

Final Evaluation Report

The Children's Society Next Generation Nottingham

October 2018 – March 2020

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**The
Children's
Society**

**No child
should feel
alone**

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Key Findings

Outcome	Progress	Evidence Snapshot	Critical Success Factors
Young people have improved mental and emotional health	Met	<i>"I didn't feel like I had an escape. I felt like I had to do something bad because if the world was against me... I'd get back at it. [He] made me realise [I can] make better choices when I'm angry, like work out, or go on a run."</i> (YP)	<p>The time workers are able to give to young people.</p> <p>The consistency in having the same, trusted professional, and not having to repeat their story.</p> <p>The skills and approach of staff – taking time to build trust, listening to young people, being honest and transparent, and modelling appropriate relationships.</p> <p>The flexibility in the model, the ability to broaden horizons by taking part in positive activities, and the gradual nature of fostering independence.</p> <p>The importance of joint working with families and statutory services.</p> <p>Being able to challenge young people, set goals, and envision a pathway towards these.</p>
Young people experience better relationships	Met	<i>"[Next Gen has] helped with my relationship with my mum. Me and my mum didn't get along, we used to argue all the time. There's no doubt [worker] helped."</i> (YP)	
Young people have greater trust in, and engage better with, other services, including ETE	Met	Data from a sample of YP shows that after working with the project their attendance at school increased from an average of 78% to 100%.	
Reduction in offending	Met	Arrests amongst a cohort of 8 YP have reduced from 13, to 2. ¹	
Reduction in missing incidents	Met	Missing incidents amongst a cohort of 5 YP have reduced from 56, to 2. ¹	
Systems respond better to CYP	Partially met	Evidence to suggest that changes have been made within smaller systems such as work on school exclusions, and bail conditions. However, this is currently limited to small examples.	

¹ Data obtained from Nottingham City Council, December 2019

1. Background and Introduction

In 2018, with oversight from Nottingham City Council and funding from the Samworth Foundation, The Children's Society launched Next Generation Nottingham as a pilot to explore how we could better support young people aged 11-25 who face multiple disadvantage in the city. The project was mobilised from spring 2018, and fully operational by October 2018.

The idea behind Next Generation is to work intensively with young people “*who have more going off in [their] lives than people realise*”. The young people with whom Next Generation are working present with a range of experiences of multiple disadvantage. They have often experienced trauma, violence, danger, abuse, neglect, and have subsequently began displaying behaviours that affect their ability to progress and thrive in life. Next Gen has two dedicated caseworkers, who hold a caseload of no more than 3-4 young people at a time, and work intensively with these young people for up to 10 hours a week. The project can work with these young people for up to two years.

The hypothesis behind Next Generation is that working intensively with young people, for as long as it takes, will enable them to have the time to achieve and overcome whatever is holding them back. The work includes support to navigate a complex system, guiding young people through the day-to-day challenges that they are experiencing, working with the extended family, and support with pursuing and accessing hobbies and interests. The type of work undertaken by the project includes:

- Support to navigate a complex system – guiding young people through the day to day challenges that they are experiencing
- Working outside of the ‘norms’ including visits to prison, emotional support in court, and support to attend appointments
- Working with close and extended family
- Support with perusing and accessing hobbies and interests
- Life skills and self-care
- Work on choices and consequences
- Support to ensure that wishes and feelings are heard
- Holding others to account and advocating for young people

The project also works with partners across the city including the Youth Offending Service, Social Care, Schools and other Education Providers, Women's Aid and the NSPCC. Workers conduct joint working with all relevant services surrounding the young people in order to ensure that services are joined up, complimentary, and duplication is avoided. The project also takes a systems change approach to challenging systemic issues that are causing additional barriers for the young people.

This report has been written in April 2020, a month into the unprecedented UK-wide lockdown due to COVID-19. During this time, the project has made significant adaptations to the way in which it is working with young people, as workers are no longer able to meet face-to-face with young people. This report touches only lightly on how the project has adapted during this time, as it only applies to a few weeks of the project. However, some detail is included on this in Chapter 4 (Learning). **In particular, it is clear that this is a critical time for young people, and the loss of their workers at this time if further funding is not imminently secured would significantly increase the risks they face.**

Presenting Characteristics

Since October 2018, the project has received 12 referrals, and worked with 10 of these:

- 50% of young people were White British, 25% from Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, 17% Black/Black British, and 8% White Other.
- 75% of young people identified as male, and 25% as female.
- Young people were aged between 12-18, with the two most common ages as 12 and 16 (with each accounting for 30%).

The young people with whom Next Gen are working present with a range of experiences of multiple disadvantage, and a number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). They have often experienced trauma, violence, danger, abuse, neglect, and have subsequently begun displaying behaviours that affect their ability to progress and thrive in life. Having a high number of ACEs has been proven to have a significant and lifelong impact on physical and mental health, and overall life chances.² Data collected by the project indicates that all the young people had been exposed to parental substance misuse and abuse. Most had experienced domestic violence, abuse, and/or trauma from a young age, had a chaotic home life and significant safeguarding risks identified. As a result, many were or had been involved in criminality, offending, gangs, and were experiencing or at risk of exploitation. Most struggled with their mental health and wellbeing, including anger, anxiety and depression, with half having suicidal thoughts. Some of the young people also had diagnosed or suspected conditions such as ADHD or autism. All the young people currently or previously had numerous other service involvement, and almost all regularly struggled to engage with these.

There are concerns for many young people about their risk of, and exposure to, exploitation and negative relationships. This is exacerbated by a lack of attendance at school (whether through exclusion or truancy), and unsafe home environments where young people may be exposed to domestic violence or substance abuse. Many of these young people had relationships with older peers, and were involved in gangs or other criminality with these peers.

“Concerns have been highlighted that this young person is entrenched within a lifestyle engaged within County Lines.” (Local Professional)

“We are concerned that [YP] is being exploited to sell drugs on behalf of older males in exchange for cannabis/alcohol and money.” (Local Professional)

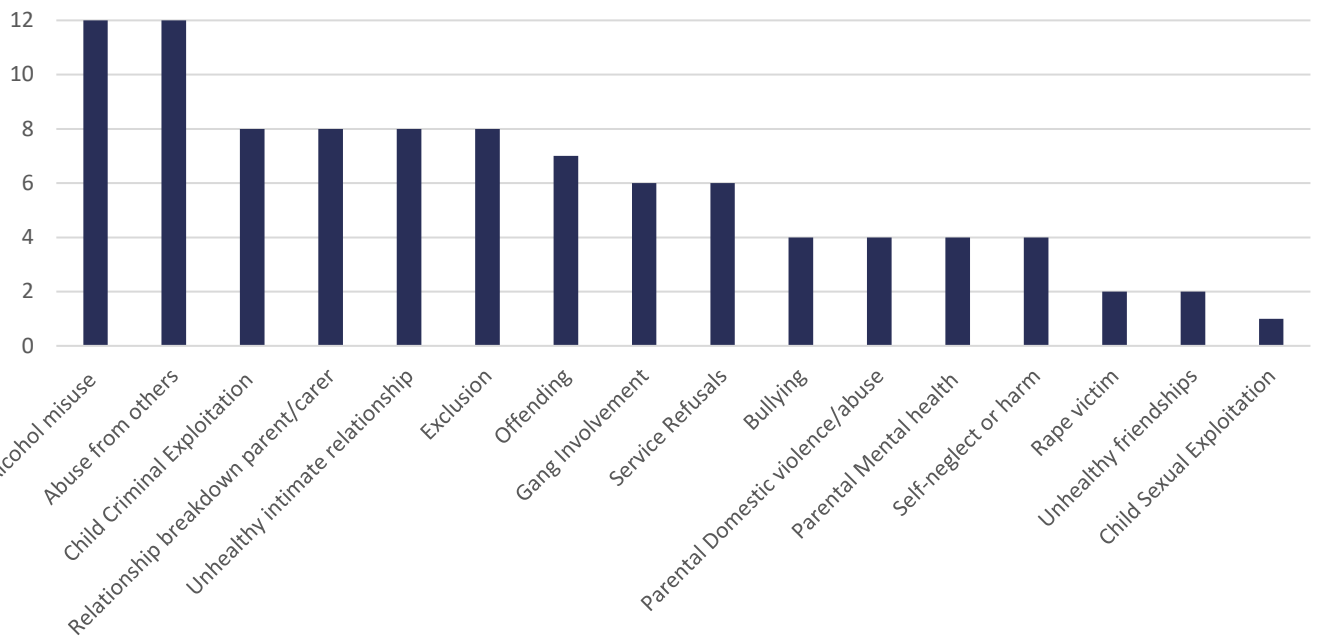
“Some older “friends” are outright exploiting him.” (Local Professional)

Violence, including domestic violence against partners and family members and peers, also features regularly in the lives of the young people. This is both as young people having experienced domestic violence, but also as subsequent perpetrators. Some of these young people were also new or expectant parents.

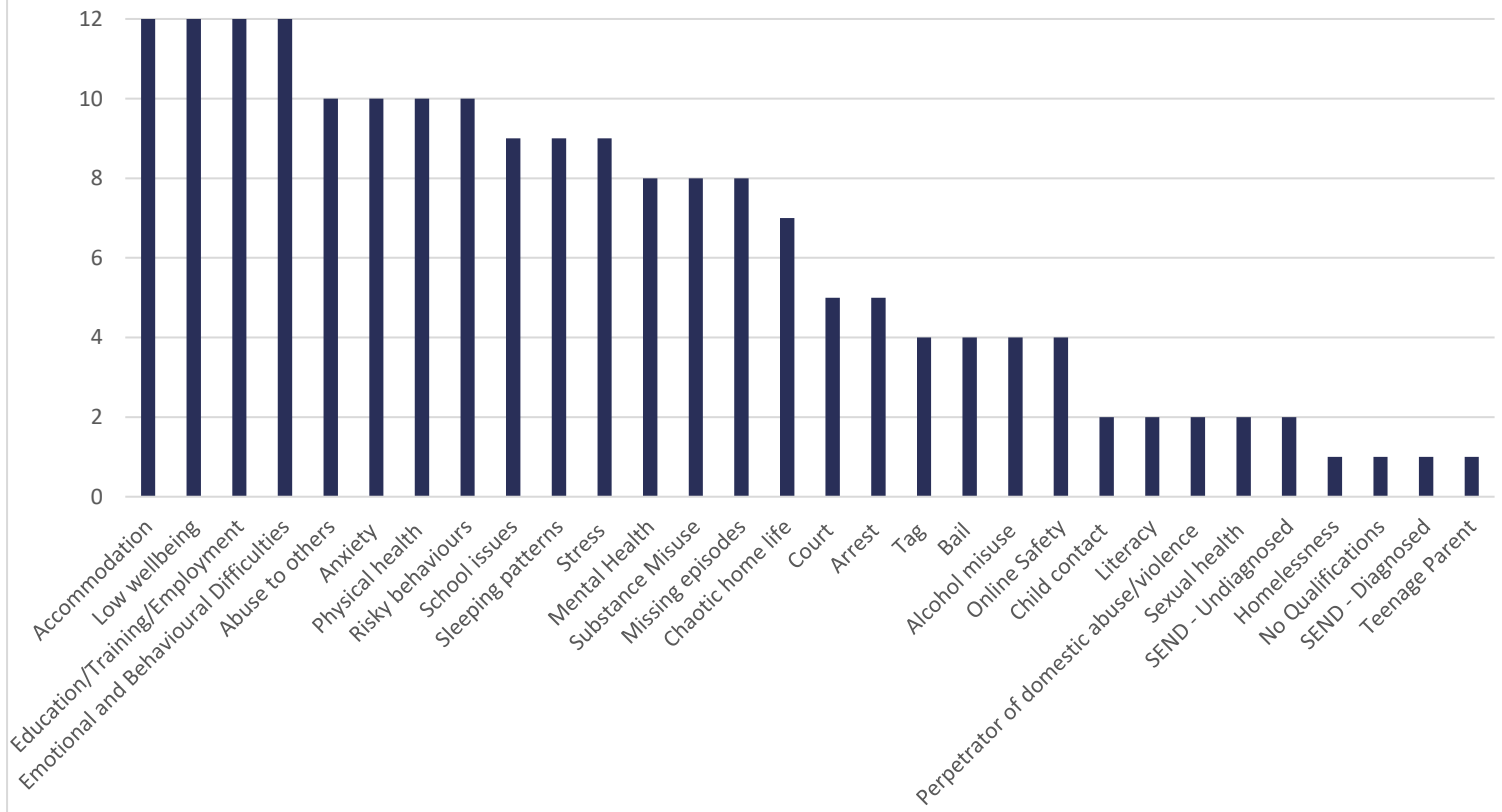
Graphs 1 and 2 demonstrate young people’s life experiences, and their current needs when presenting to the service. It is important to note that these are not mutually exclusive, and almost all of those features within the ‘life experiences’ category were still present in the young people’s lives when they began working with the project:

² NHS England. Future in mind: promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people’s mental health wellbeing (2015)

Graph 1: Young People's Experiences



Graph 2: Young people's presenting needs

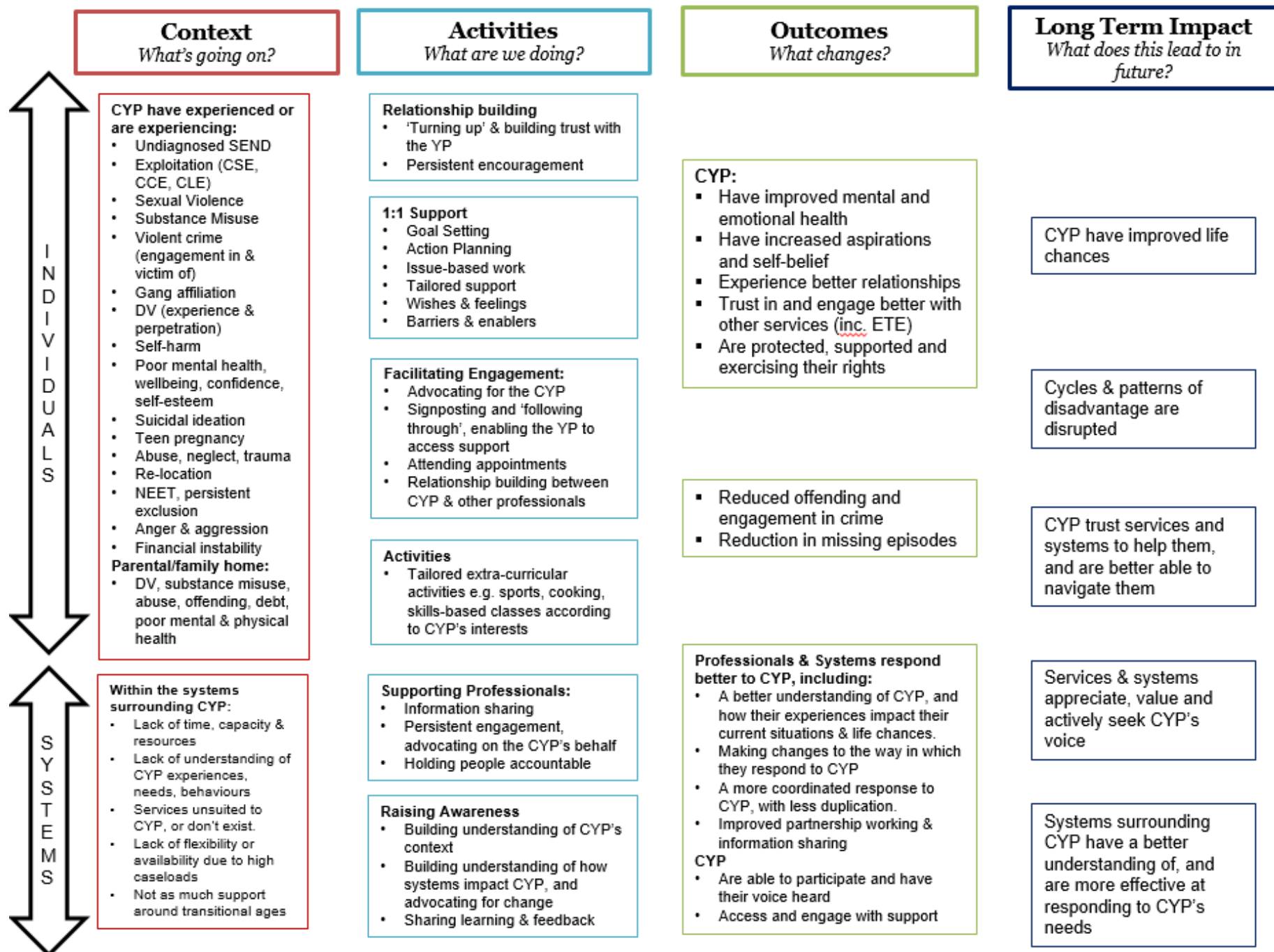


Despite these experiences, many professionals identify a strength and resilience in these YP that the Next Gen team can use to enable them to work through difficulties. Many young people are able to identify goals, positive activities, and interests that they would like to explore through the work with the project. They are able to identify the barriers to their goals, and their strengths that will enable them to achieve these. The young people have overcome a significant amount of trauma, and a significant number of external stressors in their lives, simply by engaging with the service. They express a motivation to change their lives, and a desire to move forwards, and want to use the support from Next Generation (once they feel they can trust their worker) to do this. This combination of multiple disadvantage and resilience is exemplified by a quote from one professional:

“He is tremendously resilient and vulnerable in equal measure.”

The evaluation takes a mixed methods approach, and utilises a range of qualitative and quantitative data in order to evidence impact. Primarily, this includes data from the project’s 360 appraisal approach (feedback from statutory partners such as education and social care), qualitative evidence from interviews (with external professionals, internal staff, and young people), and a sample of quantitative data received from Nottingham City Council. The evaluation aims to explore the project’s impact, its critical success factors that led to these, and learning for future delivery. Details on the evaluation methodology, including sample sizes, can be found in Appendix B.

The Theory of Change for the project is below. It outlines the activities undertaken by the project, their anticipated outcomes, and the long-term goals. The evaluation looks for evidence against these outcomes, drawing on the data sources outlined above. The anticipated longer-term impacts are expected to manifest in future as a result of these outcomes, or are likely to occur as a result of a combination of external factors. As a result, the evaluation does not focus on these.



2. Impact

The evaluation will first look at the impact on young people, by examining each outcome identified within the Theory of Change in turn, and considering the evidence for these.

Young people have improved mental and emotional health

All of the young people with whom Next Gen has been working have low wellbeing and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most struggle with stress, anxiety, and depression.³ In many cases, their trauma and previous life experiences have led to feelings of confusion, anger, and difficulties in processing emotions. For example, many young people spoke about using drugs and alcohol as responses to stressors or trauma, which in turn can make them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Feedback from young people, both through interviews and the feedback forms, indicates that they have experienced significant improvements in their wellbeing as a result of the support received from Next Generation. This includes reduced stress, improved confidence, reduced feelings of anxiety and anger, and increased wellbeing:

“I’m more relaxed... I have improved my confidence” (YP feedback form)

“[My] anger has reduced... [I’m] thinking more about consequences” (YP feedback form)

Through the support received from Next Gen, workers aim to provide a safe space for young people to explore their emotions and feelings. Workers give young people the validation that their emotional responses are normal, enable them to recognise their triggers, and provide practical tools to manage emotional health and wellbeing. Feedback from young people demonstrates how they have been able to achieve this improvement, by using the tools, positive activities, and strategies discussed with their worker:

“I used to punch walls and everything. I used to get angry and then start doing the maddest stuff. I used to proper kick off, but I’m more like an adult now. I used to have no filter whatsoever. I used to F and blind at everyone, because I didn’t really care. Now, I’ve grown a sense of caring from working with [Worker], because he’s helped me to realise that not everybody’s against ya.” (YP interview)

Out of those who completed a feedback form, 71%⁴ of young people said that they are better able to manage their emotions as a result of the project.

Young people experience better relationships

Many of the young people experienced significant tensions within the family home, struggled to manage their anger and communicate with people, and often had negative relationships with peers (including older peers), families, and professionals. Within the identified needs and experiences data, 10 had displayed abuse to others, 8 had identified concerns about unhealthy intimate relationships, 7 identified that they had chaotic home lives, and 8 had experienced relationship breakdown with their parents or carers. Since working with the project, young people have fed back that their relationships with peers and families had improved.

³ See graph 2

⁴ 5 out of 7 young people who completed a follow up form (N= 58%)

“[I’m] not getting into conflict with [my] younger sister anymore.” (YP feedback form)

“[Next Gen has] helped with my relationship with my mum. Me and my mum didn’t get along, we used to argue all the time. There’s no doubt [worker] helped.” (YP interview)

“It’s helped me to see the good side to my mum, And he’s helped me recreate my bond with my dad. I rebuilt my relationship with my dad and I’m in a better place with my dad now than I’ve ever been. Now I actually can talk to my dad.” (YP interview)

As well as improving relationships, Next Gen workers also try to encourage young people to distance from negative relationships, particularly with older peers from whom they may be at risk of exploitation. Young people spoke about being able to recognise negative relationships with peer groups, and distancing themselves from people who were negative influences (including former exploiters).

“It was not a great a relationship at all and he helped me realise I need to get away from that, because [it was] really negatively affecting me” (YP interview)

“I used to do stupid stuff, get drunk all the time. Out with my mates who weren’t my mates. I used to do stuff what got me into trouble and then, ever since working with [Worker], I’ve not done anything like that.” (YP interview)

Next Gen workers aim to enable young people to recognise their triggers, and how these can lead to negative situations and affect their relationships with others. Young people described being better able to understand and manage their feelings of anger and stress, and an ability to see alternative perspectives. They felt that this had enabled them to improve communication with their peers, families, and professionals, and had subsequently led to better relationships with these groups. Staff and professionals also described how they were able to model an appropriate relationship with an adult or service, enable young people to have constructive conversations, and improve their communication skills.

“He’s also really helped my social skills as well; he’s helped me be able to talk to people. Working one-on-one with him, it’s allowed me to talk to other people one-on-one in real life.” (YP interview)

“I know how to act in certain situations. I know what I can and can’t say in certain situations with people.” (YP interview)

“[The] relationship building we do with them allows them to model other relationships with adults that they haven’t been able to, like tutors, parents and in school.” (Staff interview)

Young people have greater trust in, and engage better with, other services, including education, training, and employment

When interviewed, staff highlighted that their main goal for young people is to ensure their engagement in education or training so that they can progress in future. Data gathered by the project shows that all of the young people expressed difficulty with education, training or employment, and 8 of the young people had currently or previously been excluded from school (either permanently or temporarily). Evidence gathered from schools and qualitative feedback

shows that young people have better engagement with education or training provision, and aspirations for employment.

Data from three young people who previously struggled with attendance at school shows that after working with the project, their attendance increased from an average of 78% to 100%.⁵

This increase in attendance is important both because it ensures young people's participation in education, which is important for their future, but also because it immediately safeguards them against vulnerability to exploitation and other risks.

"As a result of [your service], [YP's] attendance and attainment in school has increased. He is managing main stream school better... this is because of his support worker from The Children's Society." (Professional feedback)

"[Young Person] knows that we are all very proud of the effort she has made in turning around her attendance and improving her achievement... [She] has been an absolute star and won the Headteacher's Award for her effort and commitment to her studies this year." (Professional feedback, education)

It is also interesting to note that there are some examples of the young people with whom the project has been working who have been moved to Alternative Provision. In many instances, this would not be seen as a positive outcome. However, some of these young people, and professionals within and outside of Next Gen, have identified that these moves have actually been very positive for these young people. Many of them have found these to be environments in which they can better focus and engage with their education, and where they can receive the attention that they need in order to do this. For example, one of the young people with whom the project has worked achieved the highest ever mock GCSE results within the alternative education provider he is attending.

"I've been non-stop just learning. I'm just trying to catch up with everything I've not learnt... I prioritise my learning now above anything else. Actually, I was getting student of the week and for ten days straight, I got... a new record in the school." (YP interview)

Data gathered by the project indicates that 6 of the young people had previously or currently refused statutory services. All young people currently or previously had a number of statutory services involved. Professionals from statutory services who were interviewed and gave feedback felt young people are engaging better with their own services. This includes increased communication, turning up to and engaging with sessions, and being more open with professionals. Staff described providing young people with an understanding of why other services are involved, which had not previously been explained to them, and that this was important in increasing their engagement in services. Staff and professionals also credited that the increased engagement had been as a result of the Next Gen workers being able to repair young people's trust in services.

"He's got trust in professionals from [Next Gen]" (Professional interview)

⁵ Please note that this data is only available for those young people whose attendance data was provided by schools (three young people). This is requested by the project but not always completed.

“I did know that [Worker] had already built the relationship, so she was encouraging him to engage with me, which sped up the process of him engaging with me.” (Professional Interview)

Reduced offending and engagement in crime

Many of the young people with whom the project had worked were or had been involved in criminality (some prolifically), offending, gangs, and were or had been criminally exploited. Data gathered by the project shows that 7 of the young people were or had been engaged in some form of offending, 6 had gang involvement, and 5 had previously been arrested. Workers aim to enable young people to see and experience alternative pathways, keep them safe from exploiters and gangs, and address underlying issues related to offending behaviour.

Data obtained from Nottingham City Council in December 2019 shows that prior to working with Next Generation Nottingham, 5 of the young people with whom the project was working at the time had 13 arrests between them. Since working with Next Gen, these 5 young people have had a total of 2 arrests between them.⁶

It is important to note that this only accounts for a small portion of reported crimes and offending – those that were reported, and those that led to an arrest. Offending behaviour is likely to be much higher than just arrests, and qualitative feedback from young people, staff, and professionals within the YOT indicates significant reductions in this. Feedback from young people also demonstrates not just a reduction, but also a prevention in escalation of offending behaviour:

“[if I hadn’t worked with the project] I think I’d probably be in prison you know...yeah I think I’d probably be in prison or somewhere else. I would have been still getting into trouble with the police.” (YP interview)

“He’s... supported me getting out of the gangs.” (YP interview)

“A year ago I was doing bad stuff, getting arrested and stuff, near enough going to prison and that, and then now I’m in care, going to college and close to getting a job” (YP interview)

“[if I hadn’t worked with the project] I’d probably be selling drugs. I genuinely probably would be selling drugs and smoking weed. I don’t know what would’ve happened with me. I would’ve been in a, definitely, a bad – a worse place.” (YP interview)

“Since [Next Gen] was involved I don’t believe that there was any further criminal activity from this YP” (Professional Interview)

Evidence shows that each arrest made costs anywhere between £285 and £593,⁷ and the National Audit Office estimates that each ‘young offender’ can cost £8,000 per year, with the most prolific costing £29,000.⁸ As a result, preventing criminality not only keeps young people safe, and enables them to thrive in future, but also has significant cost saving implications.

⁶ Data obtained December 2019

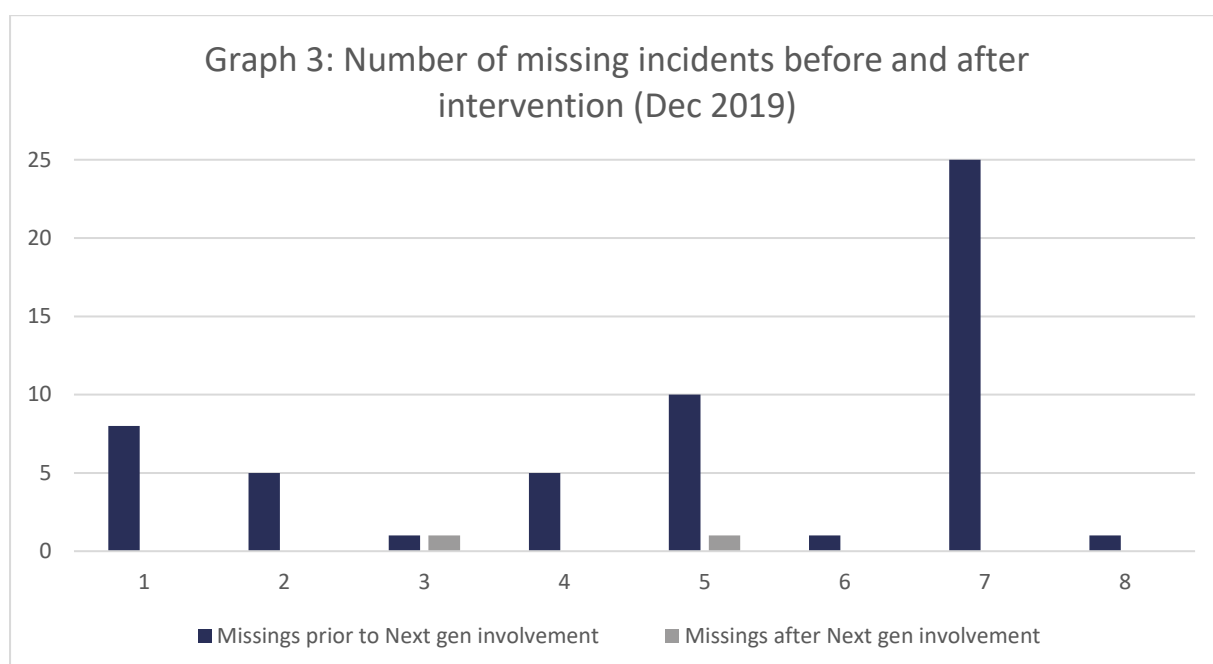
⁷ Unit Cost Database, GMCA Research Team (formerly New Economy), 2019

⁸ National Audit Office and Ministry of Justice, The cost of a cohort of young offenders to the criminal justice system, 2011

Reduction in missing episodes

Missing episodes represent a significant risk factor for young people at risk of exploitation.⁹ For many young people, missing episodes are a coping mechanism employed to deal with conflict within the home environment, or a response to triggers, but also unwittingly place them in danger of exploitation, violence, and other harm.

Data obtained from Nottingham City Council in December 2019 shows that before working with Next Gen, **8 young people with whom the project was working at the time had 56 missing incidents between them. Since working with Next Gen, these 8 young people have had a total of 2 recorded missing incidents between them.**¹⁰ Whilst some young people account for a much higher number of missing incidents than others, there are particularly significant reductions across all young people for whom it was relevant. Graph 3 shows the spread of these missing incidents across these young people:



Research shows that each reported missing incident costs the Police £2,416¹¹, so this reduction is likely to lead to significant savings for local services. It is again important to note that this only accounts for reported and recorded missing incidents. Evidence indicates that reported missing incidents account for only a small portion of overall missing episodes, and so it is likely that overall numbers are much higher than within this data.¹²

Young people have increased aspirations and self-belief

Staff describe how many of the young people's goals when they first start working with the project are often to reduce service involvement, have better relationships with their families, and feel calmer. However, these goals are constantly evolving and changing, and after they

⁹ See for example: Missing People, A Safer Return, 2019

¹⁰ Data obtained December 2019

¹¹ Unit Cost Database, GMCA Research Team (formerly New Economy), 2019

¹² Rees, G. (2011) Still Running 3: Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways (The Children's Society) report indicates that 68% of CYP who have run away from home are not reported to the police.

have made progress in other areas, young people are able to create goals for the future and envision a pathway towards these. Workers encourage young people to take up new hobbies and interests, develop goals, and show them the pathway towards these. Young people described how taking part in these activities enables them to focus their energy in a positive way, and prioritise their physical and mental health for the future. Many of the young people spoke about ideas for their future careers, and how their education would contribute towards these, but how they would never have had these goals prior to working with the project. Young people are proud of what they have achieved through their work with Next Gen, and recognise how they have managed to change their lives and make significant progress as a result.

“I’ve already planned out my future. I know I’m going into the Army when I finish school. Then I can get my trade in the Army, I can learn things, like become an Electrician, or an Engineer. Then [when] I come out... I’ve got everything I need to set up own business with the skills that I’ve learnt. I’ve thought all about it and that’s a driver for me, that I know what I want, so I know what I’ve got to do to get that... [Worker’s] been the most important thing for me to realise that I need to change. I needed to sort it out, because I didn’t want to end up in ten years being off my head all the time on weed, in pubs, ruining my life, when I could be having a decent life, actually be doing something, going to different countries with the Army. He’s helped me realise that there’s two walks in life and he’s helped me realise the one that’s better.” (YP interview)

“I just want to improve every day... I feel like I can now get a job and believe in myself. I feel like I changed my life around now.” (YP interview)

Young people are protected, supported, and exercising their rights

As a result of the significant reductions in missing episodes, arrests, and overall outcomes achieved, the young people with whom we are working are likely to have experienced significant improvements in physical safety. Factors such as school exclusions¹⁴ and missing incidents are shown to be linked to increased risk of exploitation, and so by reducing these instances, young people are being protected against exploitation and other risks. The project also works with young people to explain grooming and exploitation, and how young people might experience these, and how to safeguard themselves against risk.

“When I was in it I didn’t really know what was happening, with the grooming... he helped me see what was actually happening. I’m not hanging around with older people anymore.” (YP interview)

“I think there was less engagement with negative peers in the community, and he seemed to have a better understanding of risk and safety. I think that’s [because of] all the things [Worker] was doing with him in terms of speaking about the criminal exploitation, carrying knives, safety in the community, and relationship with peers.” (Professional interview)

There are also examples of where the trusting relationship built with their workers has enabled young people to communicate about unsafe situations, and for the project to help support young people through this in a safe way. For example, one young person had threats to life made against them in their local area as a result of previous gang involvement. Prior to working with Next Gen when these threats had been made, the young person had run away to keep themselves safe. They informed their worker about the threats, and the worker was able to safely find this young person accommodation out of area. This had the combined effect of keeping them physically safe from the threats, and preventing a missing episode.

Additionally, improvements in relationships in the family home have been vital in enabling young people to stay at home where this is appropriate.

“[Next Gen] support has been vital at keeping the young person at home in a safe, calm and sustained way.” (Professional feedback)

However, the following case study demonstrates how keeping a young person at home may not always be the most appropriate mechanism for keeping them safe and enabling them to thrive. It also demonstrates how giving young people choice over their lives, and enabling them to exercise their rights, is important to their progress.

One young person with whom the project has been working lived in an unsafe, chaotic home environment. This included experience of domestic violence, substance abuse, and a generally unsafe environment. They were at significant risk of exploitation, were unable to concentrate or engage with school, and had poor mental health and high levels of stress. This was affecting their ability to progress and thrive in other areas of their life.

The young person grew to recognise, acknowledge, and accept this. As a result, this young person voluntarily chose to go into care. This was fairly unexpected, as we often think of this outcome as not being beneficial to a young person. However, in this instance the young person recognised that the safest and most stable option for them was to be voluntarily removed from the family home and placed into care.

Since this decision, the young person has been able to significantly increase their engagement in school and education, has been volunteering with St John’s Ambulance, and wants to become a paramedic in future. This case study demonstrates just how resilient and mature this young person is, in spite of all the trauma and previous negative experiences.

Unfortunately, the original care home in which the young person was placed became subject to an external review as a result of concerns over the behaviour of a number of care home staff. As a result, this young person has moved again, which has caused disruption. This has been frustrating for this young person, as it demonstrates again how a young person can be at significant risk of harm despite doing their best to improve their situation. However, they remain confident for the future.

It is also hoped that as a result of better engagement in statutory services, and a greater trust in professionals within these, young people are more likely to be protected in future. Feedback from statutory partners indicates that the project’s joint working with these services has been successful in enabling their services to be more effective. For example, workers from Next Gen are able to highlight and share important information about the young people in key multi-agency meetings, which leads these services being better able to protect young people:

“[Worker] was able to share information with us we didn’t know... [As a result] in the CCE strategy meeting this child was deemed at risk of being criminally exploited. [Worker] was able to gather a lot more information than I was, because he didn’t open up to me as much as he did with [Worker]. The outcome for the YP was around safety, and being able to monitor him and his progress, because of that meeting [he was] then transferred to the community team on a child in need plan.” (Professional Interview)

Professionals from other services interviewed felt that the support provided by Next Gen had been incredibly useful for their services, including:

- Amplifying the voice of the young person within this service;
- Sharing information about the young person's experiences, perspectives, and progress; and
- An ability to provide additional support that these services cannot provide.

"She has developed a really good working relationship with a young man who engages with very few people, [Worker] is probably the only person who he engages with. It's clear that she knows more about him than any [other service]. We have been in meetings before when there have been 10-12 professionals from different agencies, and [Worker] has always been the one that has brought the most valuable information because she has been able to get him to engage with her." (Professional Interview)

Reduction in substance misuse

Whilst this outcome was not originally identified within the Theory of Change, there is significant qualitative evidence to suggest that many of the young people have reduced substance abuse, including drugs (mostly cannabis) and alcohol. As previously highlighted, many young people previously used drugs and alcohol as responses to stressors or trauma, using them as an escape from issues and conflict in their lives. Drugs and alcohol were often closely interlinked with their experiences of abuse, trauma, and exploitation, and had been prevalent in their home lives. Through work with the project, they have been able to find alternative pathways to drugs and alcohol for dealing with stress and trauma.

"I think I'd be in serious trouble... all I used to do was smoke weed and drink and I used to get myself into so much trouble. But now... I'm not like that now." (YP interview)

"I've got stuff that makes me do bad things, for instance my relationship was bad having lots of arguments... then I'd go and smoke weed to get away from that. Something [he said] I could do was create other pathways away from that situation to stop me from going and smoking weed or committing crimes... they were my getaways... I guess I released anger from doing that. I didn't feel like I had an escape. I felt like I had to do something bad because I felt that the world was against me, [so] I felt like I'd get back at it. But then he obviously made me realise [I can] make better choices when I'm angry, do something like kick a football, work out, or go on a run." (YP interview)

Other outcomes

It is also important to note that young people have experienced a range of other positive changes as a result of the project. However, many of these are not necessarily recorded within the Theory of Change, or could be predicted from the outset. The flexible nature of the model provided means that outcomes experienced will often be highly individual to the young person themselves. This is demonstrated in the following example outlined in a staff interview:

“One piece of work that’s been the most meaningful for me was supporting a young person to be able to visit family in prison. No other service was able to do this – social care wasn’t willing to do it as it was out of their working hours, foster placement didn’t want to support this due to perceived risks to the placement setting. For me it was really meaningful to get the young person to be able to do that. It was to enable the young person to feel connected to her family, as they were very close and she missed them desperately. There would be no other service who could do that, for a young person who just desperately wanted contact with her family. It was just about facilitating it. If you asked the young person what the best thing about the service was they would say that, because without us she would not have been able to speak to her family, which they were so desperate for.” (Staff interview)

Attribution

It is important to note that no comparison group is available for the evaluation to definitively evidence attribution to the Next Gen project. Professionals and parents who provided feedback credited the project with the changes experienced by young people. The young people interviewed, and who provided feedback, all credited Next Gen explicitly with enabling them to achieve these changes. It is important to note that there is likely to be some element of positivity bias within this, whereby young people are keen to associate changes with the project when asked. Almost all of the young people have service involvement from other services. As a result, it is likely that these services, as well as other external factors, also had some influence on changes seen. The young people also heavily credited themselves as well, for being motivated to change their situations, behaviours, and responses.

“I can just credit him, basically, for almost everything towards me changing. He’s been pushing me in the right direction. I feel like he actually wants me to change, unlike other people. Some people just are there telling me all this... but he actually means it. I’ve been involved with other services before... but I feel like they’re [there] for the sake of it.” (YP Interview)

“I can make the decision to not do anything if I want to. I can make the decision to just shut my mouth and walk away if I need to. I had the choice to make the changes I did.” (YP Interview)

“There’s a number of agencies involved, YOT, drug services, mental health, social care, but genuinely the most constructive engagement has been through [Next Gen]” (Professional interview)

It is also important to recognise that, whilst many of the young people have made significant progress as a result of the project, many of these young people are still dealing with previous trauma, sometimes chaotic or unsafe home environments, and are likely to face other barriers in future. It is important to remember that these young people have faced significant adverse childhood experiences, which can take a long time to overcome. Next Gen has enabled the start of this path, and seen significant outcomes. However, for many young people the continuing pathway is likely to be up and down at times, rather than clearly linear.

Systems change

“System changes” are changes to the people, organisations, policies, processes, cultures, beliefs and environment that make up the system. This is an aim to improve the system response to young people to ensure long term change for children in the area, so that in future there is less need for a project like Next Generation. This work is undertaken in partnership with other agencies such as the police, schools, and local authority colleagues. Next Generation Systems Change work is informed by young people’s experiences, looking at the issues they face within systems and then attempting to change these for the better.

Section 4, Learning, highlights that the project has not been as able to focus on systems change work as much as anticipated. However, there are some small, clear examples of systems change work, particularly with individual professionals or system actors.

For example, one of the systems change projects sought to change unsafe bail conditions for young people. Bail conditions in the city are set by either the courts or police, and are often automatically assigned to certain police stations. For some of the young people the project works with, this can mean that they need to travel across the city, either through or to an area that is very unsafe for them due to previous gang affiliations. This means that they fear for their physical safety when travelling to these police stations as part of their bail conditions, and so in many cases end up missing these meetings. Although this gets them in further trouble, it is seen as a safer option than travelling through or to an area that is dangerous for them.

We recognised that this was a potential system that wasn’t working for young people. It wasn’t enabling them to engage with these systems, and was potentially putting them at risk of physical harm. Through the strong relationships we had built with the police, we were approached by them to discuss options for an alternative process. The team worked closely alongside those in the relevant police station, and we advocated for a different system to be put in place for the benefit of all. The team influenced mindsets by enabling the police to look at the system from an alternative perspective. As a result, it was agreed that bail conditions and locations would be changed for young people for whom it was a risk to travel to certain locations. It is hoped that these changes will continue to apply to those with whom the project has not worked. In future, the team would like to work with courts, solicitors, and other police stations to ensure that the momentum in these changes isn’t lost, and that this can be expanded to benefit other young people.

The project has also sought to challenge school exclusion processes through system change work. Many of the young people have a number of school exclusions, and yet evidence indicates that excluding young people from school often places them at risk of exploitation and/or physical harm.¹³ For one young person who had a significantly chaotic and difficult home life, with experience of domestic violence and parental substance misuse, their resulting poor emotional health manifested as anger in school. This led to a number of exclusions, which only sent this young person back to the unsafe environment that was causing these behaviours in the first place. This was especially damaging for this young person who is incredibly bright, and engages well in their studies when able to. In order to try and stop this cycle, the project worked with the school to advocate for the young person. The team enabled the school to understand the young person's situation, and flipped the perspective about why this behaviour leading to exclusions might be happening. As a result, the school started to think differently, and approach situations that may have previously led to exclusions differently. This young person is now thriving in education, and it is hoped that the changed approach in this school will continue to benefit other young people in future. The team also hope to work with a greater number of schools in future.

These changes have been identified as having a positive impact on the young people with whom the project is working, as well as other young people in future if sustained. Systems change work requires strong relationships with partners, which the project has now developed over the last 18 months. It is anticipated that these strong relationships will stand the project in good stead for future systems change work. For example, the project has forged strong relationships with other voluntary sector providers, the police, the local authority, and statutory services in the area to build expertise across the area in systems change and embed new and effective ways of working. The project also has in place a proposal to Nottingham City Council to deliver systems workforce development, which is being supported by the Lankelly Chase Foundation. Building on previous work on bail conditions, the project is also continuing to work in partnership with the Police to bring together systems work, aligning this across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (Nottinghamshire Police force have been selected by the Home office to pilot systems change). Current proposals include funding for an additional post within the team, that would increase capacity in this area.

¹³ See for example Exclusions review: Call for evidence Written evidence from The Children's Society (<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/dofe.school.exclusion.consultation.response.pdf>)

3. Critical Success Factors

Evidence gathered from appraisal forms, external data, and interviews, has demonstrated how the project has met its outcomes. Understanding why these changes might have occurred (the critical success factors) will help to inform future delivery and best practice. From interviews and qualitative feedback, the following factors have emerged as important in achieving these outcomes:¹⁴

Time

The most important factor, identified by almost everyone interviewed, was the amount of time (both frequency and longevity) that workers are able to spend with young people. Next Gen has two dedicated caseworkers, who hold a caseload of no more than 3-4 young people at a time, and work intensively with these young people for up to 10 hours a week. The project has had significant success in engaging young people with high levels of previous service refusals, with a significant range of adverse experiences and needs. Evidence indicates that in order to engage these young people successfully and meaningfully, a significant amount of time is needed from the worker. It is apparent that a low caseload/high intensity model, delivered over a longer time period, is crucial to enabling these young people to thrive and progress. Staff, professionals, and young people all highlighted the amount of time that workers are able to dedicate to young people as fundamental to the success of the service model.

“I’ve been with loads of other services before and they’re there for a certain allocated period of time, like I’ve had people for 6 weeks, and then they just disappear, they’re gone....how am I supposed to really change if I’ve only got that person for [that time]? You’re left in the dark, whereas with [Worker] he’s been there the entire way through me improving and he’s still there now that I’ve come out the other side and I’m in a way better position. I would nowhere near have come as far as I have done if it was a short term thing.” (YP interview)

“We can’t unpick 12 years of somebody’s life within 12 weeks, when it is full of a significant amount of trauma. The young people are expected to go into a building, room, person that they are unfamiliar with and expected then to start telling them, articulately, about their experiences and trauma and how this is affecting them. It’s not until week 8 really that they are comfortable, then they become a trusting adult, and then if it’s time limited the relationship is then just cut. This has such a big impact on YP and it happens to them time and time again. When they have high vulnerabilities and high risk, it’s just adding to that, and they can’t handle it and they get to a point where that’s too much for them.” (Staff interview)

“The time that she’s put into him has been quite amazing. In all the years I’ve worked at the YOT, I can’t remember working with another partnership agency that’s offered so much valuable support. I’ve been a YOT worker for 20 years and this kind of support is unprecedented. It’s brilliant.” (Professional Interview)

“[Next Gen Worker’s] availability was undoubtedly so valuable, allowing [them] to arrive in school in times of immediate crisis – this is one characteristic of Next Gen support that is very unique and undoubtedly helped. The fact that a caring adult arrived just for him gave another level of emotional support that was alien to [YP’s] life. It made him feel worthy of care and effort.” (Feedback from local school)

¹⁴ Note that this section is relevant to outcomes relating to work with young people, as opposed to systems change, unless otherwise stated.

Consistency

Linked to this, the consistency of having one trusted professional to help navigate multiple aspects of their lives has been very valuable to young people. Young people said that one of the most difficult and frustrating things they encounter when working with professionals is the need to repeat their story because of professionals and services around them changing. Having the consistency of one worker for the past 18 months has been hugely beneficial, and has made a significant difference. By not having to constantly repeat their experiences, they have been able to spend time with their worker focusing on moving forwards and making progress.

“One young person, during the 18 months we’ve worked with them every other professional around them has changed at least once, and we’re the only consistent one. With us, young people don’t have to talk about their traumatic experiences over and over again like they do when they meet new professionals. They don’t have to try the same things over and over again with different professionals that they know don’t work for them. They disengage with [other] services because they know they won’t be there in a few months.” (Staff interview)

“[Next Gen Worker] being a constant in [young person’s] life was so valuable. He felt less isolated and knew he had Next Gen as a caring and guiding force in his life when he needed it. I feel [he] would be undoubtedly more ‘lost’ and at risk of a criminal life without Next Gen in it.” (Feedback from local school)

However, there is a risk that if further funding is not secured the removal of the project could unwittingly reinforce this problem.

Flexibility

The model the project uses is flexible, and is able to adapt and respond to what works best for each individual young person. Staff are able to use their skills to support young people in a way that will enable them to progress, and this may be different for each young person. Staff provide a range of support and opportunities to young people, drawing on specialist expertise when needed. For example, this might include accompanying young people to appointments, engaging them in positive activities, as well as one-to-one support on a range of issues. Additionally, the young people tend to listen more to workers in Next Generation because they have chosen to take part, and the workers are independent and not seen as having a particular agenda. They are used to service involvement and often suspicious of the agenda behind the advice of other professionals.

“He was making sure the work that we’re doing is allocated to me, it’s for me and me only. It’s not like it’s a set regime you’ve got to do. It’s optional, as well.” (YP interview)

Skills and approach of staff

The skills of staff on the project are fundamental to its success. The importance of the trust that young people have in these staff to support them in their best interests cannot be underestimated. Young people, professionals, and staff identified that there are key skills held by the staff and approaches used within sessions that made their support effective, including:

- The ability to really listen to young people, and hear what they say;
- The time taken to build trust with a young person, and develop a supportive, genuine, and professional relationship;

- Being available to provide flexible support, and talk about any aspects of a young person's life that they needed to;
- Not making false promises, being honest with them about what they can achieve, and transparency about what information they will share with others;
- Modelling an appropriate and supportive adult relationship, and creating a feeling of genuine care for that young person; and
- Explaining to young people what services do, why they are involved, and what they are working towards for the young person.

"A lot of services go in and tell, we go in and listen." (Staff interview)

"I feel like she's the only one that actually listens properly... It's just helped me a lot, because I know I've got someone to talk to, mainly... It's just good to see there's someone there." (YP interview)

"I know I can trust him and that gives me the chance to tell him everything." (YP interview)

"He's always there for me when I – if I need to speak to someone." (YP interview)

Workers are open and honest with the young people about what they can do, and what they can achieve. They treat the young people with respect, explain all their decisions and actions, and are transparent about joint working. This is particularly important, as many of these young people have a significant mistrust of services. The approach of staff means that young people are likely to listen to them above most others, including their own families.

"He trusts [Worker] because she's never let him down. She never promises him anything that she can't deliver, if she does tell him she can do something it's because she knows she can do it. That's a massive part of engaging with these young people; don't make any false promises and do what you say you're going to do." (Professional interview)

Young people, professionals, and staff all identified that they feel workers on the project are relatable to the young people. They are able to communicate effectively with young people, and draw on their own life experiences where appropriate to motivate young people.

"He's been through... the same things as me, and cause I know that he's sorted his life out and got a job. He grew up... He was involved with bad people. I look up to him and think I want to be like him, because he's done good in his life, despite he was given nothing." (YP interview)

"If there's something from my past that I can bring into it then I can do. I work in school a lot with my young people, and we're constantly talking about their relationships at school or at home, and talking about how important education is. I bring in my own experiences of that. Having somebody who's real with them really helps, and they can relate to. There's no point saying that you just have to do it." (Staff interview)

"I don't know what her background is but whatever she's done in the past has obviously influenced the way she's able to engage CYP, and her personality; she knows how to get on their level." (Professional interview)

Broadening horizons and building aspirations

Young people gave significant feedback about the activities they were able to do as part of the project. The project aims to broaden the horizons of young people by exposing them to a range of hobbies, positive activities, and opportunities that they had never previously been able to experience. All of the young people who provided feedback highlighted this as having been very important to them. They, and professionals, identified many benefits from these, including increased physical and mental health, diversionary interests, broadening horizons, and finding new hobbies to focus energy. Many of these young people have not previously had positive outlets for their energies, and the possibility of these options has been beneficial to expanding their horizons, and diverting their energy into positive pursuits. Importantly, it provided them with interests and goals that they were able to work towards, and broadened their perspectives about opportunities available to them. It also provides an opportunity to bond and communicate with workers in a less-pressured way.

“The best thing we used to do [was] play football. It’s not only the mental benefits of it, it’s also the physical benefits, because playing football has also helped me to come off weed, stop smoking completely, and stop vaping and whatever else I was doing at the time. Because I’ve noticed the more sports I do, the more motivated I am to be a better person, because that’s my drive. I want to be physically fit. I want to be happy. I want to have a future.” (YP interview)

“Obviously, I do like playing sports and stuff... but it’s not that I just use him to do that. I actually do take a lot of his advice in, because it is decent advice.” (YP interview)

When young people first come to Next Gen, many struggle to articulate goals or aspirations for the future. Workers try to broaden young people’s horizons so that they can set goals to work towards, as otherwise they may struggle with motivation. The model used by the project aims to empower young people by encouraging them to find independence, handholding along the way when needed, and stepping back gradually. For example:

1. Making health appointments for the young person (or asking parents to do so);
2. Accompanying them to the appointment and sitting in on the appointment;
3. Sitting with them while they call to make an appointment (or parents depending on age);
4. Accompanying them to the appointment and sitting in the waiting room, or waiting outside; and finally
5. Encouraging them to make an appointment independently (or parents), and attend this alone or with a different trusted adult or peer.

“Building confidence and self-esteem is really important. Having some aspirations. If they don’t have a goal, and they can’t see a route through to it, they’ll give up. Having someone to help clear the way for them, walk side by side with them through the difficult periods, really helps them to build their confidence. Until they start taking a step ahead of you and start doing it on their own.” (Staff interview)

Professional challenge

Staff, professionals, and young people all fed back that the workers on the project will also challenge young people when needed. Whilst workers have a supportive and understanding relationship with the young people, they will also challenge the young people on behaviours, reactions, and actions. As the workers have strong and trusting relationships with the young people, and the young people know that they are on their side, this challenge is constructive

and productive. All noted that this ability to challenge, as well as support, was important in enabling young people to progress:

“[Worker] will challenge him a lot, she’s not just doing all the nice things. We’re statutory and making young people do things that they don’t want to, and some other services are just letting them do the nice things so they engage with those services because they don’t get challenged. But [Worker] does, she will challenge him about his behaviour just as much as I do, but it’s the way she approaches things, she’s had the time to build up the relationship with him so she can challenge him. He’s very untrusting of everybody until he gets to know them, but [Worker] has had the time to get to know him and he clearly trusts her so when she does challenge him about what he says and does, he accepts it.” (Professional interview, YOT)

Communication and joint working with parents and services

It has also been important to build relationships with parents and other key people in the young people’s lives. Joint working with statutory services has enabled these services to receive important information about the young people that they would not have otherwise had, and professionals from these services identified this as very useful. All external professionals were very positive about the amount of information shared, and joint working completed, by Next Gen. Workers encourage young people to engage with statutory services, which professionals in these services identified as very helpful and time saving. This positive and constructive engagement with other services has also meant that workers are able to challenge these services and advocate for the young person when needed. Services are open to the opinions of Next Gen workers, because they have experienced the benefits of the project.

“[Young person’s] behaviour is challenging and difficult so everyone can be quite negative about him – but [Worker] has really been an advocate for him” (Professional feedback)

“She always replied back to emails... was easy to get hold of, if there was a missed call she’d call me back, there was always really good communication” (Professional interview)

Workers also take the time to build strong and trusting relationships with the parents or carers of young people, and their families. Whilst they primarily work with young people, workers will communicate with parents, and support them with building a strong relationship with their child. There has been positive feedback from parents whose children have been supported by Next Gen, and their buy in for the work has been important, particularly when trying to improve familial relations and increase communication.

“Communication with the parents is key. I always understand what the parents are saying and I understand their point of view and it allows me to filter it to the YP too, and it gives us a chance to talk with them so in future they can go to their parents with those worries in future.” (Staff interview)

4. Learning

As well as understanding the outcomes achieved, and what led to these, it is also important to understand learning for the future. In particular, obstacles or barriers that the project has had to overcome, and learning about how to improve in future. The following topics have emerged through interviews with staff, professionals, and young people.

Responding to COVID-19

Like all projects delivered by The Children's Society, and across the sector, Next Generation has recently been affected by COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. The UK-wide lockdown since mid-March has meant that the project has been unable to deliver face-to-face with young people, and the majority of the work delivered by the project (such as in schools, taking part in activities, 1:1 sessions) has been disrupted. In response to this, the project has moved to digital and telephone means of communicating and keeping in touch with young people. For example, through FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, phone, and other approved technologies. This has been in line with the rest of The Children's Society, and has been led by central assurances around privacy, safeguarding, and data protection.

As a result of support from within TCS, and the strong relationships established already with young people, the project has been able to move relatively quickly to this way of working. The long-term nature of the support meant that relationships with young people were already well-established, and the majority were open to moving to a different way of working temporarily.

There are concerns about the safety of young people, and the potential additional risks that they will face as a result of the current situation. For example, some young people may be more at risk of exploitation, and others are disappointed about not being able to sit their GCSE exams after having now worked so hard over the past year, leading to increased stress and anxiety. There is also a risk that relationships within the home will struggle under the strain of lockdown. These risks and anxieties are compounded by restrictions on the workers, which mean they are unable to support young people as they are used to. It is clear that this is a critical time for young people, and the loss of their workers at this time if further funding is not found would be significant.

The risk of dependency

There are concerns about whether a project of this intensity is likely to lead to greater dependencies, whereby young people may find it harder to 'exit' the service. Many of these young people do not have many other adult relationships to turn to, have experienced a significant amount of trauma, and have received intensive (and successful) support from a consistent and constant trusted person within Next Gen. These factors are likely to mean there is a higher risk of dependency. At the time of writing, no young people on the caseload had completely finished with the service. Prior to the lockdown, there had been a number of young people who would have been moved to very rare contact, and subsequently exited the service. However, due to the exceptional circumstances and potential for increased risk, the project decided to maintain regular contact.

When asked about the risk of dependency, staff felt confident that they had learnt how to manage the step-down process, and had discussed this openly with young people. Stepdown and exit happens in a gradual way, with the amount of support provided to young people reduced very slowly. The project stressed the importance of ensuring that young people are

not 'exited' too soon, and some of the young people who had been working with the project for a long time still described needing that contact when things become difficult.

It is also important to note that should the project not finding further funding, it is likely that these young people will find it hard to adapt without the ability to occasionally fall back on the support of the workers. This is a significant risk and will be managed by The Children's Society, but the risk is likely to be magnified with an intensive project of this nature.

"I was seeing him three times a week at one point, to start off with, but that's [reduced]. But I also would say I don't need it as much now, because I've improved a lot more. I don't need as much of his attention as I could've done previously, because I'm better in myself now."
(YP interview)

"The worst thing is when I can't get hold of him, because when I can't get hold of him and my Social Worker, things can escalate. And then I'm sat there with something on my chest and I can't get it out, I can't vent it, so I'll end up getting agitated with people. That's my worst thing, when I can't talk to people and I build things up. So, it all comes out in one big explosion and [that's] not good." (YP interview)

Time limits

It has become apparent through the work that many of these young people need at least 18 months support, or longer. Whilst the project theoretically does not place any time restrictions on the longevity of support, this can be affected by funding restrictions. Within a two year contract, in order to fit with the timelines the project had to stop accepting referrals within a relatively short time period, so as not to over-promise and under-deliver. Where these models are funded, it is important to recognise the length of time needed within grant agreements or contracts for these types of models.

Meeting demand and resources

The project is designed to provide long-term, intensive support to young people when they need it, and however long they need it for. This very low capacity within the project has meant that whilst the project has been successful in supporting those young people, there have been a number of eligible young people that have not been able to receive a referral. This is disheartening for the project, as these young people often fit the criteria, and are likely to have benefited from the project. However, if the project had accepted these referrals then the model would be diluted, and the project would not be providing the type of service that is effective and works for these young people. It has been difficult for the project to communicate these decisions in some cases, though this has been managed as well as possible.

Where the model is replicated in future, it is important to be highly aware of the number of referrals that can be taken on, and build in sufficient resource to be able to respond to these as much as possible.

What the project can control

The young people who have received support from the project have a range of previous life experiences. For two young people on the caseload, historic offences have resulted in custodial sentences during their time with the project. These offences happened before their

engagement with Next Gen, but their sentencing and court hearings happened when they were receiving support from workers. These young people began to make significant changes in their lives due to the support received from Next Gen, and receiving a subsequent custodial sentence for historic offences has been incredibly disheartening for the young people, their families, workers, and other professionals around them. Given the numbers of referrals that the project has had to turn down, there may be a case for imposing greater restrictions on these referrals:

“If he had been referred before he committed that offence, the outcome could be completely different. It’s difficult to see him having made so much progress and then go to prison because of a crime committed before to us, it’s really disheartening. He had started to engage in education, was adhering to conditions and turning things around. If they have a pending court case that’s looking likely they might get a sentence, moving forward we need to think about whether we’d accept those referrals. We know the model is successful, so could it be used better with other young people? Now one of the young people will be going to an adult prison because they are turning 18 soon, and everything that we have worked with them on will be so hard to remember.” (Staff Interview)

However, it is important to note that workers and professionals did not feel that this was wasted. Professionals who gave feedback on this did note how valuable it has been that the workers are able to continue to support these young people when they are in prison, and that this continuity will enable a smoother transition back into the community:

“When I first came into contact with the young person he was a prolific offender. He started working with [Next Gen], and did some really constructive work. His offending behaviour virtually stopped. Unfortunately he went to prison was because of historic offences. We were making real progress with him prior to going to prison, but because of the amount of offences already accumulated we couldn’t save him from a custodial sentence. He hasn’t responded well in there, but I don’t know another service that I’ve worked with that has continued engagement with a young person when they have gone into prison. However, if she’d stopped engaging with him while he was there they wouldn’t have been able to pick up when he comes out. It’s going to be a challenge when he comes out of prison, but I know that [Worker’s] support will be invaluable when he’s back in the community.” (Professional Interview)

Systems Change

The small amount of resource within the project, and the high demand placed on staff time by direct work with young people, has meant a limited amount of time could be dedicated to the systems change work. Originally, systems change was not an identified goal of the project. However, this developed as a priority for the team after sharing learning with other TCS projects. Whilst there have been some changes seen within systems, as outlined in Section 2, these have been limited and small-scale.

It has been difficult for staff to prioritise systems change work when faced with the pressing demands, and high level of need, from the young people with whom they are working. Systems change work can require in-depth planning and a significant amount of input and coordination. If a young person is in crisis, or needs a worker during the time they have set aside for this, then the young person’s needs will naturally take precedence.

“Working intensely and trying to incorporate systems change is really tough. Often we have time booked in for systems change, but I’ll come in and a young person has had a crisis, so I have to drop the systems change work. Due to our model and our service, we are dedicated 100% to the young person and have to be there for them. It’s happened so many times where the 1:1 work has overtaken systems change because the model is about supporting YP with anything, small caseload and intense relationships, so we have to go with that instead of the systems change. If my young person needs me in that moment, I don’t care about my systems change journey map.” (Staff interview)

If systems change work is to remain a priority, which all staff agreed it should, it is important to think about the resource needed to dedicate time to this. With such a small staffing structure, and the intensive demands of the service model, it is difficult for staff to absorb this into their roles. As a result, it may be that a dedicated role is required or greater resource within the overall team, as well as further training or ongoing support for this work. Current proposals include funding for an additional post within the team, that would increase capacity in this area.

5. Conclusion

The project has been successful in engaging a number of high profile young people, with a significant amount of adverse childhood experiences, in intensive support. Evidence gathered as part of the evaluation shows that the project has been successful in enabling these young people to achieve the outcomes in the Theory of Change. This includes:

- Increased emotional health and wellbeing
- A reduction in anger and conflict in settings such as home and education
- Recognition of triggers and trauma response, and improved responses to these
- Improved physical health through increased physical activity, focusing energies in a positive way, and a reduction in drug and alcohol use
- Improved relationships with family and peers, including a recognition of inappropriate relationships
- A reduction in offending, including gang involvement
- A reduction in missing episodes
- Increase in safety for the young people, including a reduced risk of exploitation (CCE and CSE)
- Better engagement in education, and improved engagement with other services
- Goals for the future, and a desire to progress

There are examples of where progress has been made towards systems change goals. However, due to the nature of the service model it has been difficult for staff to focus as much as originally planned on system change projects. As a result, the evaluation has classed these outcomes as only partially met. It has been recommended that in future, if system change is to continue to be a priority, greater resource is allocated to this. This may be in the form of a distinct role dedicated to system change work, or increased overall resource within the staffing team.

The evaluation has highlighted the critical success factors that are believed to have led to these outcomes, including:

- The time workers are able to give to young people.
- The consistency in having the same, trusted professional, and not having to repeat their story.
- The skills and approach of staff – taking time to build trust, listening to young people, being honest and transparent, and modelling appropriate relationships.
- The flexibility in the model, the ability to broaden horizons by taking part in positive activities, and the gradual nature of fostering independence.
- The importance of joint working with families and statutory services.
- Being able to challenge young people, set goals, and envision a pathway towards these.

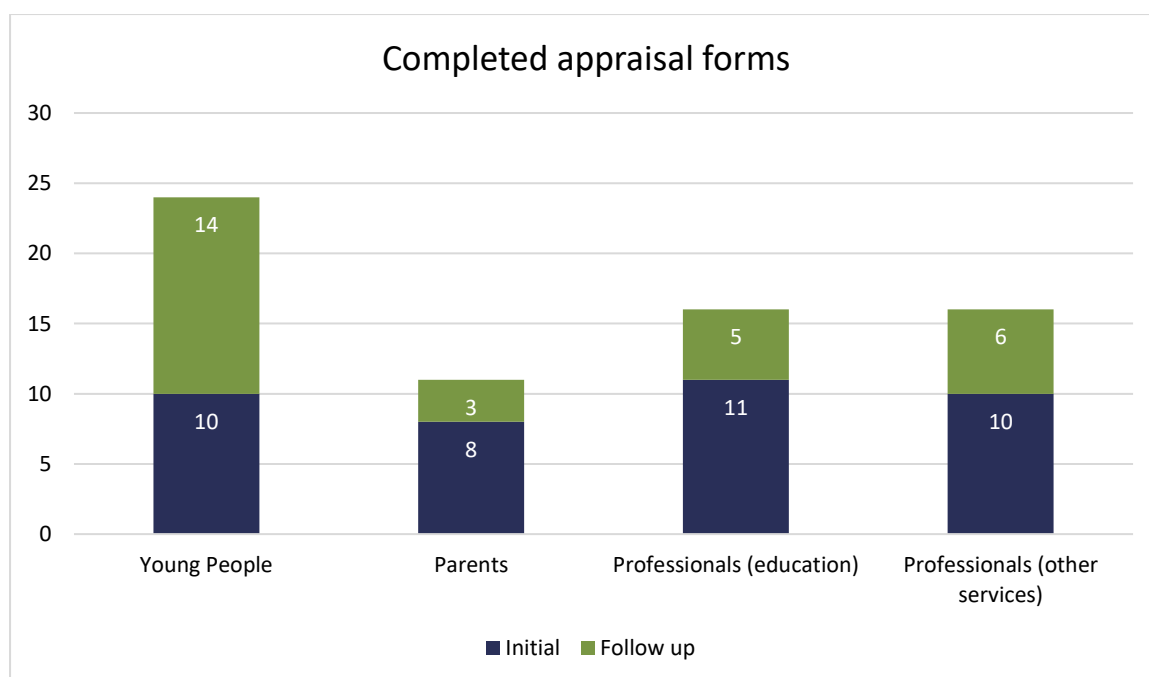
Learning from the project has highlighted how the project has adapted to the UK-wide lockdown imposed due to COVID-19. It has also highlighted important factors to consider should the project find further funding, when funding similar kinds of projects. The lack of funding for the future is the most critical need for the project at the current time, and there is a danger that the current situation within the UK (due to COVID-19) could exacerbate risks faced by young people without Next Generation.

Appendix A: Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation collects data about the programme from a range of different perspectives, including young people, social care, schools, and families. The evaluation draws on the following data:

1. Quantitative and Qualitative data collected routinely by project staff as part of a 360 Appraisal Approach. This approach gathers information at three levels;
 - a. From professionals surrounding the young person (i.e. system level), at referral and throughout a young person’s journey with the project. Alongside the data from the referral sheet, professionals will complete a 360 Appraisal of the YP at entry to the service, and every 12 weeks thereafter. There are two separate appraisal forms sent to professionals:
 - i. Professionals (e.g. social workers)
 - ii. Education (schools and alternative education providers)
 - b. Feedback from the young people about their experiences with the project. This appraisal form includes a comprehensive assessment of young people’s goals, barriers, enablers, and progress.
 - c. Feedback from parents about their experiences with the project.

There were a total of 67 appraisal forms completed in total during the project, from which the evaluation draws evidence. The graph below demonstrates how these are broken down:



2. Primary qualitative data from professionals and young people, gathered through:
 - a. Interviews with young people (3)¹⁵
 - b. Interviews with staff (3)¹⁶
 - c. Interviews with professionals (6)¹⁷

¹⁵ Please note that the evaluation had planned to interview more young people. However, due to restrictions placed in the UK as a result of coronavirus/COVID-19, only three interviews could be conducted. A decision was taken not to interview young people over the phone for the purposes of evaluation during this time.

¹⁶ Conducted over the phone

¹⁷ Conducted over the phone

The evaluation has also been able to draw on a sample of external quantitative data provided by Nottingham City Council.