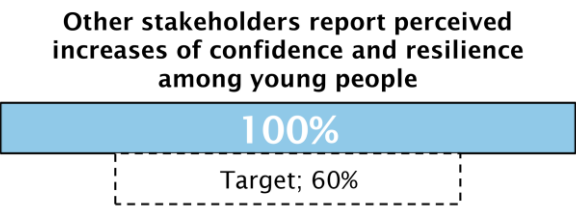
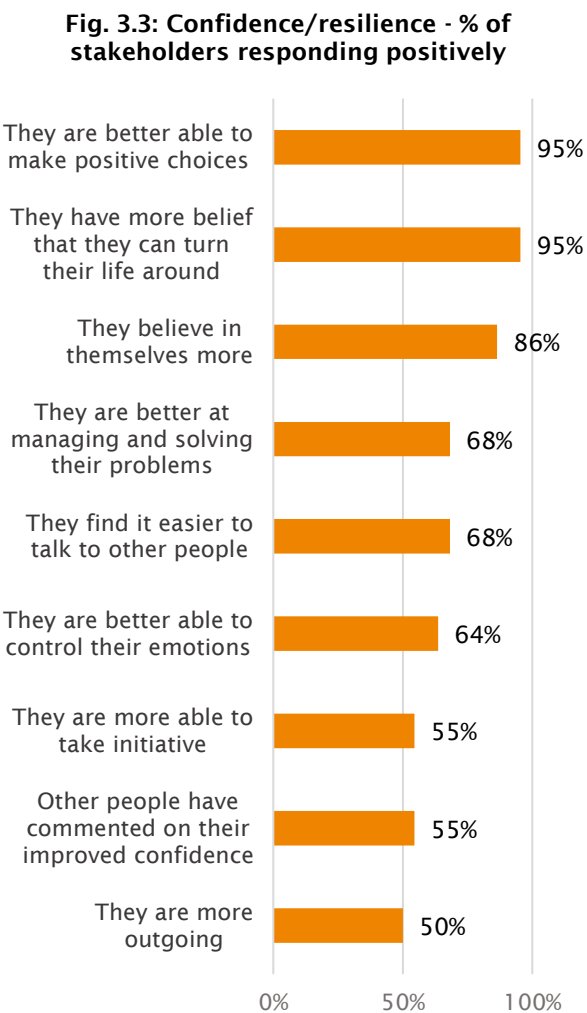


Figure 3.3 demonstrates the ways in which other stakeholders have observed improvements in the confidence and resilience of young people.



Comments from young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders provided further insights into the ways in which young people had improved their confidence and resilience, and how they had been supported to do this.

VOW has encouraged young people to see their own self-worth and take pride in themselves and their development. Participants are supported to build up confidence and independence at a pace that suits them but in a way that ultimately puts them out into the world more and makes them feel comfortable in unfamiliar settings.

Also clear was the impact on changing young people’s mindset in a positive way. As well as giving young people a different perspective on responding to mistakes, the project has made young people actually want to turn their life around and given them the belief that they can do it.

“It gave me a boost, before I didn’t see anyone or go out.”

“My mum and dad have said I speak better and tell them stuff.”

“They’ve done so much for my confidence...by getting me out and about I feel like a normal person.”

“I still get pissed off when stuff goes wrong but I’m coping a bit better with life.”

“I have developed a stronger ability to deal with negative emotions and have learned to not give into temptation and other problematic behaviours such as drinking.”

Young people

“It’s taught her to believe in herself and trust that we will support her.”

Parent/carer

“As a result of their engagement, there has been a huge difference in motivation, self-belief and resilience. They have a more purposeful outlook and increased capacity to develop coping strategies.”

Employer of young person

“It’s just helping them believe in themselves. And that’s what it is basically, because they’ve spent years not believing in themselves.”

Peer Mentor

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

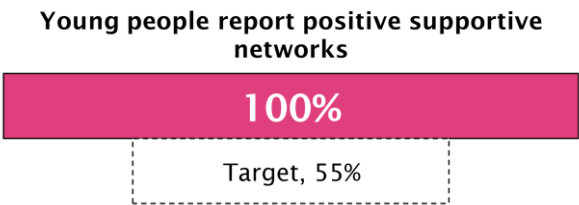
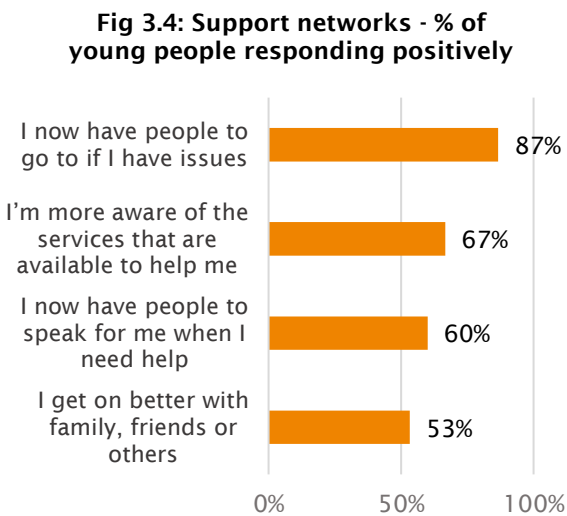
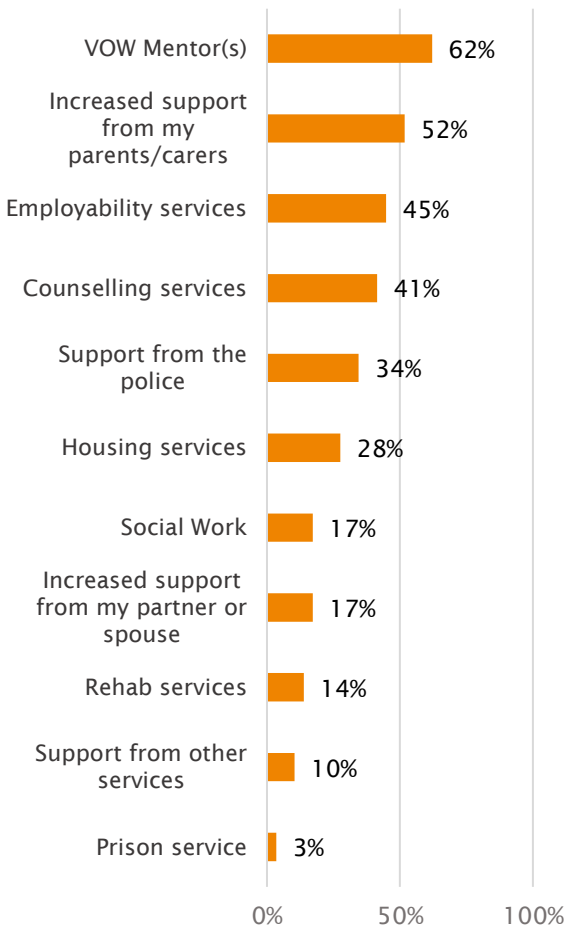


Figure 3.4 demonstrates the ways in which young people reported their support networks had improved.



Young people were asked to indicate from whom they now had additional sources of support thanks to the project. As Fig. 3.5 shows, the majority of young people counted VOW’s Peer Mentors as new sources of support and around half had improved relationships with their parents or carers. Smaller, though still significant percentages of young people have gained additional support from key services.

Fig 3.5: Additional support - % of young people responding positively



As reflected in surveys and interviews, young people have developed positive, supportive relationships with VOW’s Peer Mentors in particular. Though it may take time to develop trust with young people, once that trust has been established young people highly value the support they receive from Mentors and having this positive relationship can have a knock-on effect on how young people relate to others.

The project has helped young people to develop a more positive view of the police, not only in relation to those officers involved in delivering VOW, but of the service more widely.

VOW’s approach of involving participant’s families in conversations and facilitating meetings between them (where appropriate), as well as linking in with relevant services, has supported young people to repair familial relationships. For some young people this has reestablished sources of support that might have been lacking.

"[The mentors] both listen to me when I'm talking. I think some folk don't really listen to me."

"I now have people I can turn to if I need help."

"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 people

"He told me he feels he can talk to you at VOW and you don't judge him."

"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."

Parents/carers

"Some of these people haven't had good relationships with families and all the stuff that comes with the chaotic families. So it's being that positive role model for them."

Peer Mentor

"Watching the way the team builds those relationships just astounds me constantly. When they form a new bond with the people that through experience ordinarily would have a fairly very negative relationship with the police, to see that polar opposite...that's impressive."

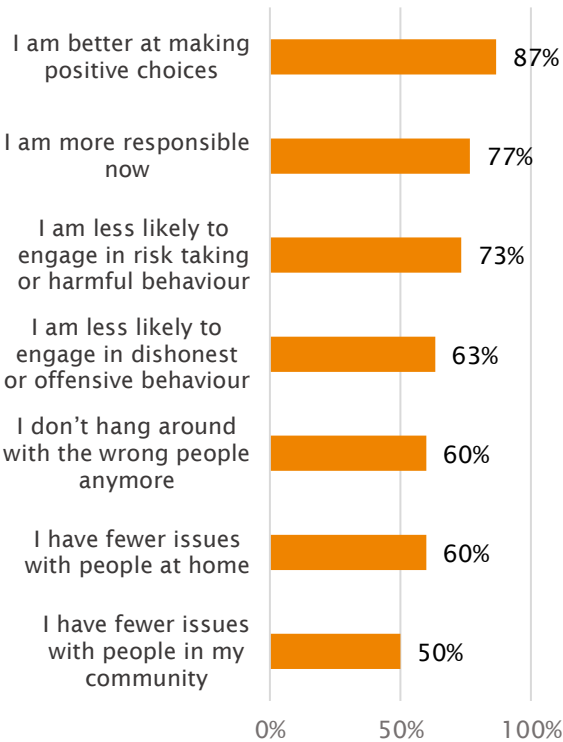
Police officer

All young people said that their behaviour had improved due to their participation in the project.



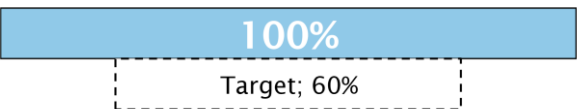
The ways in which young people reported positive changes to their behaviour are shown in Fig. 3.6.

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



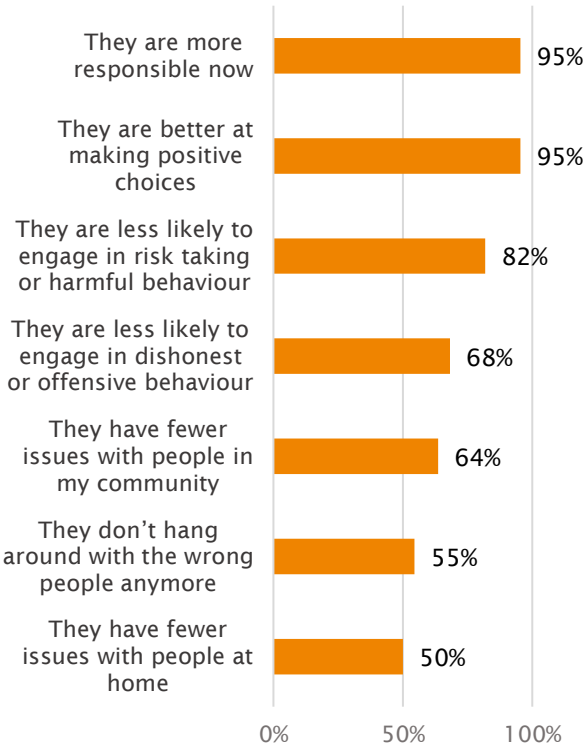
All stakeholders also agreed that the project has had a positive impact on the behaviour of young people participating.

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



As Fig. 3.7 demonstrates, stakeholders noted improvements in the behaviour of young people across a range of areas, and most agreed that positive changes in behaviour had occurred in several ways.

Fig. 3.7: Behaviour- % of stakeholders responding positively



Comments from young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders provided further evidence of the project impact on the behaviour of young people.

Working with VOW leads young people to become more reflective of their behaviour in general and gain more perspective on how the choices they make will affect their options in future. By encouraging young people to live more independently, the project also contributes to young people taking on more personal responsibility.

"I am more aware of what I need and what I should do in life and what I shouldn't."

"I'm getting better at getting up in the mornings cause I know I'll need to do this if I get a job."

"I'm definitely more responsible and make better choices than I did before I worked with VOW."

"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

"I have seen a big difference in him since he has been to talk to VOW. He is more responsible for his actions."

"I see an improvement in him regarding his decision making. I just hope he can stay on this path."

"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."

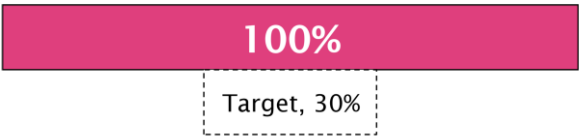
"He seems to understand there are consequences now."

Parents/carers

Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills

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

Young people report their skills are increasing



As well increasing their knowledge of risky or harmful behaviours (e.g. anti-social behaviour or drug/alcohol misuse), young people reported improvement to a wide range of personal skills (see Fig. 3.8).

Fig. 3.8: Skills - % of young people responding positively

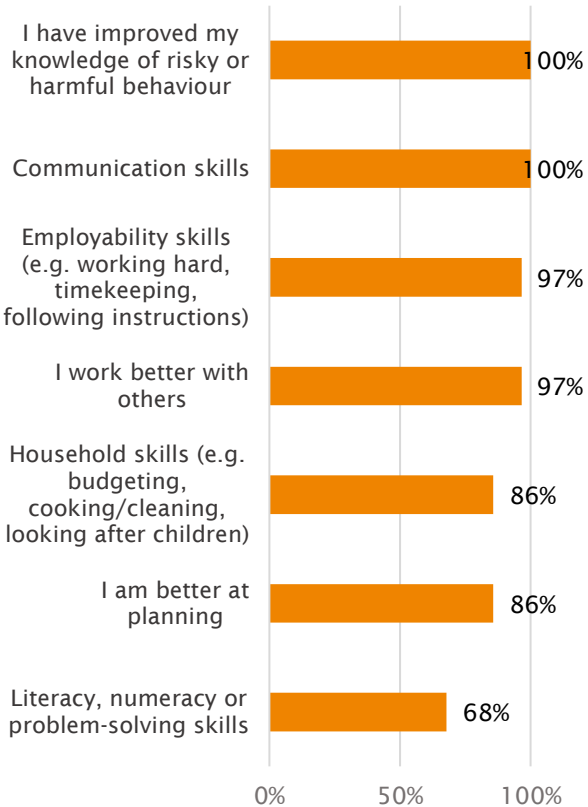
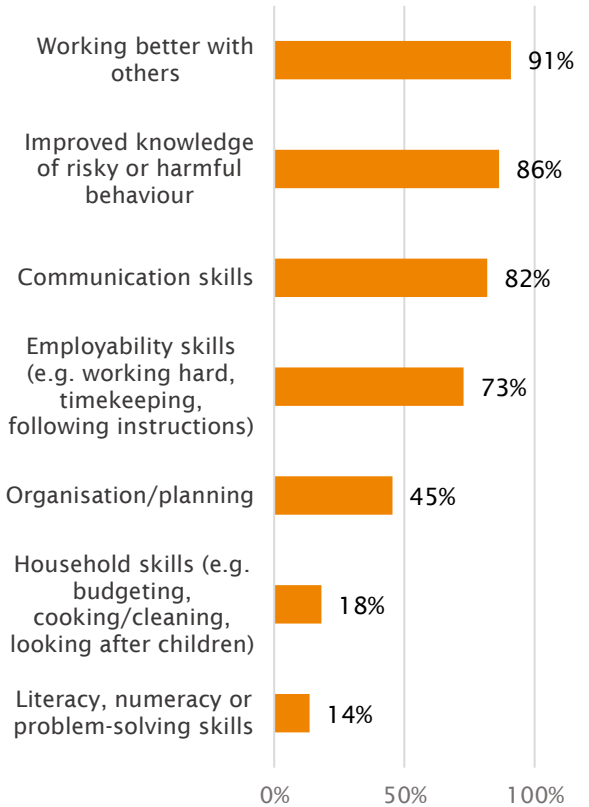


Fig. 3.9: Skills- % of stakeholders responding positively



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

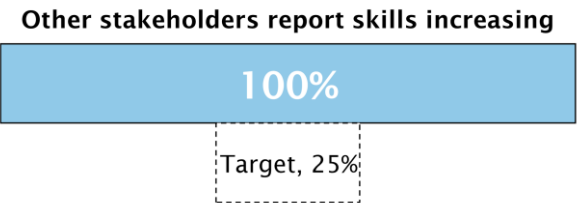


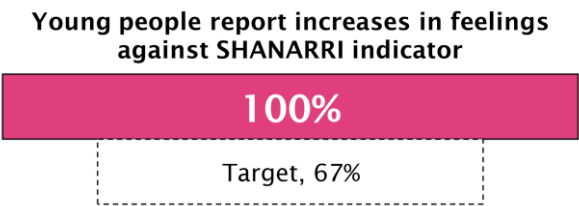
Figure 3.9 shows the skill areas that stakeholders had witnessed improvements in young people.

"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

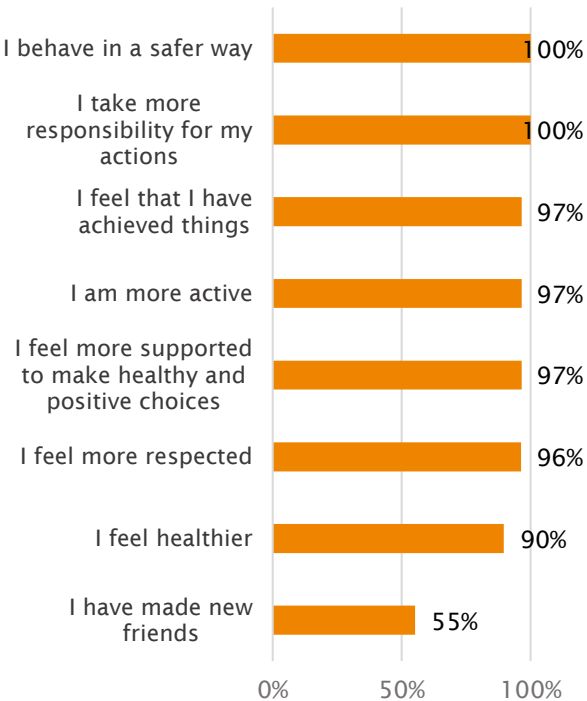
Outcome 3: Young people's health and well-being improves

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



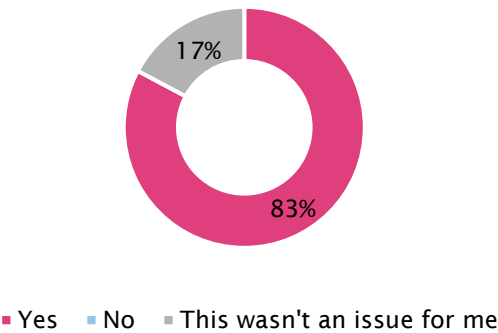
The breakdown of responses to this question is shown in Fig. 3.10

Fig. 3.10: Wellbeing - % of young people responding positively



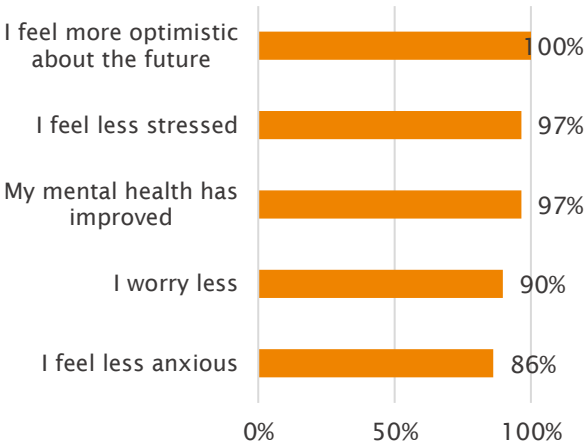
For young people who indicated that they had previously had an issue with this (83% of all respondents), VOW had helped all of them to make improvements with their alcohol or substance misuse.

Fig 3.11: If you have previously had issues with alcohol or substance misuse, have these improved as a result of VOW?



Young people were also asked to indicate the impact the project has had specifically on their mental health – see Fig. 3.12.

Fig. 3.12: Mental health - % of young people responding positively



All other stakeholders also 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

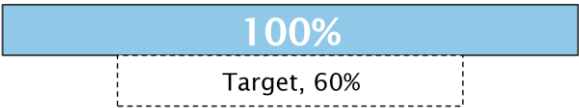
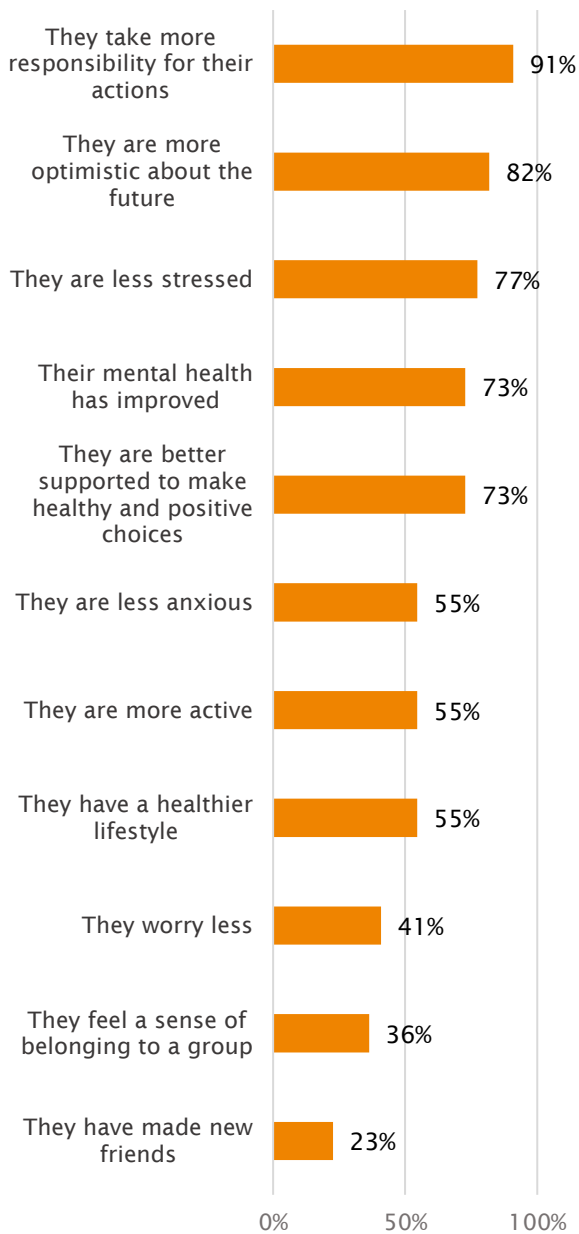


Fig. 3.13: Wellbeing - % of stakeholders responding positively



Comments revealed the variety of ways young people have been supported with their health and wellbeing through VOW.

As well as getting support for specific issues they might be experiencing (e.g. addictions support or access to counselling/mental health services), young people have lined in with services and activities that benefit their overall wellbeing. For example, young people have received gym passes, food parcels, attended cooking classes, and been helped to register with GPs and dental practices (the latter also easing the stress of this for young

people who previously struggled in dealing with services).

More generally, young people have been encouraged to become more active by getting out more often and doing activities that will raise their mood. This, and the regular contact with VOW, has allowed young people to become less isolated.

"Most days my mental health seems a bit better and cause I've got the college place and maybe a work placement that VOW have put me forward for I feel more hopefully about the future."

"VOW got me a job and I know I can stay away from the weed. I need to stay away from drugs to pass the tests and keep my job."

"Getting to speak with that doctor and knowing I've got Dyslexia has helped me understand why I struggle."

Young people

"He's stayed away from the drugs for longer than I can remember."

"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/carers

"[The Mentor] makes a real impact with our young people and he makes them feel understood and valued."

"I believe that giving access to counselling support through VOW has helped the clients understand themselves more at the fundamental level."

Delivery partners

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

All young people reported progress towards a positive destination as a result of VOW.

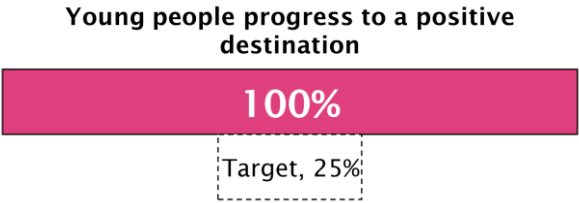
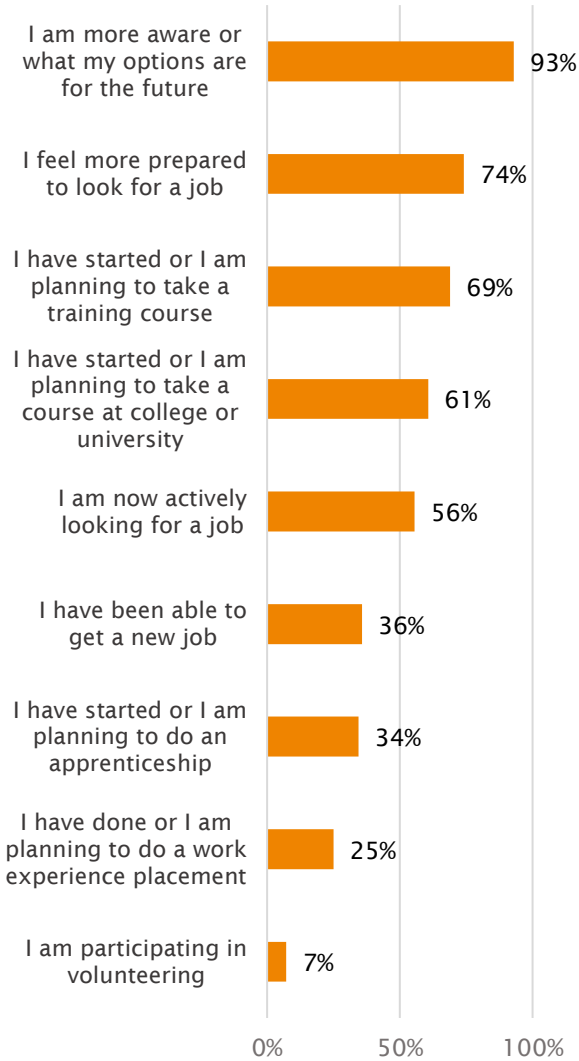


Figure 3.14 shows the ways in which young people report they have progressed towards positive destinations. As well as feeling better prepared or more aware of what they can do in future, the majority of young people indicated plans to pursue training or education.

Fig. 3.14: Positive destinations - % of young people responding positively



As well as reflecting the support young people have had to pursue employment, training and education

(as well as the transition to these positive destinations), comments from young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders highlighted the difference the project has made in changing mindsets around this. For some it can be supporting them to the point that they might be ready to take a next step, to start thinking about their future or to simply not making negative decisions in the same way that they would have before.

"I have a college place and I don't want to go back to jail so I'm trying to keep out of bother."

"I am nearly ready to sit my CSCS test. Just getting ID for that now. Once I have passed it, I can get work labouring on a site."

"I would really like to complete my CSCS card and then look at getting a job and one day I might even try to become a mentor and show others that you can change."

"I am not using or selling drugs anymore and I've got a conditional place at University."

Young People

"I do believe he has changed his life around - not getting into trouble, looking for jobs, and trying his hardest at everything he does."

"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!"

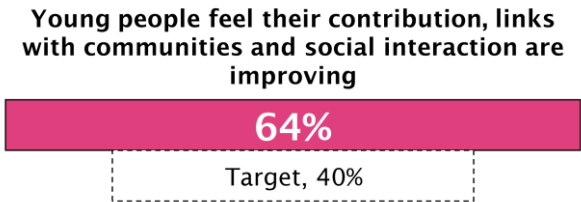
Parents/carers

"If they come away from here and that's all they get - realising that they can actually do this themselves - that's a result."

Peer Mentor

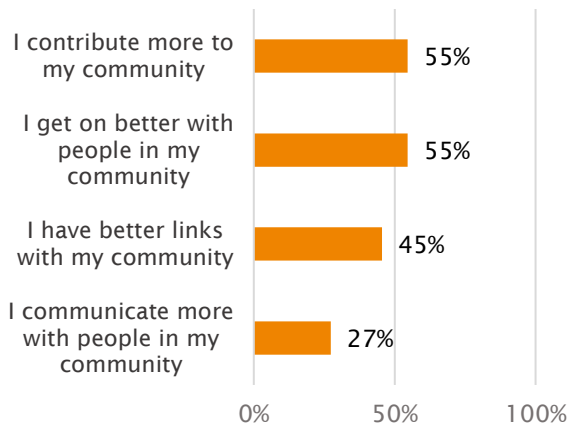
Outcome 5: Young people contribute positively to their communities

Just under two-thirds of young people (64%) reported that their contribution, links and social interaction with their community had improved through taking part in VOW.



The breakdown of responses for this outcome is shown in Fig. 3.15.

Fig. 3.15: Community contribution, links and social interaction - % of young people responding positively



Most other stakeholders (92%) reported that young people’s contribution, links and social interaction with the community had improved as a result of VOW.

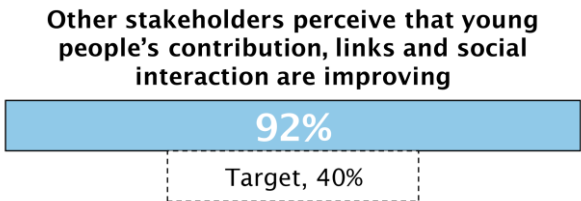
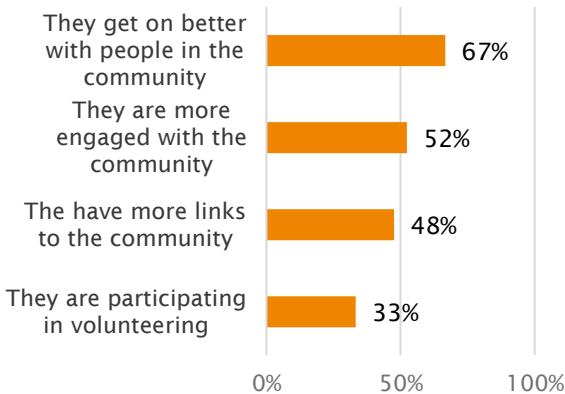


Fig. 3.16: Community contribution, links and social interaction - % of stakeholders responding positively

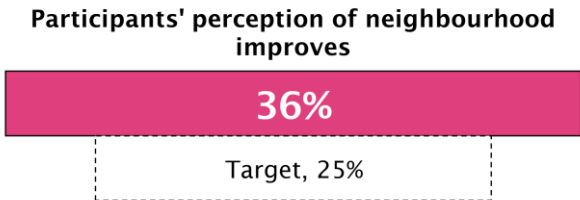


“He gets on with us and has had less problems with boys out on the street.”

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

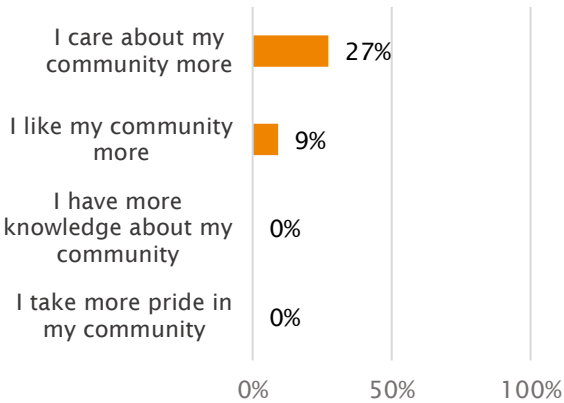
Parents/carers

Just over a third of young people (36%) said that taking part in the project had positively changed their perception of their own neighbourhood.

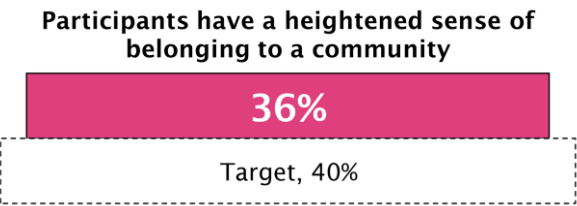


Most commonly, young people reported caring more about their community, with some indicating that they liked their community more now (see Fig. 3.17).

Fig 3.17: Perception of community - % of young people responding positively

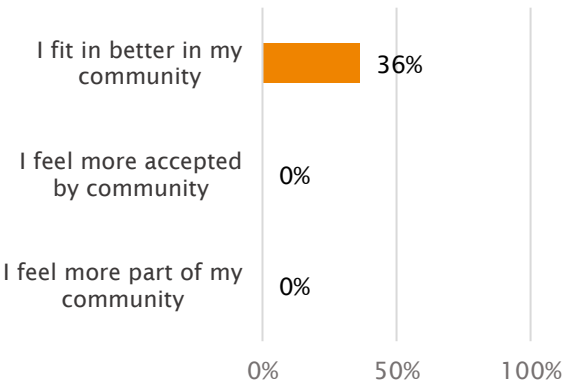


Young people’s sense of belonging to a community was also positively impacted by the project for around a third of respondents (36%), just below the target of 40%.

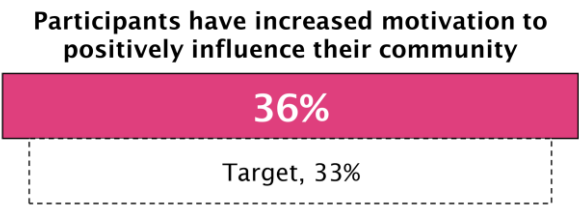


Of these young people, all said it was as a result of feeling that they fit in better in their community.

Fig. 3.18: Belonging to community - % of young people responding positively

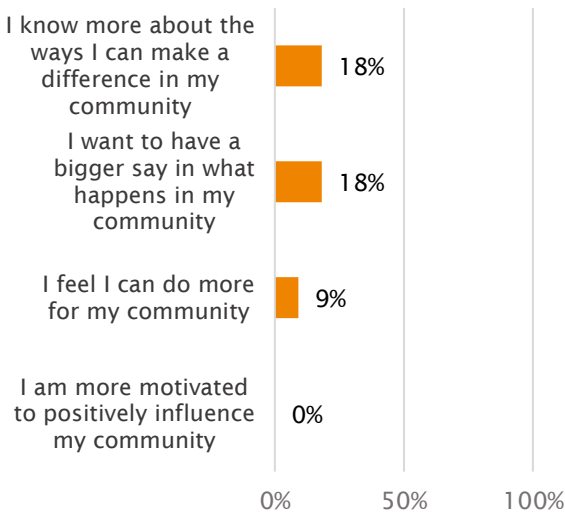


Motivation to positively influence their community also increased for around a third of young people (36%).



This increased motivation was measured by young people responding positively to at least one of the statements shown in Fig. 3.19.

Fig. 3.19: Motivation - % of young people responding positively

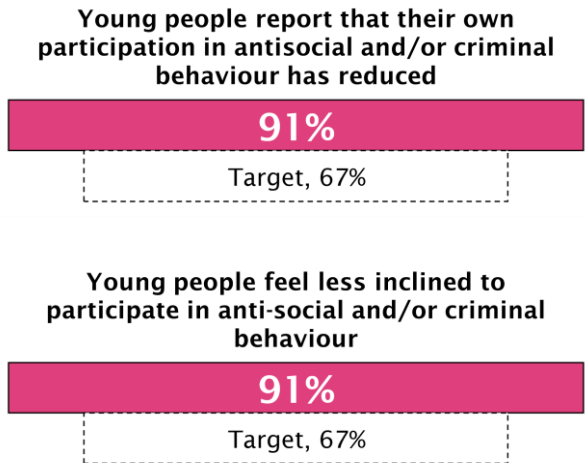


"I used to break into houses in my area, but I don't do that now."

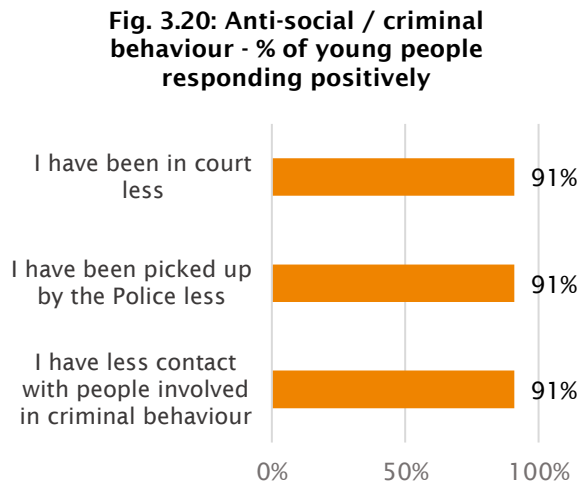
Young person

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

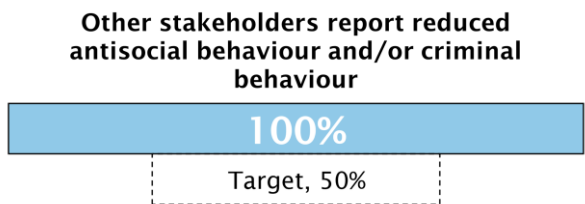
Most young people (91%) reported that they had reduced their involvement in anti-social/criminal behaviour and were less inclined to take part in this kind of behaviour in future.



Young people also provided additional information around this outcome. As shown in Fig. 3.20, most young people reported fewer run-ins with the police, fewer court appearances and less association with people involved in crime as a result of the project.



All stakeholders reported an improvement in young people’s involvement in anti-social or criminal behaviour.



Comments from young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders emphasised the impact the project has had on helping participants make a break with their past criminal behaviour.

By getting young people to reflect on how their behaviour affects them and others, develop new skills and behaviour traits, supporting young people into more worthwhile activities and positive destinations, and instilling the belief that they can make a change, the project has enabled young people to take positive steps in leaving anti-social and criminal behaviour behind them.

- "I feel more able not to go back to my old life."*
- "I don't really get into trouble much now."*
- "I'm not out doing crime now. I'm working. I've got money in my pocket."*
- "I used to steal all the time, but I don't do that now."*
- "I want to be the one from my family who doesn't go to jail and break the circle."*
- "For once in my life I have no cases or any problems with crime or that."*
- "I've not had a new charge in over a year."*
- Young people

"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

"I've seen proof of how it helps individuals carve better futures/lives for themselves to move away from crime/addiction."
- Delivery partner

Wider impact

Beyond the positive outcomes achieved for young people, the project has also been beneficial for those involved in delivering it. For Peer Mentors, VOW has provided opportunities to take positive steps in their own recovery or personal development, building up confidence and gaining new skills.

Peer Mentors' wellbeing also benefits from the significant amount of satisfaction and pride in the work they do, particularly in seeing the difference the project can make to the lives of young people and how they can prevent young people taking the same path they did.

"I can't get that 30 years back, but I can prevent them from losing that 30 years."

"[It's really satisfying] knowing that they're not going to take that journey, they're still young and they're starting to build a good life for themselves."

Peer Mentors

Likewise, police officers involved in VOW take satisfaction from achieving positive outcomes for young people and value their role as being different or distinct to other roles in the police. Instead of handling incidents and moving on, as can be the case in other areas of the police, working with VOW allows officers to gain a greater perspective on the journey young people make after entering the criminal justice system.

Increasingly the project has been able liaise with colleagues to raise awareness of their approach, and officers from other departments have occasionally undertaken temporary placements with VOW. This, combined with former VOW officers taking up opportunities in other areas of policing, has led to a greater knowledge of the VOW project and more referrals coming in from different departments.

Lessons learned

Challenges

There are barriers to young people effectively participating in VOW which the project has had to overcome. High among these is the attitude towards the police held by many of the young people VOW would seek to work with. These young people often have negative experiences with police, possibly where their only interactions with them are when being arrested, and there may be peer or family pressure to not to be associated with the police in any way. Though it can be difficult to break down these attitudes, the role of the Peer Mentors has been key to overcoming this barrier in many cases due to the credibility that they lend the project, particularly in the eyes of young people.

It is also important that any potential participant wants to work with VOW and is ready to do so. If not, they are less likely to take part fully in the process and more likely to drop out. For this reason, VOW has resisted being used as part of

sentencing for young people, ensuring that it is seen as a positive for young people and not another part of the 'system' that has been forced on them.

The pace of change with certain young people could be viewed as a challenge. It is important to recognise that offending will not necessarily stop straight away and for a variety of reasons – e.g. chaotic lives, lack of belief, addictions, mental health – progress may be incremental. However, the project approaches its work with young people as an ongoing process and recognises that each young person needs to be supported in a different way. Even if that process slows to the point that young people drop out of VOW, this is not viewed as wasted time – it is planting seeds for the future and the option for young people to re-engage with VOW will always remain.

Successes

Often cited as a key element of the success of the project was getting the right team together. In particular the importance and influence of the Peer Mentors was clear from discussions with young people and project staff alike. The knowledge and experience of the Peer Mentors have provided significant value to the project, particularly in getting young people to engage in the project.

Police officers commented on how they have learned a lot from Mentors in relation to how to approach certain situations, how to communicate with young people and how to look beyond the behaviour and think about the cause of it.

"In relation to their [Peer Mentors] lives, and the understanding of trauma, addiction offending, and the link between them all, and looking beyond the addiction and the offending at the root cause. And to understand why their lives took the paths that it did based on their experiences as children, I've learned a phenomenal amount from that."

Police officer

There was also a belief that for the project to be successful there needs to be buy-in from everyone involved towards the vision and approach of VOW. To this end, the recruitment process places an emphasis on key personal traits such as empathy, understanding, care and compassion. The project has also been enhanced by having police officers involved who have come from a range of backgrounds, bringing different perspectives to the role.

Being adaptive and flexible has allowed the project to expand its impact. In particular, taking a wider perspective of who the project works with and when has been beneficial. This is partly in response to a change in focus in the criminal justice system towards liberty as opposed to custody for young people which has meant fewer young people being kept in custody or appearing in court – the traditional referral routes for the project.

An example of how VOW has done this is in building up partnerships with addictions services, such as the Lothian and Edinburgh Abstinence Programme. This has enabled VOW to look at intervention at an earlier stage – rather than waiting until young people are at the repeat offender stage, work on the root causes of their behaviour following a first offence.

surgeries and other primary care services, as well as delivering inputs to young people's residential care units in future.

"It's not moving away from what we do. But to add to it by looking at earlier intervention. People who are maybe coming to the attention of the police for the first time. How can we prevent that behaviour escalating? And how can we get them on the right track?"

VOW staff member

Similarly, the project has built up its relationship with HMP Edinburgh allowing it to work directly with young people currently serving prison sentences, rather than waiting until they are released. One young person VOW is currently working with has benefited from this approach, receiving counselling while in prison that will hopefully better prepare him for coming out and establishing future pathway for recovery once he does.

On the counselling aspect of the project, VOW and the counselling service it works with have learned lessons about appropriateness of counselling for young people based on the stage of recovery they are at. There have been instances of VOW participants taking up counselling only for it to fall apart due to them not being ready or not fully understanding of what counselling is. In response, counsellors have adapted the service to offer more introductory activities to prepare young people for what is involved. VOW has also expanded the range of therapeutic activities it supports young people with, such as trauma-informed yoga or music therapy, offering alternatives to counselling for those that are not yet ready.

Those involved in the VOW project recognise the need to continue to be flexible and adapt to emerging trends or changes in policy or legislation that might require a different approach. There are plans to expand the project's reach with GP

4. VOW Case Studies

This section describes the experience of young people who have taken part in the VOW project and the difference it has made to them. Participants' name has been changed.

Robert's Story

Background

Robert had been using drugs recreationally for years, but really began to get into trouble when he started getting involved in selling drugs as well. This became gradually more extensive and soon he was involved in other criminal activity, including robbery.

His relationships had suffered as a result of this. He had been forced to give up his house and move back in with his mum, but this was adding further strain to the relationship. His network of friends revolved around criminality, and he didn't think he could trust anyone.

He increasingly felt like he wanted to make a change but found it difficult to do this on his own. Eventually, Robert's behaviour led to charges being brought against him and he was given a short prison sentence.

VOW involvement

Upon his release from prison, Robert was introduced to staff from the VOW project. Initially he was wary – he wasn't sure what anyone could offer him that would make a difference and he hadn't had a good experience of the police in the past.

However, Robert got on with the VOW Peer Mentor straight away. He found that their lived experience really spoke to him, and he could easily relate to what they were saying. This made him feel comfortable to open up and accept the help they were offering.

"I felt I could really be myself."

VOW has supported Robert to get help with his drug use, access counselling and have offered regular advice and guidance on anything he has needed help with.

Support network

More than anything else they have done for him, Robert values the stable presence of the VOW team – particularly the Peer Mentors – as consistent source of support with whatever he might be struggling with.

When he came to VOW, he didn't feel able to confide in his mum and was mistrusting of the other people around him. He felt as if he had no one in his life to talk to, but VOW changed that.

"I couldn't trust my friends, but I could talk to [the Peer Mentor]."

VOW encouraged Robert to work on his relationship with his mum and helped to facilitate conversations between them. This, combined with the personal progress he has made through VOW in other areas, has helped to strengthen their relationship.

Moving away from criminal behaviour

Robert already felt as though he wanted to move on from the behaviour that previously got him in trouble, but it had proven difficult to do. VOW's input, and the additional support they helped him to access, helped Robert to change his habits, to introduce a better routine in his life and become more understanding of his previous urges to get involved in negative behaviours.

"They helped me making good decisions."

This gave him a platform to make positive changes in his life, notably cutting ties with his old friends. It hasn't always been easy and Robert has occasionally drifted back into old ways, but when he has the VOW teams have listened to him without judgement and helped him get back on track.

Since working with VOW, Robert hasn't had any additional charges.

Positive destinations

Working with VOW has created more stability in Robert's life and enabled him to hold down a job

for the past 18 months. He has plans to go to college in future to train to become a mechanic.

Most importantly, though, Robert says VOW has made him care about his future again and raised his aspirations about what is possible for him.

"I wasn't thinking ahead...before I met these guys I had no plans, I just expected to be in jail."

Robert's mindset has completely changed for the better. He has become passionate about things and can see a different future for himself. He is thankful for the role VOW played in getting him to this place.

"They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

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 realise 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 surveys completed by participants and school staff, and interviews with TYLA volunteers.

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

Most young people (93%) reported that their confidence had increased as a result of taking part in TYLA sessions.

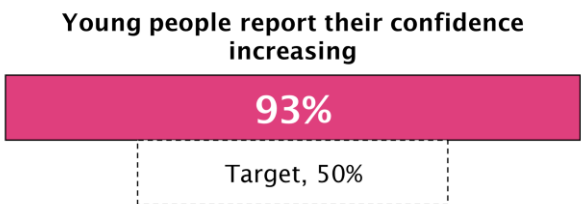
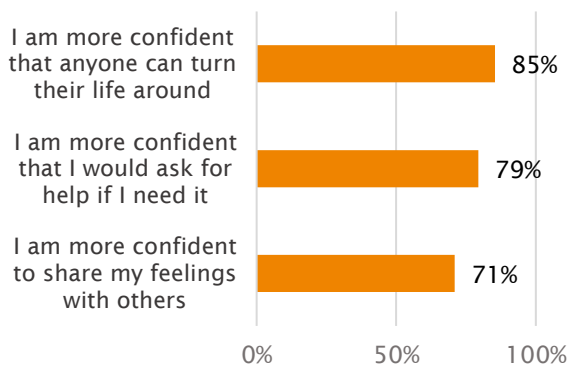


Fig. 5.1 demonstrates how this improved confidence has been experienced by young people. Most said they had more confidence in people’s ability to turn their life around, with most also agreeing that they themselves were now more confident to share their feelings and ask for help.

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



Most young people (94%) indicated that they felt more resilient after taking part in TYLA.

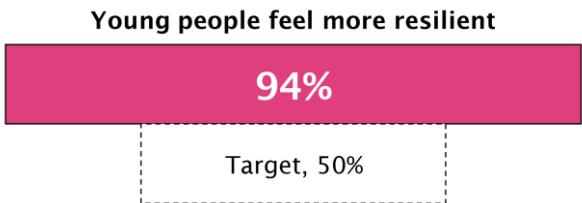
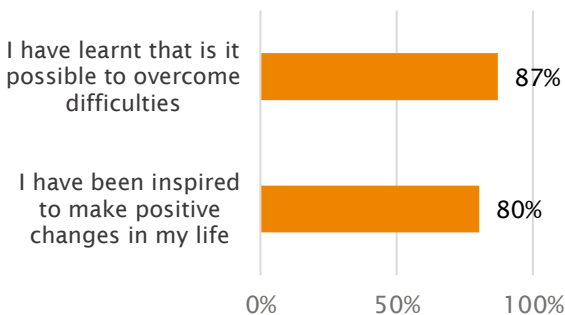


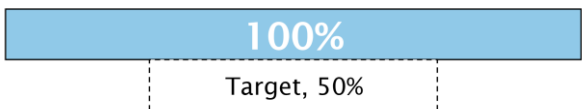
Fig. 5.2 shows the breakdown of young people’s responses for this outcome.

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



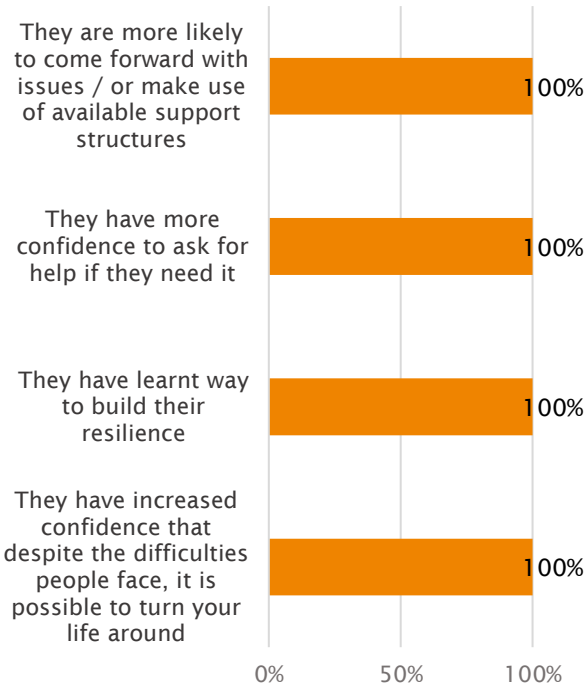
All other stakeholders (school staff) also reported improvements in young people’s confidence and resilience as a result of their participation in TYLA.

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



All stakeholders agreed that they had observed improvements in the confidence and resilience of young people in multiple ways following their participation in TYLA – see Fig. 5.3.

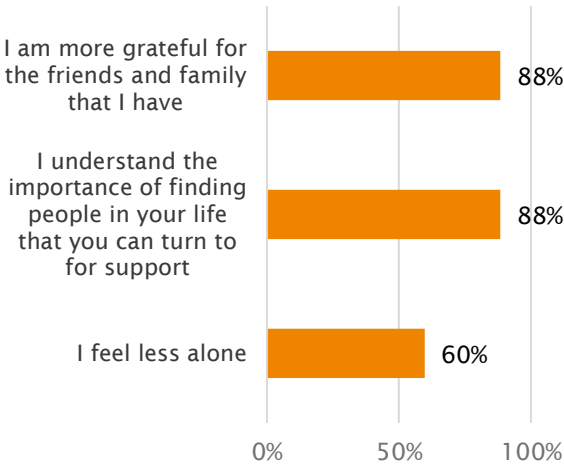
Fig. 5.3: Confidence/resilience - % of stakeholders responding positively



"To have an adult come in and speak about experiences they had as children with such vulnerability and a sensitivity, what it does is it allows children to feel that, if they are experiencing those things at home, things can and do get better...it allows them to know that being in that situation isn't how it will always be."

TYLA Volunteer

Fig. 5.4: Support networks - % of young people responding positively

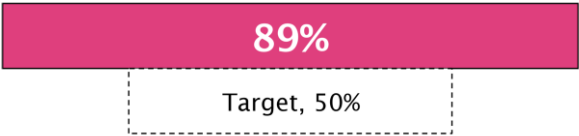


"They created a bond with [the TYLA Volunteer] and had such great respect for him, which was lovely to see."

Teacher

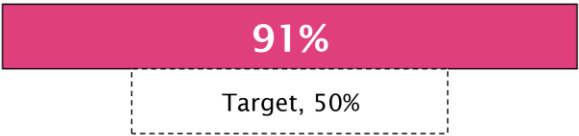
TYLA had a positive impact on the behaviour of the majority (89%) of young people taking part.

Young people report positive changes in their behaviour



For the majority of young people (91%), their support network has been improved through participation in TYLA.

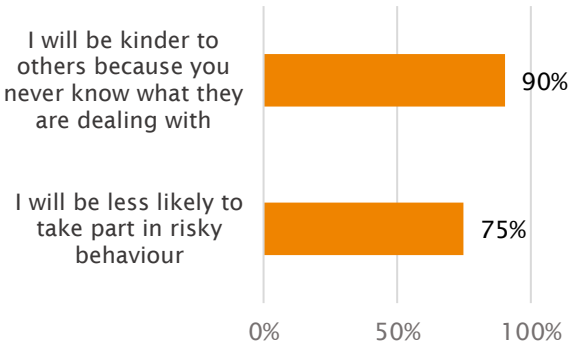
Young people report positive supportive networks



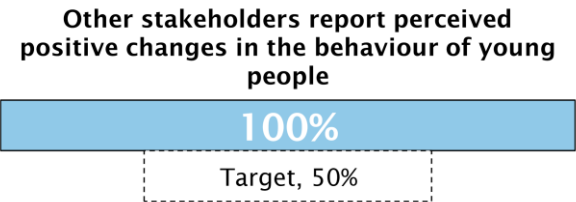
Young people reported improved behaviour towards other people and reduced risk-taking as a result of the programme (see Fig. 5.5).

The ways in which young people reported improvements to their support network is shown in Fig. 5.4.

Fig. 5.5: Behaviour - % of young people responding positively

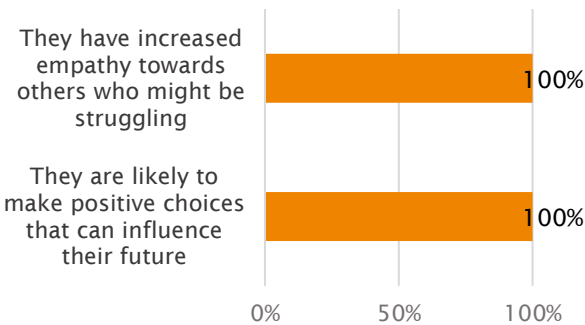


Other stakeholders all agreed that young people’s behaviour had bene positively impacted by TYLA.



Stakeholders observed greater empathy and an increased ability to make positive choices in young people – see Fig. 5.6.

Fig. 5.6: Behaviour - % of stakeholders responding positively



“By hearing from a real person they were able to make links to the real world and connect Michelle’s story to their own lives or people they know. They were also much more respectful when listening to a real person as opposed to me talking them through different scenarios.”

“The children have been more emotionally aware of how to support others in their wider community.”

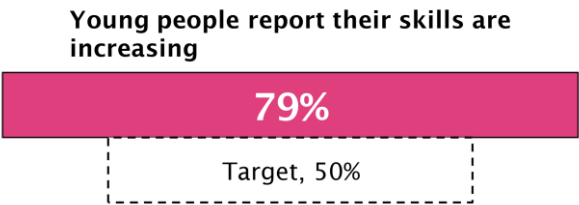
Teachers

“It builds a bit of empathy for the kids that aren’t [going through trauma] and maybe explains why some of the kids in class are behaving the way they are. And for the kids that are going through things, it lets them know that they’re not alone.”

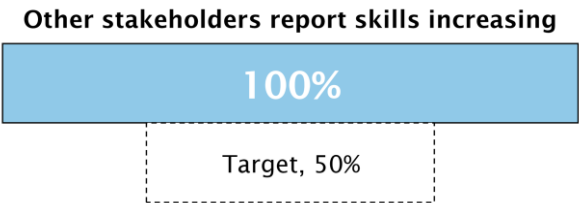
TYLA Volunteer

Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills

The majority of young people (79%) said that they had developed their skills as a result of TYLA.

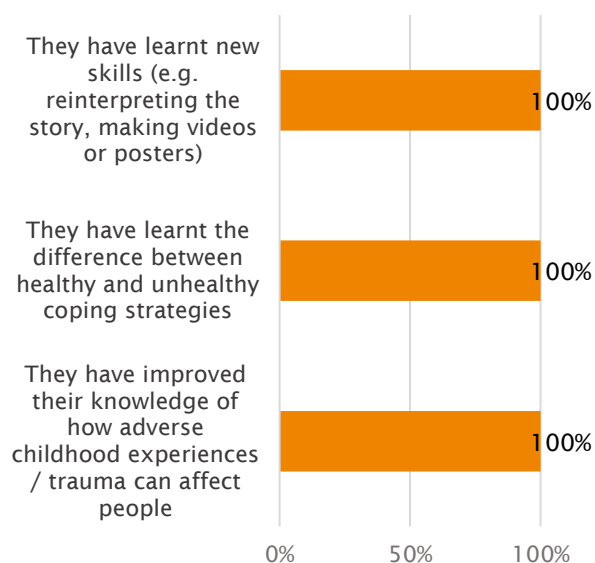


This view was also held by other stakeholders, with all reporting increased skills in young people.



School staff reported improved skills in techniques relevant to TYLA projects (e.g. storytelling or presenting ideas), skills in healthy coping strategies and a greater awareness of trauma and its effects (see Fig. 5.7).

Fig. 5.7: Skills - % of stakeholders responding positively



Additional comments from young people about TYLA:

"You are amazing and good for sharing your story to others who are struggling and making them feel less alone."

"I have found the lessons interesting and it shows determination and that anyone can turn their life around."

"James was amazing for sharing his story with everyone and it is helpful for everyone to speak and spread it so it can help them and us."

"It was really nice to hear James tell his story. It showed lots of messages as well like it's never too late to change."

"I find it very inspiring how you changed your life around and you're in a better environment."

"It is helpful to many people and tells us how we can change our life's and how it is never too late."

"Having the courage to talk about your life in front of a class not knowing how they can react is amazing."

"I think it was helpful because it helps other people to overcome their fear."

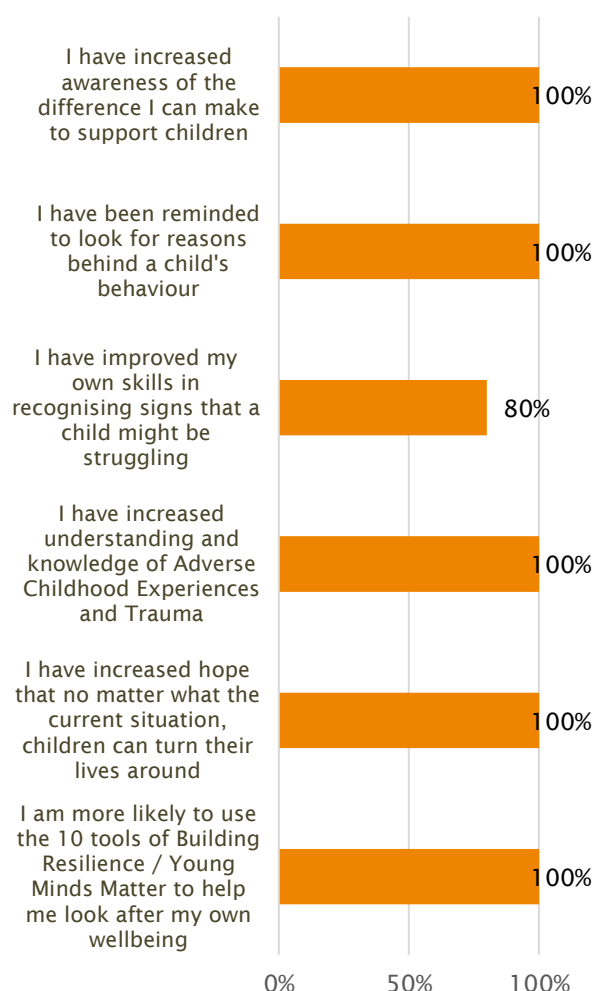
Wider impact

School staff

School staff were also asked to indicate what impact being involved in the TYLA project had on their own skills and practice.

All teachers agreed that TYLA had in some way improved their ability to understand and respond to young people with adverse childhood experiences or trauma, with the majority reporting improvements in multiple areas – see Fig. 5.8.

Fig. 5.8: Impact on skills and practice of school staff - % responding positively



"It was important for the staff to hear the story as well to ensure we are taking care of our own well-being."

Teacher

"I think, gives them [teachers] the confidence to communicate with children, knowing that it's okay...that you do not have to be a

specialist in trauma in order to have children in your class feel that you're making a difference to their lives."

TYLA Volunteer

Volunteers

TYLA volunteers spoke about the rewarding nature of the work they do in schools. This was not only in relation to the positive feedback they have received from young people and teachers, but also the satisfaction that comes from using their own experience to help young people to, for example, make connections, build positive relationships, develop skills, or gain a better understanding of what they are going through.

"It's really life changing for children, I really do believe that. And I've seen that with the feedback that we get from them, it's amazing."

TYLA Volunteer

Volunteers also took pride from the creativity that their stories had helped to inspire in young people. Young people had presented to volunteers through plays, dance, creative writing, comic books, and other ways and volunteers derived a lot of enjoyment from watching young people interpret their stories.

Delivering TYLA sessions has also provided opportunities for volunteers to improve their own skills and develop in other ways. Volunteers spoke about gaining skills in public speaking or presentation, communicating with children and young people, and storytelling. It was also clear that working with TYLA enables volunteers to build their confidence and self-esteem.

"Doing this has given me so much self-esteem and so much confidence. So it's actually been a kind of reciprocal relationship in which I've got so much back from giving so much and talking about these things, I've actually gained so much too"

TYLA Volunteer

Revisiting their story through working with TYLA has also helped volunteers to more frequently reflect on their own recovery. For some this served to reinforce the messages they are sharing with young people – reminding them to look after their own wellbeing as well. It has also given volunteers cause to reflect on and recognise how far they have come in their own journey.

"As I'm talking about these tools, I'm reminding myself what I need to do on a daily basis and how I need to practice the things I'm talking about."

"That's what's so amazing about TYLA, it's so special, because it has like this effect on everything that comes through, basically, whether it's the volunteers, or the people that support the volunteers, or the teachers or the children - it's really very special."

TYLA Volunteers

Volunteers have also benefitted from direct support through the TYLA project. Volunteers spoke positively about project staff's recognition of the need to ensure that volunteers are absolutely ready to be involved, and the issues that can arise from sharing their story. The support to access training that gives them a better understanding of their own experience, and the offer of counselling, was highly valued by volunteers.

"The support you get is everything because it's scary when you go out and you share your story. So, the fact that they're there for you all the time and they make sure that you know that, I think that's been what has allowed me to feel really safe in the organisation and be part of it for so many years now."

TYLA Volunteer

6. Conclusions

This section summarises the key findings from the evaluation and highlights the key lessons learned.

VOW

Outcomes

1. The project has a significant impact on the confidence of participants. As well as developing their social confidence, young people are supported to feel more at ease in unfamiliar settings and gain more confidence that they can turn their life around.
2. All young people taking part in the project have been able to build up their own resilience as a result of taking part in the programme. VOW has encouraged young people to see their own self-worth, take pride in themselves and their development, and become better at managing difficulties.
3. VOW enhances the support network of all young people who participate. In particular, young people build up trusting relationships with Peer Mentors, though a significant number have also improved their familial relationships and links to key support services.
4. Through encouraging young people to reflect on their actions and contextualising these actions within their wider life chances, the project has enabled all young people to make positive changes in their behaviour. Young people make better choices as a result of VOW, take on more responsibility and are less likely to engage in harmful or dishonest behaviour.
5. All young people have been able to increase their skills as a result of VOW, with most reporting improvements across a range of personal and practical skills.
6. Young people's wellbeing benefits from participation in VOW. As well as supporting increases across a range of SHANARRI indicators, the project has helped young people to address specific issues in relation to their physical or mental health, become more active, and take part in activities that boost their mood.
7. All young people that participate in the project make progress towards a positive destination. For most, this is in becoming more aware of

what their options are, feeling more prepared to take next steps, or putting plans in place to pursue work or training, though some have been supported into education or employment.

8. Based on participants' self-reporting, the project has been successful in positively changing some young people's view of the community, their links to the community, and their desire to influence it. However, community did not feature prominently in conversations with young people and the only target missed in Year 2 was in relation to young people's sense of belonging to the community, so there may be scope to improve on this outcome.
9. Young people's inclination towards and actual participation in anti-social/criminal behaviour is positively affected by taking part in the project. As with behaviour in general, VOW demonstrates success in getting young people to reflect on the risks and consequences of this type of behaviour and take steps to address it.

Wider Impact and Lessons Learned

10. VOW also has a positive impact on delivery staff. Peer Mentors have been able to build their own skills and confidence, while police officers have had the opportunity to learn from Mentors and gain new perspectives on their role. The wellbeing of those involved in delivering VOW is positively influenced by the pride and satisfaction they take from the role.
11. Achieving the right skillset among the team has been key to the success of the project and the influence of the Peer Mentors – particularly in ensuring the engagement of young people – has been crucial.
12. The project's flexibility and adaptability has enabled it to add additional value to what it does by targeting different types of young people, working with them at an earlier stage of intervention and offering different forms of support based on need. This has also ensured continued referrals to the project.

TYLA

Outcomes

1. The programme supports most young people to become more confident in asking for help if they need it and sharing their feelings, as well as becoming more certain that it is possible for people to turn their life around.
2. TYLA has helped young people learn ways to build their resilience and understand that it is possible to overcome difficulties in their lives.
3. Young people's support network is improved through participation in TYLA, with young people reporting increased gratitude for the people they have in their lives, more knowledge of the importance of having people they can turn to and the majority feeling less alone after taking part.
4. TYLA encourages young people to make positive changes in their behaviour by increasing their empathy towards others and making them more likely to make positive choices.
5. TYLA supports most young people to develop new skills in presentation and storytelling, as well as improving their knowledge around health/unhealthy coping strategies and trauma.

data and the actual figure is likely to be higher – possibly taking it beyond the targeted number of hours. If not already done, it would be useful for Police Scotland to consider how this issue might be resolved for the next phase of CashBack funding.

Wider Impact

6. School staff are also positively impacted by working with TYLA, gaining a better understanding of young people living with adverse childhood experiences or trauma and improving their own skills to support them.
7. TYLA provides volunteers with opportunities to improve their own wellbeing and develop their skills and confidence. Volunteers have also benefitted from the support provided to them by the programme through training and counselling.

Performance in CashBack Phase 5

1. Both VOW and TYLA have met or exceeded almost all targets across CashBack Phase 5.
2. The exception to this is in relation to volunteering hours completed by VOW participants. However, as noted above, the project had some difficulties in recording this

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