CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES

FINAL REPORT

Evaluation of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase 2015 - 2016

Centre for Effective Services, July 2016

This evaluation report has been produced by the Centre for Effective Services (CES) for the Department for the Economy (DfE), which assumed responsibility for the United Youth Programme from 9th May 2016. The programme had been the responsibility of the Department for Employment and Learning prior to that date.

Please note that some information deemed to be potentially commercially sensitive has been removed from this report prior to external circulation.

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Terminology

When reading this report, it is important to keep in mind the difference between the following terms.

United Youth Programme

The United Youth Programme is a headline commitment within the Northern Ireland Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy (T: BUC) (OFMDFM, 2013). The Department for the Economy (DfE) is responsible for the development of the programme in response to the vision communicated in the T: BUC Strategy. (The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) had been responsible prior to May 2016.)

United Youth Programme Pilot Phase

As part of the co-design activity for the United Youth Programme, a Pilot Phase took place during 2015-16. The aim was to test the principles and practices being developed for the United Youth Programme, and to provide lessons that could inform its design. Pilot projects were tasked with achieving beneficial outcomes for young people in four areas: personal development involving social and emotional capabilities, citizenship, good relations, and employability, reflecting the objectives for the United Youth Programme communicated within the T: BUC Strategy. The pilots were also required to work with participants according to a number of principles which essentially reflected a youth work or youth development approach. These outcomes and principles were collectively known as the United Youth Outcomes and Principles Framework. The Pilot Phase was supported via the Northern Ireland Executive's Change Fund.

United Youth Pilot Providers

Thirteen pilot projects were initiated with the aim of engaging up to 350 young people aged 16 to 24 years and not in employment, education or training. The organisations delivering the pilots were known as pilot providers.

Programme (of activities)

Within this report the term 'programme' can refer to either the United Youth Programme or the programme of activities developed by each pilot to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of young people. These activities included, for example, outdoor pursuits, residential and overseas experiences, cultural visits, work experience, volunteering and social action. Pilot programmes also included day-to-day non-formal learning activities featuring one-to-one support, group work, and other kinds of structured opportunities and experiences.

United Youth Programme Team

The United Youth Programme Team comprises eleven staff within DfE including a Head of United Youth (Grade 7) and with the remaining staff arranged across the two functional areas of policy and administration (financial processes and payments). The team has been responsible for the co-design process of which the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase is a part, development of the structure and operation of the Pilot Phase including monitoring and supporting ongoing co-design, and managing all financial aspects of the Pilot Phase at the programme level. The team is assisted on a full time basis by a strategic adviser for the United Youth Programme who is employed by the Strategic Investment Board. The United Youth Programme Team sits within the Youth Policy Division of DfE and is the responsibility of the Director of the Division (Grade 5). The Division is part of the Department's Operational Policy – Delivery through Arm's Length Bodies Group, headed by the Assistant Secretary (Grade 3).

United Youth Programme Design Team

The United Youth Programme Design Team was assembled in response to the need for a programme design oversight role which would be inclusive of a range of perspectives relevant to the breadth of purpose of the United Youth Programme. The Design Team has included representation from DfE (and formerly from DEL), The Executive Office (formerly Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister), Department for Communities (formerly Department for Social Development), Department of Education, Public Health Agency, International Fund for Ireland, Youthnet, Education Authority (with representation formerly from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland), Community Relations Council and the Strategic Investment Board. Latterly, the membership of the Design Team has been expanded to include the Special EU Programmes Body, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Introduction

In April 2016, the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) commissioned the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to undertake an external evaluation of its United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. The Department for the Economy (DfE) assumed responsibility for the United Youth Programme on 9th May 2016. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the delivery of the Pilot Phase, as well as generating lessons to inform the design of a new United Youth Programme. This CES report presents the findings of the evaluation together with the key lessons.

In Section 1, the origins of the United Youth Programme are explained as an action described within the Northern Ireland Executive's *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* (T: BUC) (OFMDFM, 2013). T: BUC seeks to build the capacity of young people, aged 16 to 24 years, with the intention of preparing them for leadership and improving community relations. The pilot providers are introduced, as well as the main features of the United Youth Programme. A link is also made between the aims of the Programme and the achievement of wider social and economic policy objectives.

Section 2 sets out the terms of reference for the evaluation, and the methodology used to obtain the data. The activities and processes that took place during the Pilot Phase are covered in Section 3. This section looks at the inception of the Pilot Phase, and the added value of the commitment to co-design throughout the development of the United Youth Programme. It considers how providers attempted to respond creatively and holistically to the multi-faceted and layered needs, situations and interests of young people. The attention is on the achievement of provider objectives, and the practices that appear to be most effective in bringing about sustainable change.

A major focus for the evaluation was on the outcomes achieved by young people. These are considered in Section 4 in terms of distance travelled in relation to the four pillars of the United Youth Programme: personal development, citizenship, good relations, and employability. Although the intention in the Pilot Phase has been to focus on outcomes in terms of capabilities, this section also provides evidence of the destinations reached by the young people.

Section 5 considers two important aspects of the Pilot Phase, which fall broadly under financial performance. The first of these is considered with regard to the efficacy and integrity of the payments and processes which allowed participants to retain welfare benefits, to receive an incentive payment, and to claim necessary travel or childcare costs. Insight is provided into the operation and the effects of the system and its function as an incentive for the young people to participate in the Pilot Phase. The second aspect examines cost effectiveness from a number of perspectives including accuracy of forecasting, distribution of costs between providers and activities, and overall unit costs.

Section 6 focuses on measurement, monitoring and evaluation issues. It considers how the methods used in the Pilot Phase to measure progress and development can be plotted on a spectrum between internal / informal and external / formal methods, with most activity at the informal end. There is scope to build on the knowledge of measurement practices gained in the pilot, and a framework is put forward for consideration, which shows how outcomes, indicators and measures can be systematically linked. The section also presents an overview of the different purposes of evaluation depending on the stage of programme development and implementation.

Section 7 provides a conclusion about the overall performance and effectiveness of the Pilot Phase in terms of its strengths and achievements, followed by key lessons in relation to the operation, management and oversight of a new programme. Finally, a number of emerging themes are discussed to highlight the challenges inherent in taking a pilot to scale.

Executive summary

This CES report presents the findings of an evaluation originally commissioned by the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in April 2016. The focus of the evaluation was on the performance of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. Its purpose was to determine a number of key lessons that could inform the design of a new programme being undertaken by the Department for the Economy (DfE), which assumed responsibility for the United Youth Programme on 9th May 2016.

The development work on the United Youth Programme is in direct response to the Northern Ireland Executive's *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* (T: BUC) (OFMDFM, 2013), which seeks to build the capacity of young people, aged 16 to 24 years, with the intention of preparing them for leadership and improving community relations. There is a commitment within T: BUC to create 10,000 one year placements in a new 'United Youth Programme'. The objectives are to:

- Build better community relations
- Create better citizens
- Provide employment experience and structured volunteering opportunities, supported by a stipend, for a potentially lost generation.

In the Budget 2015-16, the Northern Ireland Executive set aside £30m for a 'Change Fund'. The fund aims to support the transformational change required to sustain medium to long term efficiency measures by:

- Encouraging innovation in the public sector and supporting the introduction of new and / or proven ways of working
- Improving integration and collaboration between government departments, arms-length bodies, the private sector and the third sector
- Supporting a decisive shift towards preventative spending, with a focus on improving outcomes for citizens.

In responding to the policy intentions of T: BUC and the Change Fund, the impetus behind the proposal for the United Youth Programme and its Pilot Phase is to connect or reconnect disengaged young people to services that they need.

The terms of reference for the evaluation stipulated that it should set the contribution of the Pilot Phase within the current policy context, review the performance of the provider organisations delivering pilot projects, assess the outcomes achieved by young people in terms of distance travelled, examine the impact of payments to young people, and consider cost-effectiveness issues. Information was obtained through separate interviews with groups of young people and staff, and with the United Youth Programme Team, as well as via documentary analysis of extensive data provided by the Team. The findings were validated in a meeting with the United Youth Programme Design Team.

The evaluation finds that a distinctive focus on the four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations, and employability, enabled the Pilot Phase to address the needs, interests and aspirations of individual young people in a holistic way. The result is that almost 300 young people have been assisted to achieve a wide range of beneficial outcomes. In addition, the number of destinations reached, with 62.9% proceeding to an employment or training destination and almost 80% to a positive destination overall (i.e. employment, further training or volunteering experience), can be seen as an early indication of the United Youth Programme's underpinning rationale, which states that improvements in the capabilities of young people can lead to further outcomes such as

employment or engagement in education or training. There are also grounds to believe that in supporting young people to fulfil their potential, the Programme can assist government departments, state agencies and social partners to achieve their own policy and organisational objectives. If scaled up, and providing that quality standards are maintained, the results of the Pilot Phase strongly suggest that a new United Youth Programme has the potential to make an important contribution to the achievement of social and economic policy objectives.

In return for compliance with specific and robust reporting and financial arrangements, providers have a high degree of autonomy over how they achieve their objectives with young people. A significant proviso is that providers have to work within the United Youth Programme's Outcomes and Principles Framework, which requires them to commit to a process of 'co-design'. This process puts the voice and decision-making of young people at the centre of activity. There is strong evidence of the active engagement of young people in planning, implementation and review at provider and Pilot Phase level. This engagement is a contributory factor to the levels of retention amongst participants (65.4%, or 76.5% when young people leaving very early are discounted), together with the influence of the person centred approach adopted by providers, and the attractiveness of the wide range of opportunities and activities on offer.

The commitment to co-design extends to work with providers in collaborative and developmental ways to ensure that their views also inform design, implementation, and review. There is strong evidence of the added value of co-design throughout the life of the Pilot Phase. In addition to open communication between the United Youth Programme Team and projects, the evaluation finds that co-design is facilitated through the administrative systems and procedures for financial control built into the structure of the Pilot Phase. The cumulative information obtained through these systems and procedures enabled providers and the United Youth Programme Team to make necessary financial and other project / programme adjustments during the course of the Pilot Phase. There is scope for streamlining these systems and processes in the interests of efficiency, and maximising the time project workers spend in contact with young people.

The systems and procedures also provide data that is essential for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The pronounced commitment to evaluation is a hallmark of the United Youth Programme development process. Going forwards this commitment can be optimised by building in evaluation at the planning stage, and by paying attention to the several purposes of evaluation depending on the stage of programme development and implementation. The evaluation finds that providers have a range of ways of internal / informal and external / formal methods for measuring progress in outcome areas. There is scope to build on the knowledge gained in the Pilot Phase by developing a framework which systematically links outcomes, indicators and appropriate measures. Such a framework has the potential to establish a common core of indicators and assessment methods, which would provide a consistent programme-wide approach to outcome measurement.

With respect to financial management and performance, there was provision for an attendance-linked incentive payment, retention of welfare benefits, Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) flexibilities, travel and childcare costs as necessary. The payments system was robust, and operated with integrity by providers, and it acted as an incentive for the majority of the young people. The evaluation also examined accuracy of forecasting, distribution of costs between providers and activities, and overall unit costs. There is strong evidence of effective central control and support for providers in equal measure. The headline average figure of £5,734 per place suggests that the Pilot Phase was an effective and economic use of public funds, given the range and depth of activities available to young people, the quality of provision, the intensity of contact with providers, the outcomes achieved, and the destinations reached. The added value of investment in the Pilot Phase has included capacity building amongst pilot providers, and learning gained from internal and

external monitoring and evaluation processes, that can inform a new United Youth Programme, and other such initiatives.

A number of key lessons can be drawn from the findings of the evaluation. In no particular order these can be elaborated as follows:

Programme structure and development

- The four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations, and employability constitute a unique blend of aims, which allows for a holistic approach to meeting the varied and complex needs, interests, and aspirations of young people.
- Explicit outcomes and principles ensure that providers work to the same ends and in the same way with young people.
- Clear and robust governance arrangements and administrative systems enable providers to have a great deal of autonomy over choice of activities and methods.
- In achieving its own objectives, the United Youth Programme has the potential to support wider social and economic policy objectives.

The importance of co-design

- 'Co-design' is crucial to successful policy delivery – in putting young people at the centre as contributors, and also in the way of working between the centre and local providers.
- Attentive and responsive central support is motivating for providers and ensures close links between policy intentions and delivery.
- The range of providers represents a community of practice that can be utilised for sharing, learning and development purposes.

The range of effective practices

- Time needs to be built in prior to programme inception to ease the recruitment and early project implementation stages.
- Selecting providers with strong links in communities of place and interest, with relevant knowledge, skills, experience, networks and contacts, is crucial for ensuring quality services for young people.
- Good formal and informal partnerships help with recruitment, provide opportunities for participants, and offer destinations for further training or work.
- It is important to be able to offer a wide range of opportunities and activities to young people in responding to the multi-faceted aspects of their lives, needs and interests, while enabling them to work together and learn from each other.
- Attention to process issues is crucial, which includes the development of a consistent, open and supportive relationship between staff and young people.
- It is important to build up the intensity of the activities through the week, and build up the intensity of the programme over time.
- There is consensus amongst providers about the merits of aligning the programme with the academic year.

Outcomes as distance travelled

- Personal development outcomes provide a basis for outcome achievement in other areas.
- Distance travelled depends on the starting point of each individual, and their active and conscious engagement in learning and development, as much as on the opportunities and activities available, and the quality of the work with young people.

- External factors heavily influence outcome achievement.

Measurement, monitoring and evaluation

- Measuring 'distance travelled' can be located on a spectrum of activity from informal at one end to formal at the other, and could be improved by centrally provided training that builds on the existing experience and knowledge of providers.
- Measurement helps young people to know that they are progressing, as well as providers to understand the impact of their work.
- Measurement helps to show that policy is being implemented as intended and having beneficial outcomes.
- Monitoring is optimal when it provides feedback to support planning and development processes.
- Evaluation planning should be included from the start.
- Building capacity for self-evaluation amongst providers is essential to ensure a consistent approach across all projects.

Payments and processes

- Incentive payments, retention of welfare benefits, flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA, and travel and childcare expenses, enable participation and engagement.
- Simplifying and streamlining the payments and processes system would maximise the time spent face to face between workers and young people.
- Providers need to make more explicit provision for administration in bids for funding.
- Jobs and Benefits Office (JBO) / Social Security Office (SSO) staff are important gatekeepers in the system and need to be fully aware of the merits of the United Youth Programme.

Cost effectiveness

- Open communication channels, support and guidance, and user-friendly templates for monitoring and reporting, enable timely and accurate reporting and control.
- While information is essential, care must be taken not to overburden providers with too much reporting. Administrative requirements could be reduced, and streamlined, for example, by issuing participants with a prepaid travel card instead of reimbursing costs.
- Cost effectiveness is aided by a rigorous application process, in which appropriate information and support for applicants is more likely to secure accurate budgeting and forecasts of expenditure.
- The most useful focus for cost effectiveness is not on specific variations between individual providers per se, but on the overall performance of the programme.
- The experience of the Pilot Phase could help to establish parameters around typical costings, which could help future programme managers and providers to budget more accurately.
- Support at overall programme level can assist efficiencies at provider level, for example through central support for advertising, recruitment, and staff training.

Emerging themes

Based on the findings of the evaluation, it is also possible to identify a number of emerging themes and issues in relation to the intention to scale up the level of activity. These are:

- Careful thought needs to be given to the extent to which all of the current arrangements involved in co-design can be replicated in an expanded programme
- Expansion will present challenges for recruitment of young people, and possibly for the availability of sufficient staff with the necessary skills and experience
- Potentially providers might compete for the same young people. To avoid this, one suggestion might be to draw up a list of the various providers and let young people select where they would like to enrol
- Recruitment raises questions of publicity and promotion. Consideration needs to be given to all forms of social media, and how the messages are put across to young people. This is an area where young people could take the lead
- In terms of making best use of available structures, it would be essential to have more promotion of the programme from JBOs and SSOs
- The problematic fit with the *Steps to Success* programme needs to be resolved in favour of both programmes complementing one another in the best interests of young people
- Central support and administrative arrangements will need to be streamlined to cope with larger numbers of providers.

Section 1: The United Youth Programme and the Pilot Phase

Origins of the United Youth Programme

In its economic appraisal for the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase (DEL, 2015), DEL sets out its purpose to transform the social and economic environment in Northern Ireland by developing employability skills and maximising participation within the labour market. The Department developed and led on *Pathways to Success*, the Northern Ireland Executive's Strategy for addressing the situation of those who are not in employment, education or training.

The *Pathways to Success* strategy, however, did not extend to improving community relations or building a united and shared society. In this regard, the appraisal notes 'a very sharp drop in Protestants and Catholics expressing a preference for mixed religion workplaces and neighbourhoods, particularly among young people' (CRC, 2014). It also informs that while over 93 per cent of children are educated in separate schools, interface walls still divide communities and sectarian riots occur.

T: BUC emphasises the role of young people in its commitment to improving community relations and to a more united and shared society. The economic appraisal explains that behind this emphasis is the need to address factors such as poor educational attainment, economic inactivity, social exclusion, sectarianism and anti-social behaviour. More positively, the premise in T: BUC is that children and young people have a crucial role to play in resolving conflict and creating a more peaceful society. In line with this emphasis on young people, there is a commitment within T: BUC to create 10,000 one year placements in a new 'United Youth Programme', with the following objectives:

- Build better community relations
- Create better citizens
- Provide employment experience and structured volunteering opportunities, supported by a stipend, for a potentially lost generation.

In developing the United Youth Programme concept, stakeholder engagement led to an agreed set of beneficial outcomes for young people in four areas: personal development (involving social and emotional capabilities), citizenship, good relations, and employability. This is consistent with the direction of travel in the wider policy context, which increasingly emphasises a focus on outcomes in work with young people.

In the Budget 2015-16, the Northern Ireland Executive set aside £30m for a 'Change Fund'. The fund aimed to:

- Encourage innovation in the public sector and support the introduction of new and / or proven ways of working
- Improve integration and collaboration between government departments, arms-length bodies, the private sector and the third sector
- Support a decisive shift towards preventative spending, with a focus on improving outcomes for citizens
- Support transformational change required to sustain medium to long term efficiency measures.

Proposals to the Change Fund were required to include a reform / innovation orientation, a partnership approach or a clear strategy to target funding for preventative approaches aimed at

addressing root causes of the identified problem, and actions which would inform or lead to improvement in the delivery of services. DEL made a successful bid to establish the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase, securing £3m for the delivery and associated administration of a number of pilot projects (DfE assumed responsibility for the United Youth Programme on 9th May 2016). During 2015-16, the Pilot Phase set out to meet the intended objectives of the Change Fund by:

- Continuing to utilise a co-design approach to service development and demonstrating innovation in the introduction of new or proven ways of working
- Focusing on the achievement of outcomes for individual citizens (in this case young people)
- Promoting a citizen centred (young person centred) approach
- Working in partnership with other organisations – improving integration and collaboration between government departments, arms-length bodies and the third sector
- Focusing on prevention of longer term economic inactivity, disengagement from community, and of negative impacts in terms of community relations.

An important purpose of the Pilot Phase was to inform the design of the new United Youth Programme.

The Pilot Phase

Thirteen pilot projects were initiated with the aim of engaging up to 350 young people aged from 16 to 24 years and not in employment, education or training (see Table 1). The pilots were tasked with achieving beneficial outcomes for young people in four areas: personal development involving social and emotional capabilities, citizenship, good relations, and employability. The four areas or 'pillars' reflect the objectives for the United Youth Programme communicated within the T: BUC Strategy, and pilot providers were also required to work with participants according to a number of principles which essentially reflected a youth work or youth development approach. Together these form the United Youth Programme Outcomes and Principles Framework (Appendix 1).

In return for compliance with robust reporting and financial arrangements, providers were afforded a high degree of autonomy over how they achieved their objectives with young people, which enabled providers to be responsive to the needs of individuals and work in a more person centred manner. This autonomy was within the context of a commitment to co-design which meant that the United Youth Programme Team worked with young people and providers in a collaborative and developmental way to ensure that their voices were heard and that their views informed design, implementation, and review.

The providers selected for the Pilot Phase covered a wide range of ways of working with young people. They varied in the number of intended participants – lowest eight and highest 60. Some were small, while others were part of bigger organisations with a long history. The locus of the organisation differed, with some community-based, some with a nation-wide reach, and some with a thematic or issue-based remit. While all had experience of working with young people, not all had specific experience of working with young people not in employment, education or training, or young people in the 16 to 24 years age group.

Table 1: United Youth pilot outlines

Pilot outline	Target number
A mentoring focused pilot delivered in partnership which operated in four separate areas in Belfast. The pilot supported participants to engage with opportunities in their community and included a European visit.	32
A pilot involving a range of development activities and delivered over three sites in NI and with young people in contact with the juvenile justice system.	60
The pilot focused on a model where the participants planned and administered a bursary programme for other young people to support local community and youth activities.	15
This pilot facilitated young people with past programmes experience to engage on a voluntary basis with participants to develop pilot content. A good relations trip within the UK featured.	48
This pilot involved a range of capacity building activities for young people including the opportunity to take part in a university course. Participants travelled within Europe.	24
A youth-led pilot which supported participants through a process of identifying their own development needs and pursuing learning opportunities according to their interests.	30
Based on the pilot provider's approach to building community relations through sport, the pilot enabled participants to become involved in developing their skills for leading activities across various sports focused initiatives	8
The pilot was aimed at young people with a visual impairment and included a variety of activities delivered on a largely residential basis at an outdoor activity centre, with support from pilot provider staff between residential events.	10
The pilot brought together a cohort of young people from rural areas to take part in activities ranging from personal development to community action activities, and from good relations to work experience tasters.	20
The pilot involved seven partner organisations offering a range of opportunities to young people across the partners' various areas of activity.	30
The pilot, in partnership with a university, engaged young people from marching bands in a range of development activities culminating in a musical performance. European visits featured.	24
This was a youth-led pilot which involved young people working in teams to identify content and organise pilot activities with appropriate support from staff. An overseas visit featured as part of the pilot journey.	24
The pilot was delivered over four sites in NI. Participants were involved in youth work projects in their respective localities and came together for regular cross-base activities.	32

*Two pilots were affected by the closure in January 2016 of one pilot provider organisation and its subsidiary which was also delivering a pilot. This led to the two pilots in question being managed by another pilot provider from February 2016, following a competitive process to appoint a managing agent. Participants' preference was for the two pilots to be completed as a single pilot. Information on the original two pilots and the new single pilot is included in this report according to its relevance and availability across the various areas considered for the evaluation.

In addition to focusing specifically on young people aged 16 to 24 years who are not in employment, education or training, the United Youth pilots aimed to target those who are often excluded from opportunities enjoyed by their peer group generally. The target group included those in need of mental health support, or support with alcohol / drug issues, lone parents, young people with disabilities, young people who have been in care, homeless and / or living in unsettled accommodation, early school leavers, long term unemployed and those involved with Juvenile Justice / Probation. It also included young people living in areas of deprivation and / or in interface areas and, to a lesser extent, those living in rural isolation.

Demographic information relating to the gender and age of participants can be found in Appendix 2. Around two thirds of participants were male and over half were in the 16 to 19 years of age bracket. Around two fifths (39%) of those who completed a pilot were aged 18 or 19 years.

Relation to wider social and economic policy objectives

Figure 1 shows how the United Youth Programme's aims relate to the Northern Ireland Executive's *Delivering Social Change* and the *Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People* objectives, which aim to ensure that children and young people are:

- Healthy
- Enjoying, learning and achieving
- Living in safety and with stability
- Experiencing economic and environmental well-being
- Contributing positively to community and society
- Living in a society which respects their rights.

In addition to policy areas such as those described above relating to T: BUC and Pathways to Success, Figure 1 also shows how the new United Youth Programme could support priorities and strategies across a range of Departments in Northern Ireland.

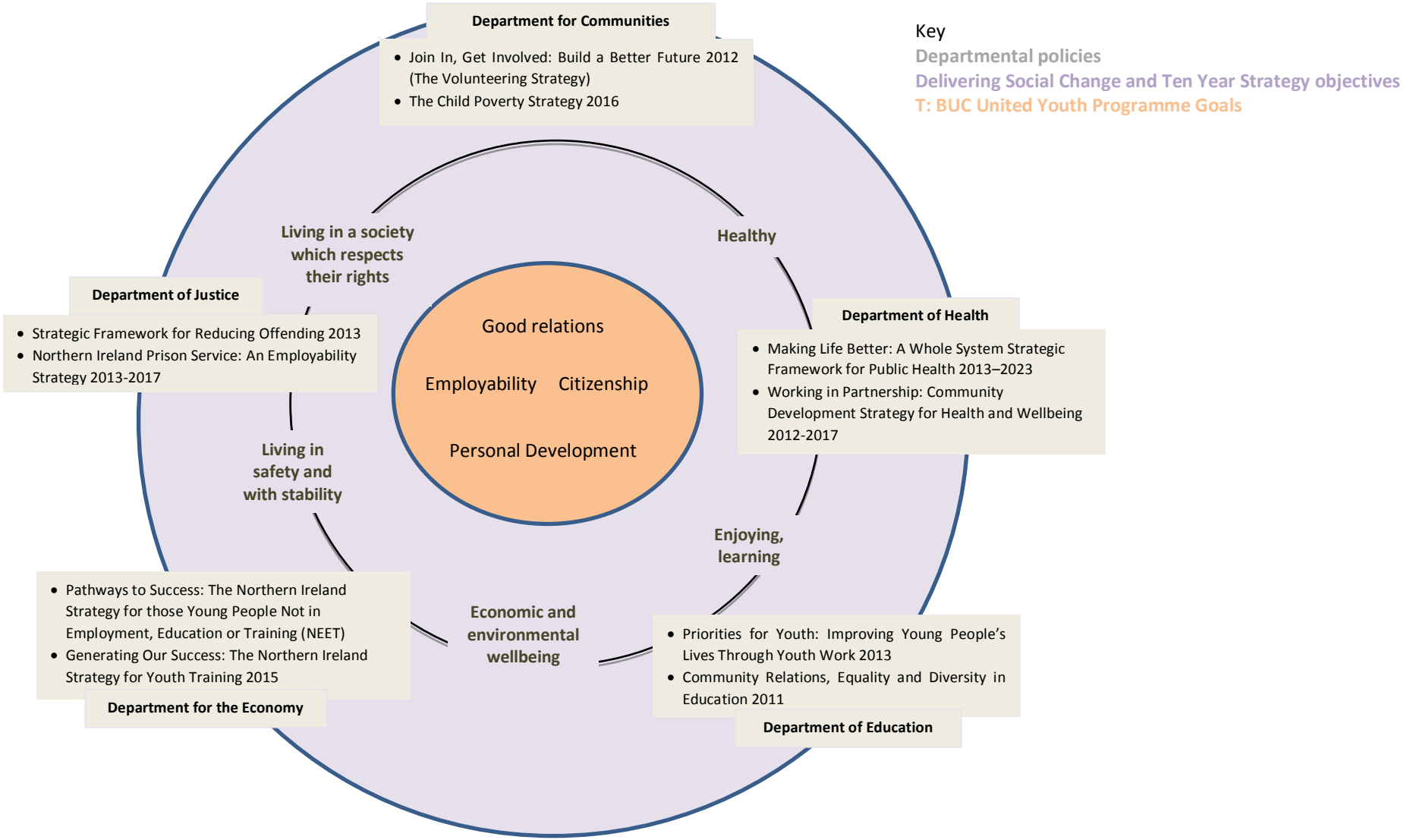
Department for Communities
- Join In, Get involved: Build a Better Future 2012 (The Volunteering Strategy)
- 'Lifetime Opportunities' Government's Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland 2010
- The Child Poverty Strategy 2016
- A Strategy to Improve the Lives of People with Disabilities 2012 to 2015 (extended to March 2017).

Department of Education
- Priorities for Youth: Improving Young People's Lives Through Youth Work 2013
- Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education 2011.

Department of Health
- Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013–2023
- Working in Partnership: Community Development Strategy for Health and Wellbeing 2012-2017.

Department of Justice
- Supporting Change: A Strategic Approach to Desistance 2015
- Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending 2013
- Northern Ireland Prison Service - An Employability Strategy 2013 – 2017.

Figure 1: Relationship between the United Youth Programme aims and wider social policy



Summary

The concept of the United Youth Programme is a practical response to the policy intentions of T: BUC and the Change Fund, in which the aim is to connect or reconnect disengaged young people to services that they need. This is to be achieved with a focus on outcomes in relation to the four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations, and employability. The four pillars constitute a unique blend of aims, which is important in allowing for a holistic approach to meeting the varied and complex needs of young people who are not in employment, education or training, and disadvantaged young people.

The Pilot Phase was shaped by an underpinning Outcomes and Principles Framework which clarified for all stakeholders how to work with young people (driven by principles), while setting out the intended benefits (outcomes). The principles are necessary in ensuring that providers work with young people in a participative way, so that their voice and decision-making is central to all activity. Clear governance arrangements and administrative systems enabled providers to have a great deal of autonomy over choice of activities and methods, while ensuring accountability. The choice of local programme activities was firmly within a context of co-design, which meant that the United Youth Programme Team worked with providers and young people to develop best practices, and resolve emerging issues and problems in relation to design, implementation and review. Based on the experience of the Pilot Phase, in achieving its own objectives the United Youth Programme has the potential to help government to achieve wider social and economic policy objectives.

Section 2: Terms of reference and methodology

Terms of reference

In April 2016, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) commissioned the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to undertake an external evaluation of its United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. Following the restructuring of government departments in Northern Ireland as a result of the Stormont House Agreement, the Department for the Economy (DfE) assumed responsibility for the United Youth Programme on 9th May 2016. The terms of reference for the evaluation required examination of the following areas:

- Preparation for the Pilot Phase and co-design process
- Pilot models and performance
- Assessment of individual change and other change achieved
- Payments and financial / administrative processes
- Partnerships and linkages
- Lessons and insights to inform future service design.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the delivery of the United Youth Pilot Phase as well as generating lessons to inform the design of a new United Youth Programme. A programme can be defined as an initiative with a collection of services, often organised and delivered by local management and delivery bodies that operate with varying degrees of autonomy from a central structure such as a government department. The term implies a degree of coherence and integration around purpose, structure and governance, design and content, implementation and delivery, monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms and processes. In short, a programme is a governmental delivery mechanism to achieve policy objectives.

Evaluation methodology

From the beginning and throughout the evaluation, we engaged with the United Youth Programme Team in DEL / DfE, to clarify and refine the objectives and deliverables. Relevant research literature was identified to provide a theoretical underpinning to the evaluation, and to support findings. We analysed documentary materials to understand provider activity, local objectives, what was achieved, and the issues arising in each pilot. This analysis enabled insight into the views of pilot providers about progress in achieving stated objectives, and also into what the young people thought about their involvement in the pilot. It also enabled insight into the co-design process from the perspective of providers and the United Youth Programme Team, including the levels and type of support for providers, and the way in which problems were addressed collaboratively as issues arose within a pilot or during the Pilot Phase.

Documentary analysis was supplemented by group interviews with staff and with young people from all 13 pilots. Staff were asked to contact young people, and we were able to interview participants from each pilot. As time was short, we used the first two interviews with staff and young people to test the interview schedule. Minimal changes were required, and we were also able to hand over two questions to be included in the final meeting of a five-stage implementation planning and review (IPR) meeting series between the pilot providers and United Youth Programme Team. These questions were about the extent to which pilot activity differed from that envisaged in their application, and the impact on providers of their participation in the pilot.

Analysing the documentation helped us to formulate questions for further exploration with the providers, the young people, and the United Youth Programme Team. Copies of the interview guides can be found in Appendices 3 - 5.

We met and conducted interviews with:

- Groups of young people in each pilot site
- Pilot provider organisations (including a mixture of managers and practitioners) in each pilot site
- The United Youth Programme Team, which is responsible for all aspects of programme management, as well as support and guidance to providers.
- Staff in The Executive Office with responsibility for the T: BUC Strategy
- Members of the cross-sectoral United Youth Programme Design Team, which was set up with representatives from departments, state agencies, and the community and voluntary sector, to advise on the co-design approach and best practices to support the aims of the T: BUC Strategy.

The data from the interviews was analysed, and returned to providers for validation and further comment. Findings from the analysis were related to the evaluation tasks set out in the terms of reference, and articulated in terms of the key deliverables agreed with the commissioners. Key lessons were drawn from the findings. A meeting with the United Youth Programme Design Team helped us to validate our findings, and to refine and finalise the key deliverables and lessons.

Although steps were taken to ensure that the approach to the evaluation was as methodologically robust as possible, the timing of the evaluation meant that the pilots had completed, with the consequence that the young people had left and were difficult to contact. Providers were responsible for assembling groups of young people to engage with the evaluators. All of those interviewed had completed a pilot, and therefore represented some of the most engaged young people. A more complete picture would have been gained had we been able to interview all participants. In the circumstances, however, this was not possible. In some cases, staff had also left the pilot or moved on to other work. The short timescale envisaged for completion of the evaluation (ten weeks), and the absence of many young people and staff meant that using a survey to obtain data was not likely to be productive.

These difficulties were counterbalanced by the extensive data generated through the management and administrative systems developed by the United Youth Programme Team, and the requirements for data collection built into the design of the Pilot Phase. This meant that documentary analysis yielded rich qualitative information about the experience of the pilot providers and the achievement of their objectives, as well as valuable quantitative information about the young people, their participation, destinations and the outcomes achieved, staffing and skills, and costs.

Our overall conclusions about performance, the achievement of objectives, and the lessons that can be drawn, are based on the consistent messages emerging from application forms, the recordings of the IPR meetings, financial and administrative records, and the data from the interviews with providers, young people, and the United Youth Programme Team. The sources of information available for analysis are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Sources of information available for analysis

Pilots and United Youth Programme Team	Administrative data								Outcomes data				Evaluation data			
	Main or youth-led*	Intended** participants	Application form	IPR1-5	Staff qualifications	Participant profile data	Initial and revised budget	Profile of actual pilot expenditure	Exit interviews	Case studies	Destinations	Participant accreditation	Staff interviewed	Young people interviewed	Questionnaire re payments and processes	Questionnaire re outcome measures
1	YL	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6	2	✓	✓	3	7	✓	✓
2	M	24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15	2	✓	✓	1	7	✓	✓
3	M	32	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	20	4	✓	✓	3	3	✓	✓
4	M	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	17	4	✓	✓	3	2	✓	✓
5	M	32	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13	4	✓	✓	5	7	✓	✓
6	YL	48	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12	5	✓	✓	5	1	✓	✓
7	YL	60	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	44	6	✓	✓	2	4	✓	✓
8	YL	24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	19	5	✓	✓	3	14	✓	✓
9	M	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	2	✓	✓	2	3	✓	✓
10	YL	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12	4	✓	✓	3	9	✓	
11	YL	24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	21	2	✓	✓	2	7	✓	✓
12	M	30	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	1	2		
13	M	30	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	2	2		
United Youth Programme Team													8			
		357		****					186***	40			42	68		

***Youth-led** means that the programme is co-designed from the outset with young people. **Main** means the programme is designed by workers but where a high level of participation is encouraged

**Based on original target

***A total of 187 questionnaires were returned, one was discarded as it contained 'incomplete' data

****Includes IPR 1-3 for the pilots where the provider organisations closed and a final performance review note covering the period following the transfer of these pilots to an alternative management structure following the closures on 22 January 2016

Section 3: Pilot Phase processes and activities

This section of the report covers:

- Pilot Phase performance with a focus on inception, development, and the impact of co-design
- The achievement of pilot provider objectives
- The practices and approaches that appear to be most effective in bringing about change.

Programme inception and development

Development towards the Pilot Phase began in 2013 with extensive stakeholder consultations. The results informed its design, which was further refined through continuing consultations in early 2014. A United Youth Programme Design Team with a range of representatives from government, as well as statutory and voluntary youth sector bodies, was established in June 2014.

In the Outcomes and Principles Framework that was developed later that summer (Appendix 1), outcomes are expressed as *capabilities* that young people will have the opportunity to develop. Progress was to be measured in the form of 'distance travelled' in relation to these capabilities in the following outcome areas:

- Personal development (social and emotional capabilities)
- Positive participation in family, community, society (citizenship)
- Capabilities contributing to good community relations
- Capabilities explicitly relevant to employability.

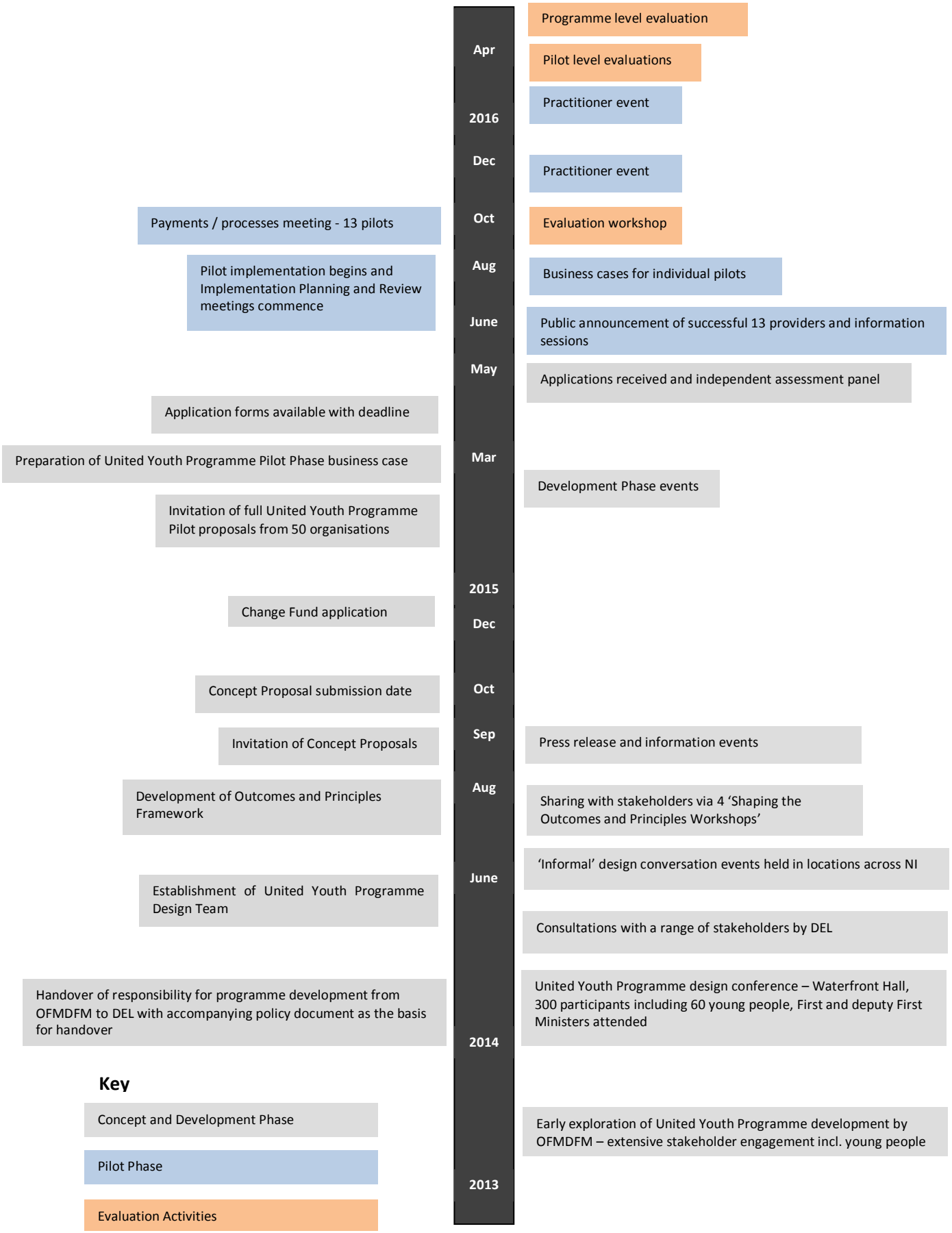
The principles within the framework underpin non-formal learning approaches and reflect a participative way of working with young people.

An open call was issued for concept proposals in September 2014, in which organisations were invited to show how they would translate the principles into reality, and work towards the outcomes. In March 2015, 50 of the organisations which submitted a concept proposal were asked to submit full pilot applications, from which 13 were selected by an independent panel.

The full chronology of events is detailed in Figure 2. An initial concept template, application and business case forms, in effect led providers through a systematic process of planning and implementation, and helped them to think through how to build on existing work in meeting the new requirements of the United Youth Programme. From a quality assurance perspective, the forms served to facilitate a fit between the provider's knowledge, skills and value commitments, and the aims of the United Youth Programme. One instance of this steering can be seen in the application form, which required providers to set SMART objectives from the beginning (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resourced and Time-bound). In turn, these objectives became the basis for five implementation planning and review (IPR) meetings scheduled between providers and the United Youth Programme Team throughout the pilot.

Our interviews with pilot providers assessed their reasons for applying to participate in the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. Several indicated that the Programme enabled them to engage more intensively, and for a longer duration, with those not in employment, education or training than previous initiatives had allowed.

Figure 2: Chronology of events in developing the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase



> "*Our previous work with this target group usually involved one-off interventions. This* [the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase] *gave us the chance to work over a sustained period with some young people." (provider)*

Many felt that the ethos of the United Youth Programme, as elaborated in the Outcomes and Principles Framework, was highly relevant to the organisation's current activity, and to youth work in Northern Ireland more generally. For some, this was a chance to continue an established way of working while adding a new dimension, for example through a greater emphasis on a youth-led approach. Others welcomed the opportunity to enhance their work in relation to outcome areas such as employability. In some instances, providers had intended to engage with the target group for some time but had insufficient resources, opportunities or time to allow such engagement. The Pilot Phase enabled some providers to actively engage with this target group for the first time.

The impact of co-design

Co-design means proactively and consistently engaging with stakeholders in planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and iterative review processes. The approach ensures that processes and procedures are more responsive to the needs and interests of participants. A CES review into the effective management of community development type programmes, is highly relevant to the development of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase given the commitment to co-design. The review (Bamber et al, 2010) finds that:

- 'Top-down' approaches to management tend not to achieve good results in this field. Better results are achieved when localities are able to engage with the policy agenda and allowed latitude to interpret it locally. However, to ensure congruence with public policy objectives, good communications and dialogue between the centre and the localities are needed throughout this process.
- There is no evidence to suggest that micro-management of local activity by funders produces good results. Whilst there needs to be joint working between the centre and the locality in agreeing the broad agenda for action, the details of how policy is interpreted at local level are best delegated to local partners.
- Funding needs to be more than a 'commissioning' relationship, and should be seen as negotiated, long-term investments in community capability. It should allow for participation at the local level with a reasonable degree of flexibility allowed to local partners to determine allocations between constituent activities and to vary between headings within overall budgets, and reasonable stability of funding over time to allow longer term priorities to be achieved.
- Good governance in this field requires careful attention to the clarification of the specific roles and remits of partners and funders. Different jurisdictions may manage this in different ways, but early establishment of clear terms of reference for partnerships and service level agreements between funding bodies and delivery agents is a common principle of strong governance. Given the imperative to be responsive to local change in this field, the facility to review and reformulate these from time to time should be in-built.
- Regarding arrangements for governance, community engagement is of central importance in addressing democratic deficit, in modernising government, in building community cohesion and in terms of plans to improve programme design and service content.

In our interviews with pilot providers, we reviewed the co-design process in terms of what worked well and what did not. It was evident that providers welcomed ongoing engagement with the United Youth Programme Team, from initial pilot design through to full implementation. Comments revealed that early opportunities to meet with the United Youth Programme Team, for instance at the concept and application stages, were useful in clarifying the approach to co-design:

> "*We were invited to a focus group after stage 1 proposal, and then after selection we were invited to another focus group and to attend a series of information seminars. They addressed a lot of queries. We were extremely well supported throughout the whole process." (provider)*

IPR meetings were also considered to be worthwhile in enabling reviews of progress against the SMART objectives, and in allowing providers the opportunity to inform the United Youth Programme Team of any factors impacting on progress. The meetings also offered providers the opportunity to engage in a process of iteration, by which they could try an approach, assess the need for change where required, discuss relevant adjustments with the United Youth Programme Team, and subsequently implement such changes. In a few instances, providers reflected on the benefits of these sessions in reinforcing commitment to the Outcomes and Principles Framework. Furthermore, some noted the value of the sessions in enhancing relationships with the United Youth Programme Team, especially in terms of enabling them to provide a truer sense of programme activity than a written progress report.

Where there is a distance between funders and providers, detailed attention to management and support can sometimes be experienced as restrictive and controlling. In this case, however, the feedback from providers consistently highlights the helpfulness of the process. They commonly report a great deal of flexibility over operational matters that was felt to be evident as early as the application stages, where providers appreciated having the opportunity to choose ways of working based on their expertise and knowledge of the needs of young people:

> *"We flourished in having the ability to have a 'blank sheet'. Our staff knew how to shape the 'journey'." (provider)*

Providers also consistently expressed appreciation of the United Youth Programme Team's efforts to listen to, respond to and work with them to resolve emerging service delivery or administrative problems. In addition, they highlighted the willingness of the United Youth Programme Team to undertake site visits, during which they demonstrated a genuine interest in the progress of the young people. These relational and inter-personal qualities of openness, and enthusiasm for the success of the pilot, were highly prized by the providers, and, in turn, had a motivational effect. The processes were supplemented by information sharing meetings with providers, at which participants were able to share insights and good practices.

The commitment to co-design appears to have enabled the United Youth Programme Team to strike a productive balance between control, such as requiring a commitment to the Outcomes and Principles Framework, and being more open about other matters, for example encouraging autonomy, creativity and innovation in working towards these outcomes. Providers frequently commented on the value and the distinctiveness of this approach, which they contrasted with other government funded programmes with which they were familiar.

The willingness of the United Youth Programme Team to meet with key stakeholders, including the young people, and place them at the fore as contributors to the design process, was felt to strengthen the authenticity of the co-design process, alleviating any impression of tokenism.

Several providers commented on the ways in which young people contributed to programme development. 'Youth-led' means that young people took the lead in programme design from the outset. So called 'main' providers also reflected on numerous opportunities for young people to contribute to programme activities. Main means that workers led on programme design but still with high involvement encouraged from young people. Co-design was deemed to be instrumental in enhancing young people's autonomy, confidence and relationships with other participants. Providers of youth-led programmes cited the establishment of steering groups and / or committees to assist the design and facilitation of activities. There was also consideration that the youth-led approach resulted in improved understanding of the programme outcomes:

> *"Within approximately six weeks, the programme went from co-led to youth-led. The young people implemented and organised training days. They were given opportunities from the beginning to contribute, and this subsequently gave them the opportunity to deliver. Committees were structured so that activities were delivered relevant to each of the four pillars." (provider)*

> *"The co-design aspect had a big impact on the confidence of the young people. They had more confidence in their decision making and it helped them to make their own decisions about moving forward, whether that involved consideration of starting their own business or going back to education." (provider)*

Feedback also highlighted the significance for young people in having a voice and contributing to programme development. Several attributed this opportunity to the willingness of staff to allow them 'a say'. This was the case in both main and youth-led pilots.

> *"Our voice was listened to;* [we weren't] *dictated to. We got to do stuff that we actually wanted to do, like get qualifications." (young person)*

> *"The staff helped and gave us ideas, but they gave us the chance to have a say. It was important to have a say, because in school and tech they look at you like you are a child." (young person)*

Achievement of pilot provider objectives

The evaluation reviewed the extent to which the pilot providers met their intended objectives, if benefits were realised, and whether any outworking of risks was addressed. This was undertaken through analysis of information compiled by the United Youth Programme Team during the IPR process. Detailed records of the five IPR meetings were provided to the evaluation team for review. These records included comprehensive information per pilot in relation to all objectives, benefits and risks, alongside an accompanying narrative to explain the extent to which each objective was met.

On the whole, objectives were achieved and benefits largely realised across all pilot providers. This was supported by the systematic process of implementation, planning and review facilitated by the United Youth Programme Team, which ensured a continued focus on the attainment of objectives and benefits across the duration of the Pilot Phase. Although some providers encountered difficulty in meeting initially proposed recruitment targets, for example due to the impact of the *Steps to Success* programme (the *Steps to Success* programme and the interface with the Pilot Phase is discussed further in Section 5), the IPR meetings enabled review of such challenges and, where required, adjustments to be made and / or targets revised. Pilot providers consistently reported that the process of continued review was highly beneficial in supporting them to achieve their objectives.

Effective practices and approaches

During interviews, providers were asked to reflect on those aspects of their work which seemed to have most beneficial impact on the young people, as well as to identify challenges, and means to overcome such challenges. Although responses do not cover all factors that are known to constitute successful practice, all were unanimous in the need for a holistic approach, and exposure to a variety of activities that support learning and development across a range of outcome areas. All expressed the view that the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase was effective in enabling a 'rounded' approach to development based on the Outcomes and Principles Framework. Indeed, given the multi-faceted nature of young people's needs, several struggled to identify any single process or activity as having most impact. It was a common view that:

> *"Different practices and approaches lead to different outcomes and open different doors for young people." (provider)*

These reported practices are considered in the following sections, starting with the role and expertise of staff.

Staff qualifications and experience

Feedback suggests that providers need to have a strong platform for their work in terms of prior experience of the youth work or youth development approach involving non-formal education and learning. On the basis of such a platform, providers could:

- Draw on knowledge and experience of what works with the target group
- Enable delivery of a range of opportunities
- Utilise existing staff skills / expertise to support optimum conditions for outcome achievement.

To understand the skills required in a programme of this type, the evaluation explored the capacity in which the staff were employed, number of years' experience, and type / level of qualifications held. Although providers define their roles in different ways, it is evident that the composition of teams is fairly consistent. All have a programme or project manager (also referred to as director, lead, or coordinator), in addition to those fulfilling youth worker or support worker roles. Not surprisingly those in management or coordinator roles tend to have more experience, whilst staff employed in a 'youth worker' capacity have an average of ten years' experience. Such experience inter alia includes: the field of community youth work, the youth justice system, working with disadvantaged and / or marginalised groups, working in communities, good relations, and employability training and skills development.

Staff have a range of qualifications and achievements. A significant number (n=19) either hold, or are in the process of attaining, a third level qualification in youth work, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Fourteen are qualified to, or are working towards obtaining (n=2) an undergraduate qualification in youth work, whilst five have a relevant postgraduate diploma. A range of other disciplines is also represented, such as social sciences, health, education, and politics.

Table 3 illustrates the highest level of qualification held by staff. Most (n=24) are qualified to degree level, whilst a further number have some form of postgraduate qualification, typically either at diploma (n=8) or Master's Level (n=2). While Table 4 shows the highest level of qualification, it does not depict the fact that several hold other awards which include a range of OCN qualifications in areas related to health and social care, mental health, addictive behaviours, community relations / diversity, conflict resolution, or managing challenging behaviour. The interest or propensity to

engage in continuous professional development is also noteworthy. Several cited interest and / or expertise in areas including LGBT issues, sexual health, employability, and performing arts.

Staff acknowledged the crucial role played by partnerships in supporting pilot programme successes. Interview feedback revealed that organisations availed of existing partnerships as a means to support recruitment, and pilot programme delivery, for example through facilitation of particular programme components, and in offering follow up supports to young people, where required, at the programme end.

Table 3: Highest qualification level attained by staff

Staff role	Number of Staff	Masters L7	Post graduate L7	Degree L6	Advanced diploma L5	L4	L3*
Manager / coordinator	7	1	3	1	0	1	1
Youth work staff	37	1	5	23	1	0	7
Total	44	2	8	24	1	1	8

*Encompasses A Level and OCN level 3 qualifications

Recruitment, engagement and retention of the target group

When recruiting the target group for the United Youth Pilot Phase, i.e. young people aged 16 to 24 years who were not in employment, education or training, providers were tasked with engaging the 'hardest to reach' young people. Co-design discussions at the development phase enabled providers to explore and define 'hard to reach'. They were later encouraged, as part of the IPR process, to revisit their understanding of 'hard to reach'. The United Youth Programme Team reports that, for the most part, pilot providers felt they had a high degree of success in achieving the required engagement. Interviews for the evaluation further reinforced this sentiment as it was evident that groups represented some of the most disadvantaged and socially excluded young people, coming from a range of backgrounds and with a wide variety of needs and issues including poor mental health, drug and alcohol dependency, a history of care, offending behaviours, and long term unemployment.

The importance of being able to identify and implement effective methods to improve engagement and retention rates, and for these rates to be carefully monitored, has been highlighted in the literature (Souto-Otero el al, 2013). Given the characteristics of the target group, a range of methods was required to recruit participants. These included:

- Practitioners attending the Jobs and Benefits Offices to promote the programme
- Seeking support from other youth and community organisations to provide referrals
- Engaging with key stakeholders, including social workers, probation officers, community leaders
- Development and dissemination of promotional materials (posters / leaflets), plus the use of social media.

More than one provider established a youth-led steering group which developed a recruitment plan for the pilot programme. When up and running, pilots benefited from 'word of mouth', and in many instances the young people played a role in identifying and / or encouraging peers to take part.

Overall, it was evident that recruitment was a more time intensive and challenging exercise than pilot providers had envisaged. This was particularly the case for those with less experience of working with the target group, and who were therefore not in a position to promote their pilot programme to or through existing service users. Some providers reflected on the reticence of some young people to participate, especially those with little confidence. Feedback revealed the importance of experienced, locally based staff in enabling the recruitment process, which was particularly effective when they had knowledge of the community, were able to utilise existing networks and effectively negotiate community 'gatekeepers'.

Pilot providers commented that a delay in receiving the Letter of Offer from the Department significantly hindered recruitment processes (due to a range of factors, the Pilot Phase and pilots began later than was intended). In most instances, this meant that recruitment was simultaneous to the early stages of pilot programme facilitation. There was a view that those who came onto a pilot programme later required more support to become integrated. All suggested a need for time prior to pilot programme inception to ease the recruitment and early pilot project implementation stages.

> *"Unfortunately, the end date of the pilot was always the same, but the funding got pushed back which meant that we started later. So we had less and less time to deliver, recruit and plan. This cost us participants as we couldn't offer our programme as early as we liked, and some had signed on to other training by the time we were recruiting." (provider)*

Some reflected on the impact of other courses / programmes on their recruitment, retention and engagement, stating that by the time they were in a position to recruit, young people had signed up to other opportunities, such as those provided by the FE Colleges. *Steps to Success* was frequently mentioned as a challenge to both recruitment and retention. It was evident that some young people were not aware of the fact that they were mandated to *Steps to Success*, meaning that they were either about to start on a United Youth Programme pilot, or were already engaged and had to leave, as a result of being called to *Steps to Success*.

> *"We lost three participants to Steps to Success in the first week." (provider)*

> *"More flexibility is needed for recruitment purposes. One young person could not participate because they were already on a 3-hour ICT course. This corresponded to just one aspect of our holistic programme. Another was on the Steps to Success programme and by the time he finished, he was over the age range for the United Youth Programme." (provider)*

The impact of *Steps to Success* is further considered in Section 5 under payments and processes.

Some practitioners commented on the fact that they took active steps to ensure the continued involvement of young people who were struggling to remain engaged. This involved, for example, keeping in touch with the young person informally via telephone, meeting them outside of usual pilot hours, and liaising with family, friends and other key stakeholders, where required. Some young people expressed recognition and appreciation of the fact that the staff had gone the 'extra mile' to ensure their continued engagement. Others reflected that the incentive payment was important in instigating interest in the programme, as well as encouraging and maintaining attendance. Some

reflected on group size and dynamics, and in some instances, it was felt that a smaller group worked best for those with more complex needs.

In a small number of instances and despite all best intentions, it was not possible to keep some participants engaged. In these cases, the young person may not have been quite ready to take part, and in others they were affected by external factors such as bereavement, illness, and drug / alcohol abuse.

Support for learning

It is known that intensive interventions with a focus on client needs rather than activities, developing life skills, and actively involving users in design and management appear more likely to lead to positive outcomes (Horwath Review, 2009). The results depend, however, on the quality of delivery by the staff concerned (Miller and Rose, 2009). Non-formal education of the type discussed above with disadvantaged and socially excluded young people, requires a particular skill set from youth workers. Bamber (2013) states that youth workers need to be able to:

- Engage with and communicate with young people in an open, friendly and business-like way
- Energise and stimulate creative and innovative capacities in young people, and to have a sense of direction
- Enable young people to think critically, to express their desires, to formulate goals, and to see through commitments
- Have the competence to act as mentors, advisors and role models
- Be equally at home in youth centres or outreach settings, as well as with formal education or the world of work
- Possess the know-how to make links between informal and formal education and also to business and enterprise, including establishing new partnerships
- Have the ability to monitor and evaluate their work, including use of measurement mechanisms as appropriate.

The following quotes provide a snapshot of the role of staff in enhancing the young person's journey:

> *"At the start I wasn't even talking to my dad and wasn't allowed to live in the house and my goal for the end was to have a relationship with him. Now I'm living with him again because the leaders helped me so much." (young person)*

> *"I'm on tag. I was on the verge of being sentenced but with the help of the youth workers sending references to the judge, they helped to keep me out of prison. I know if I go back in – I'll come out worse. I owe a lot to the guys here. If it wasn't for the youth workers' intervention I'd be in prison right now." (young person)*

> *"The staff were a big help. They were always asking if we were okay. We could request a one-to-one by ringing them and got one every two weeks. We talked about the personal action plan – thinking about career or personal issues." (young person)*

> *"If you needed help they would have helped you with everything, actually anything. They would have done anything to help with any problem you had." (young person)*

> *"The leaders were brilliant, you wouldn't even call them leaders. You could really talk to them and trust them. They don't treat you like they're teachers and that, they don't speak down to you; they just talk to you and give you another way to think about things." (young person)*

> *"It's the people* [the staff], *they care about you and you know they want to help. They show that they care on multiple occasions." (young person)*

All pilot providers identified a need for group work, which provided a context in which young people could learn and work together. Peer learning in groups occurred naturally, and the group could provide necessary support for individuals who might have been lacking confidence in their own abilities. One to one working was deemed particularly essential in the early stages, as a means to build staff / participant relationships, assess young people's levels of need, develop confidence and improve the likelihood of retention and engagement. A few providers stated that, had they been aware of the complexity of need and number of young people with mental health issues, they would have appointed one or more additional practitioners to enable a higher incidence of individualised sessions. Some provided formal mentorships to young people, and brought in partnership agencies to support this facilitation. Testimonials from young people, as captured through the case studies, depict the value of one-to-one sessions with staff:

> *"The mentor helped me by initially just meeting up with me and helping build my confidence and then introduced me to the larger group. This helped me in that I felt more confident and I knew that I would not be judged because the mentor was there to support me to grow and develop." (young person)*

> *"Mentoring enabled me to talk through issues. I thought I was suffering from social anxiety, but the leader talked me through it and helped me to see that I am an introverted person. If I had not had the mentoring I would not have been able to go the residential or avail of the international travel." (young person)*

There is also consensus in the literature that a positive relationship between workers and participants contributes to the development of a number of important social and emotional capabilities. This is especially the case when workers interact with young people on a regular basis and support participants in achieving educational and developmental goals together. While involved in such programmes, young people have indicated to researchers and evaluators that having a mentor and / or youth worker in their lives helped them to stay away from alcohol and drugs, avoid fights and reduce gang involvement (Singh and White, 2000). In a study of the effectiveness of the Big Brother Big Sister Programme in Ireland, for example, Dolan et al (2007: 6) state that:

- Young people with a mentor were more hopeful and had a greater sense of efficacy in relation to the future than those without a mentor
- Young people with a mentor felt better supported overall than those without a mentor
- Parents of mentored youth rated their pro-social behaviour more positively than did parents of non-mentored youth.

The role of activities

Activities enable engagement with young people and provide specific contexts for learning and development. Typical activities in the programmes delivered by pilots are:

- Residential courses and international visits which enable young people to be away from their home and / or usual environment: countries visited by participants as part of the pilot programmes included Poland, Germany and South Africa
- Involvement in creative arts provides young people with the chance to explore their creativity through arts, crafts, music, dance, performance, and media: to facilitate this, one pilot adopted a performance-based focus
- Work experience introduces young people to the world of work
- Volunteering opportunities enable young people to take part in the delivery of a neighbourhood or other local community service development project: examples include painting, food collection, and bag packing
- Social action refers to activities which encourage young people to engage in the community through action planning and / or action campaigns
- Adventure and outdoor pursuits allow young people to develop capabilities and specific skills via activities such as karting, archery, kayaking, climbing, while also enjoying these activities
- Cultural exchanges and visits: includes opportunities to learn about gender and race issues, engage in cross-cultural dialogues, visit interface areas, as well as engage in educational experiences such as the Somme Centre or Crumlin Road Gaol
- Sports and physical activities: such as football and gym training - one pilot had a specific objective to build positive relations through sport, therefore this was a particular programme focus
- Courses leading to a wide variety of qualifications: further detail relating to the type of accreditations offered by providers can be found in Section 4
- Specific training and skills development: this includes interview experience, guidance on developing a CV, as well as opportunities to avail of driving / motorcycle training etc.

Table 4 shows the frequency of these activities across the pilots. It is acknowledged that this information is approximate as the description of activity can vary slightly from one pilot to another, and sometimes activities can come under more than one heading. Nevertheless, it gives a broadly accurate picture of activity.

Table 4: Profile of activities across the Pilot Phase

Pilot	Activities											
	Group work	Mentoring or other one to one support	Skills development and training	Residential events	Volunteering	Adventure / outdoor pursuits	Cultural visits	Social action	Work experience	International / overseas visits	Performance / arts based	Sport / physical activity
1	x	x	x	x3				x	x			x
2	x	x	x	X7	x	x	x	x		x	x	
3	x	x	x	X2	x	x	x	x	x	x*		x
4	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
5	x	x	x	x2	x	x	x	x	x			
6	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	
7	x	x	x	X2	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
8	x	x	x	X4		x	x	x	x	x		
9	x	x	x	X8		x	x	x	x			
10	x	x	x	x2		x		x	x			
11	x	x	x	X5	x	x	x	x	x	x		
12	x	x	x	x2		x		x		x**	x	
13	x	x	x	x2		x		X		x**		
Number of pilots using activity	13	13	13	11	7	12	9	13	9	7	5	4

*Own overseas visit plus access for some young people to overseas experiences via other programmes
**Access to overseas visit for four young people from these two pilots via another programme

Table 5 describes the common associations that staff and young people made between activities and outcomes. While staff tended towards the view that almost any activity can lead to a wide range of outcomes, it was a common response that certain activities lent themselves more readily to specific outcome areas. For example, volunteering and social action were seen as naturally supporting the development of active citizenship. Such associations are further reflected in the following table.

Table 5: Relationship between activities and outcomes

Outcome areas	**Activities**											
	Group work	Mentoring or other one to one support	Skills development and training	Residential events	Volunteering	Cultural visits	Social action	Work experience	International visits	Adventure / outdoor pursuits	Performance / arts based	Sport / physical activity
Personal development	■	■		■					■	■	■	■
Citizenship					■		■				■	
Good relations				■		■			■			
Employability			■					■				

This association between activity and outcomes can be illustrated with reference to residential experiences and overseas travel. In relation to the former, young people tended to reflect on the 'fun' aspect of courses, while at the same time acknowledging wider benefits, such as enhanced personal capabilities. This is revealed in the following comments:

> *"I'm more confident now than when I started through the training and meeting the group. The outdoor programme (survival 4 days in mountains) was a good way to get to know the group – we'd nothing to do but talk to one another. At the start it was very hard, after the first day I decided to make the most of it and we built a pathway for tourists to use and went rock climbing." (young person)*

> *"*[On the residential] *although I was nervous at the start, at the end we were best mates - now I have a Protestant best mate!" (young person)*

Overseas travel was seen by providers as a highly valuable opportunity to 'accelerate' learning. As one stated, such opportunities were deemed vital in enhancing young people's soft skills:

> "*These residential or overseas events take young people out of their 'comfort zone'. They are exposed to new experiences that they cannot avoid. They are required to 'navigate' through a range of unique experiences, even before they leave the country e.g. applying for a passport, going to an airport, getting on a plane. And then to gain experience of a different country. For many, this is the first time they have left Northern Ireland. These experiences have to be integrated into the overall programme. It is not a 'jolly'." (provider)*

Comments from the young people also provide insight into the ways in which international travel brought about positive change with regard to good relations.

> *"When you travel to countries you learn and grow. It brought us closer together." (young person)*

> [On visiting a concentration camp] "*You use your mind more and put yourself in their shoes, think about what they went through." (young person)*

Adventure and outdoor pursuits were also highlighted by providers as enabling personal development including patience, time management and other such capabilities. Similarly, the relationship between skills development and employability can be illustrated with reference to the small 'personal development allowance', offered by some providers to young people towards the end of the programme. This allowance enabled practical opportunities such as undertaking the driving theory test, or applying for a provisional driving licence and taking lessons.

While no single activity automatically delivers particular outcomes, it is clear from the young peoples' and workers' accounts that engagement is more likely to be beneficial when both parties are conscious and deliberate about the potential for learning and development.

Programme length and timing

Based on feedback from young people and providers, it would seem that programme length is a crucial aspect of effectiveness. If a programme is too short, the full potential of engagement is not realised. In this regard, the delayed start date, and subsequent impact on pilot programme length, was challenging for providers. There was a view that this impacted on planning, recruitment and facilitation time.

> *"Our funding officer made us aware that United Youth were intending to run the pilot. It was a long time after our application that we heard that we had a successful result. Again, this left very little time to plan for the project." (provider)*

There was a sense of frustration that the end date remained immovable despite delays in starting. From a provider point of view, this meant that a great deal of activity had to be compressed within a shorter time frame. Furthermore, several commented on the fact that some young people were just beginning to get into their 'stride' whenever the programme was required to finish.

> *"Six months was too short and there was a lot to pack in and the young people were not ready to transition" (provider)*

Young people reiterated this view, with some stating that they would have benefited from more time on the pilot programme. Some suggested that they would have liked a few more weeks to develop further skills.

> *"I think you should make the programme longer. Maybe another four weeks? We could have had more time to build different skills." (young person)*

Others commented that the required length is variable dependent on the young person's needs.

> *"The length of time depends on the stage people are at coming in. Those who know what they want out of the programme might need less time, and for others it takes longer to find themselves." (young person)*

Providers were also of the view that the timing of the March end date was unsuitable, as there are limited opportunities related to further education and training at this time. There was some consideration of the fact that young people are left 'hanging' until courses / programmes kick off again in September. In some instances, this has been alleviated by signposting young people to other

programmes or services. Good partnerships with other organisations were deemed to be highly valuable in this regard. Whilst the evaluators recognise that the Pilot Phase ended in March 2016, in line with the funding period, it should be noted that providers expressed a common view that the programme cycle should run concurrently with the academic year.

Further exploration of the pattern of intake of *Training for Success* and *European Social Fund Programmes* somewhat reinforces the value in aligning a future United Youth Programme with the school year, as there appears to be a pattern of providers focusing on September as an important intake point for these programmes.

A focus on process

The interviews with staff revealed a common conviction that the work is more rather than less likely to be effective when it is underpinned by a clear understanding of the process involved. For example, understanding the rhythm of the pilot programme was deemed to be important with regard to effectiveness. This involved awareness of the weekend's impact on participant engagement, as well as acknowledgement of the benefit in building programme intensity across its entirety.

> *"There was a rhythm to the programmes. Intensity was consciously increased from Monday to Wednesday and then reduced in the run up to Friday. Monday was 'light touch' because of young people coming off the weekend, and the same with Fridays as they approached the weekend. Tuesdays tended to focus on personal development. Young people were most up for working together, up for the 'challenge', on a Wednesday. The intensity was also increased over the duration of the programme." (provider)*

In addition to references to the Outcomes and Principles Framework, some were explicit about the theoretical underpinning, for example being committed to a person centred approach. Others could clearly explain the staged structure and the sequence of steps in their support of the psycho-social development of the young people. Going forwards, to ensure consistency in the offer to young people, it is important to have a common understanding across all providers about how to make use of non-formal learning mechanisms and environments. Bamber et al (2014) have explained that this approach:

- Builds mutually trustful and respectful relationships with and between young people, into which they normally enter by choice
- Occurs mainly but not exclusively in informal community-based settings
- Works through purposeful practices tailored to the interests and concerns, needs, rights and responsibilities of young people, giving priority to how they identify and understand these
- Seeks to build personal and social competencies and capacities
- Favours active, experiential, group and collective learning over didactic and individualised forms, or predetermined curricula
- Encourages young people to participate voluntarily where they are supported to work with adults in partnership
- Provides opportunities that are fun, developmental, educative, challenging, supportive and creative, and are intended and designed to extend young people's power over their own lives and within their wider society
- Seeks to enable young people to clarify and embrace key features of their individual and collective identities in relation to class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability

- Supports young people as they deal with difficulties, threats and risks which may impact in damaging ways on them, in their communities, and wider society.

Partnership working

Pilot providers highlighted the value and the necessity of partnership with other organisations. Interview feedback revealed that organisations availed of existing partnerships as a means to support recruitment, to support programme delivery, for example through facilitation of particular programme components, and to offer follow up supports to young people, where required, at the programme end. It did not appear to be necessary to establish a formal partnership, although several pilot providers did go down this route. The key was prior experience of working successfully with and alongside other agencies in specific communities or in communities of interest, where trust has been built and ease of communication established.

Summary

This section highlights the value and importance of co-design from the beginning of an initiative. Co-design is important throughout implementation as a necessary mechanism for adjustment, and for mutual problem solving between providers and future United Youth Programme managers or funders, and between young people and providers. The section also suggests that no one practice or approach is most effective in bringing about change for young people. Rather, a holistic approach, enabling exposure to a variety of activities across outcome areas is required. Furthermore, it is evident that staff play an integral role, with feedback suggesting that providers need to have a strong platform for their work in terms of experience of the youth work or youth development approach involving non-formal education and learning. The evaluation revealed depth of experience, with a significant proportion of pilot staff being qualified as youth workers. Experienced workers have strong knowledge of the characteristics, needs and interests of the target group, knowledge of the local community, and established contacts / networks to support recruitment and delivery of opportunities. With regard to recruitment issues, the proposed expansion of the programme may present challenges for recruitment of young people, and possibly for the availability of sufficient staff with the necessary skills and experience.

Key lessons – inception, co-design and effective practices

Inception

- It is vital to build on the previous work and the direction of travel of provider organisations, where this is aligned to the objectives of the programme to be delivered. This is important for ensuring quality services for young people. It also means that providers can 'hit the ground running' thus making a timely start and with little wastage at the beginning.

Co-design

- The practice of 'co-design' is a crucial element in successful policy delivery – in putting young people at the centre as contributors, and also in the way of working between the centre and local providers.
- Central support in the form of care and attention to detail, problem-solving, high levels of motivation for programme success, and ensuring close links between policy intentions and finance functions, is highly prized by providers.
- It is important to strike the right balance between being controlling about some things, for example requiring commitment to the Outcomes and Principles Framework, and more open about others, for example how providers choose to work with the young people.
- It is highly effective when paper systems (e.g. application forms / business case) and processes (e.g. IPR meetings) provide, and are seen to provide, an enabling structure for management and support.

Recruitment and retention

- Recruiting young people can be a more time consuming and challenging exercise than providers anticipate, and time needs to be built in prior to programme inception to ease the recruitment and early project implementation stages.
- The intention to increase the scale of activity in order to deliver the United Youth Programme will present challenges for recruitment and possibly for the availability of sufficient staff with the necessary skills and experience.
- Relevant prior experience and knowledge amongst staff is a critical factor in success, as experienced, locally based staff are needed to make key decisions based on their knowledge of the community, to effectively negotiate community gatekeepers, and to make the most of networks and to fully utilise trusted contacts.
- Good partnerships or linkages are crucial in helping with recruitment, offering a range of opportunities to participants, and with destinations for further training or work.

Support for learning

- Attention to the individual needs, interests and circumstances of participants seems essential to engaging and retaining young people, as well as ensuring relevant outcomes.
- Learning and development opportunities are most effective when they are clearly linked to the needs, interests and aspirations of young people.
- A wide range of activities is necessary to cater for the different and developing needs and interests of young people.
- Beneficial results are more likely when staff and young people intentionally pursue certain outcomes. Mentoring and one-to-one work is highly effective.

Process

- There is consensus amongst providers about the merits of aligning the programme with the academic year.
- A positive relationship between workers and participants contributes to the development of a number of important social and emotional capabilities. This is especially the case when workers interact with young people on a regular basis and support participants in achieving educational and developmental goals together.
- Taking forward a commitment to co-design will present challenges for future programme managers and providers. Careful thought needs to be given to the extent to which current arrangements can be replicated in a new programme with the proposed expansion in places.

Section 4: Outcomes and participant destinations

Outcomes as distance travelled

Put simply an outcome is the result, change or difference made as a result of taking part in a programme. Outcomes involve knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours, but also refer more widely to a change in situations, systems and processes, or social conditions. Outcomes can be short term, in other words occurring immediately or soon after participation in some aspect of a programme. They can also be medium or longer term, building on short term outcomes, while taking longer to develop or achieve. There is an emerging evidence base to show that well delivered youth work in a wide range of contexts and settings can have a positive impact on the lives of young people (see Merton et al, 2004; Young, 2005; McKee et al, 2010; Mundy-McPherson et al, 2012; Dunne et al, 2014). In their review of the research literature, Dickson et al (2012) identify the outcome areas and related indicators that are most commonly associated with youth work. Table 6 presents a summary of the findings.

Table 6: Outcomes and indicators in the youth work research literature

Outcome areas	Indicators	Number of studies
Relationships	Positive peer relationships; positive relationships with adults; pro-social skills; leadership skills; decision-making skills; empowerment	66
Sense of self	Personal development; self-esteem; confidence; self-efficacy; self-discipline; identity; character	64
Values and beliefs	Future aspirations; positive attitudes to diversity	30
Health and well-being	Reduced alcohol / substance misuse; diversion from crime; prevention of risky behaviours; making healthy choices; general mental health	36
Community and society	Citizenship, civic engagement; strengthened bonds to community; volunteering; development of new social interests	36
Formal education and training	Academic achievement; strengthened bonds to school	27

The United Youth Programme Outcomes and Principles Framework clearly sets out the intended outcomes for the Pilot Phase in terms of capabilities across four outcome areas.

> Personal Development: refers to social and emotional capabilities such as self-awareness, personal aspirations, and getting on with other people. Work in this area involves young people in learning opportunities that challenge and stretch them. Above all it involves reflection, which is encouraged in a number of ways including informal conversation with workers, structured one-to-one sessions, and peer feedback.
>
> Active Citizenship: is about young people becoming more active in shaping life in their communities, or other aspects of social, cultural and political life. Work in this area engages young people in discussions and raising awareness about social issues, offering opportunities to make a difference through volunteering, or encouraging young people individually or in groups to address a social issue.
>
> Good Relations: refers to the willingness and ability of people with different traditions, faiths, backgrounds, cultures, nationalities and affiliations, to respect one another and to live peacefully side-by-side. Work in this area brings young people together from different communities, to work together and jointly to consider how to break down barriers to mutual respect and understanding.

Employability: refers to the skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes that are broad in nature, such as communication and teamwork, while being highly valued in the workplace. Work in this area enables young people to develop these 'soft skills', which in turn helps them to improve their capacity to meet the requirements of the labour market. The United Youth Pilot Phase offered a degree of flexibility in relation to employability outcomes; providers were allowed opportunity to go 'beyond' soft skills, for example, through the provision of accredited courses, if they felt this was appropriate for the young person.

Evidence of distance travelled

In order to illustrate the outcomes achieved by young people and the effects of participation in the Pilot Phase, providers were required to complete a participant questionnaire with the young people (Appendix 8) and case studies (Appendix 9).

The questionnaire, designed by the United Youth Programme Team for use as young people exited the pilot, drew on previous work by the former Youth Council for Northern Ireland as part of its *Youth Works* programme. The questionnaire was intended as a means to ensure a common Pilot Phase 'programme level' measurement for some of the key outcome areas. The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the difference the United Youth Pilot Phase experience made to participants in a range of outcome areas and associated capabilities. It asked young people to consider a series of questions in terms of how they saw themselves at the start of their programme, and then also near the end. They were asked to indicate 'before' and 'after' positions using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 typically represented the most 'negative' and 10 the most 'positive' position. For example, '0' is not confident and '10' very confident. The questionnaire was provided alongside detailed guidelines for its appropriate usage in order to ensure equivalence with regards administration and interpretation.

A total of 187 questionnaires were returned from the 11 pilots. A total of 270 young people completed the Pilot Phase so the figure of 187 represents approximately 70% of the young people participating around the time the questionnaire was administered. It should be noted that some questionnaires contained missing data, and one questionnaire did not contain any 'before' data, and was not included in the analysis. In a few instances, participants did not respond to every question, and as a consequence, the question base varies from 183 to 186, with average 'distance travelled' (i.e. the difference between the pre and post scores) calculated accordingly.

As shown in Table 7, positive movement can be observed in relation to all capabilities, at both an individual pilot level and on an aggregated basis. Whilst the average difference score varies per pilot, with some demonstrating more marked improvements in certain capabilities than others, consideration should be given to the fact that the difference per pilot has been calculated as an average score, relevant to the number of respondents. The latter varies across pilots, between seven and 44 respondents. Where there are a smaller number of respondents, it is possible that 'outliers' i.e. those with significantly different results from the group, may impact on the average score per pilot.

For these reasons, it is better to review the results from the participant questionnaires on an aggregated basis. Overall, participants reported positive change in all capabilities. The average difference was quite consistent on a pre and post basis; respondents typically demonstrated an average difference of +3 or +4 points across the various capabilities, with the exception of physical health, which yielded a smaller pre-and-post score of +1.

Table 7: Development in relation to capabilities

Outcome	Capabilities	Pilot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Average
Personal development	1.Communication skills *(Base:185)*	Before	5	6	5	6	4	3	6	4	6	5	5	5
		After	7	9	8	8	8	9	8	8	8	7	9	8
		Difference	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**6**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**4**	**3**
	2.Self-confidence *(Base: 185)*	Before	4	6	5	5	4	2	5	4	5	4	4	5
		After	7	9	8	7	8	9	8	8	7	7	9	8
		Difference	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**3**
	3. Resilience and coping *(Base: 184)*	Before	5	6	5	4	5	2	5	3	6	4	5	5
		After	8	9	8	6	8	8	8	8	7	6	8	8
		Difference	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**3**
	4. Working with others *(Base: 185)*	Before	6	6	6	6	5	2	6	5	7	6	6	6
		After	9	9	9	7	9	10	9	9	8	8	9	9
		Difference	**3**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**8**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**3**
	5.Physical health *(Base: 186)*	Before	3	7	6	5	5	4	6	4	6	6	5	6
		After	5	8	8	6	8	8	8	7	7	7	8	7
		Difference	**2**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**1**
	6. Mental well-being *(Base:185)*	Before	6	6	6	4	5	3	5	3	7	5	6	5
		After	9	8	8	6	7	8	8	7	7	7	9	8
		Difference	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**5**	**3**	**4**	**0**	**2**	**3**	**3**

Outcome	**Capabilities**	**Pilot**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	**Average**
Good relations	7. Awareness and understanding of difference *(Base:185)*	Before	6	6	6	6	5	3	6	4	6	7	6	5
		After	9	9	8	7	8	10	8	8	8	8	9	8
		Difference	**3**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**7**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**3**
	8. Respecting others from different backgrounds *(Base: 184)*	Before	7	5	6	7	6	4	7	6	8	7	7	6
		After	9	9	9	8	8	10	9	9	8	8	10	9
		Difference	**2**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**6**	**2**	**3**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**3**
	9. Meeting others from different backgrounds *(Base: 184)*	Before	7	5	6	4	5	4	5	3	7	6	5	5
		After	9	8	8	6	8	10	8	7	8	7	9	8
		Difference	**2**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**4**	**3**
Citizenship	10. Connection to community *(Base: 183)*	Before	4	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	5	2	3	3
		After	4	5	6	5	8	9	6	7	7	5	7	6
		Difference	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**3**
	11. Knowing about and being able to access useful services *(Base: 183)*	Before	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	4	7	6	4	4
		After	7	8	8	5	8	9	8	8	8	8	8	8
		Difference	**2**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**6**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**4**	**4**
Employability	12. The future *(Base: 183)*	Before	6	4	4	5	4	3	4	2	5	3	4	4
		After	9	9	7	7	8	9	8	8	7	7	9	8
		Difference	**3**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**6**	**4**	**6**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**4**

It is interesting to note that the starting point tended to be largely consistent across the various capabilities, with the exception of 'Connection to community', which was slightly lower at '3'. However, this finding may be explained by qualitative information from the providers, who indicated that some young people have actively distanced themselves from engagement with the community as a result of sectarianism, drug / alcohol abuse and paramilitary activity by others.

Data from our interviews with providers and young people reinforces the findings from the exit questionnaire that there is progress in all outcome areas, with the degree of outcome achievement dependant on the starting point of each individual. Staff and young people were keen to stress the positive impact on participants.

> "*This project was a needed bridge for the young people between where they were at and where they wanted and needed to be." (provider)*

The remainder of this section reflects on the 'distance travelled' by the young people in relation to the four pillars. Our information comes from the interviews with staff and young people, as well as from a review of case studies completed by pilot providers towards the end of their pilot programme. Each provider was asked to submit a small number of case studies proportionate to the number of pilot participants. The main purpose of the case study was to demonstrate or explain the young person's progress or journey, and to illustrate the difference made in terms of the United Youth Programme outcome areas. Providers were advised by the United Youth Programme Team to draw on a range of sources to compile the case studies, such as project records and monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as to allow the young person a 'voice' in its development.

It should be noted that the providers were responsible for selecting which participants' 'stories' were reflected through the case studies. While the usual caveats with regard to self-reporting apply, the case study findings are consistent with the quantitative data generated from the participant questionnaires and the qualitative feedback captured by the evaluators. This information provides a wholly consistent picture regarding participant progress. Furthermore, the themes emerging from case studies were largely consistent across the pilots. Within this section, we provide a 'flavour' of some of the young people's experiences as depicted through the case study material. This is incorporated alongside interview feedback from providers and young people.

Personal development

Typically, providers sought to enhance personal development in the earlier stages of their pilot programmes, to lay the foundations for progression in general. All providers commented on positive outcomes in terms of participants' confidence, esteem and self-worth.

Planning and problem-solving capability, alongside resilience, is also thought to provide young people with 'positive protective armour' against negative outcomes associated with risky life events. Problem-solving has been linked to the ability to cope with stresses in life (Turner, 2000). Creativity and imagination, which is related to resilience and well-being, can have a positive impact on both self-esteem and overall achievement (Benard, 2004; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999).

In the first instance, it was suggested that simply having a reason to get up in the morning positively impacted on participants in that it gave them a sense of motivation and control over their lives. A few providers noted that this was reinforced by not having to attend the Jobs and Benefits Offices to 'sign on' fortnightly, whilst others commented on the impact of the incentive on participants' intrinsic motivation. This is significant as self-discipline is highlighted in the literature as a vital factor in building academic achievement, and as a better predictor than IQ (Duckworth and Seligman, 2005).

As the programme progressed and participants had the opportunity to contribute to its design / development, adopt leadership roles, engage in activities, and forge relationships with other participants and staff, this had a significant positive influence on participants' social and emotional development.

> *"One of the guys in my group, you wouldn't recognise him. He's taking care of himself, working part time and you can just see it in his face…it's hard to explain the difference it has made to him." (provider)*

Brady et al (2012) point to a virtuous cycle in which involvement in constructive activities such as those provided through youth work, enhances personal and social development. It has been shown, for example, that young people in citizenship programmes are more likely to have increased awareness of social issues, and more likely to get involved in community issues in future (Kirkman et al, 2015).

There was a general view amongst providers that the development of social and emotional capabilities was integral to the distance travelled in other outcome areas. This finding is consistent with a body of research which establishes that social and emotional outcomes (relationships, sense of self, values and beliefs) are foundational to the achievement of a wide range of other outcomes (Clegg, 1999; Rose, 2006; Bercow, 2008; Adamson et al, 2011). In a study for The Young Foundation, McNeil et al (2012: 4) state that:

> There is substantial and growing evidence that developing social and emotional capabilities supports the achievement of positive life outcomes, including educational attainment, employment and health. Capabilities such as resilience, communication, and negotiation are also increasingly cited as being the foundations of employability. Evidence shows that approaches that focus on building social and emotional capabilities such as these can have greater long-term impact than ones that focus on directly seeking to reduce the 'symptoms' of poor outcomes for young people.

Direct feedback from the young people provides insight into the way in which the pilot programmes have brought about social and emotional change. There was an almost unanimous suggestion that engagement in the pilot programmes had enhanced participants' confidence and ability to communicate with others. Some reflected on acute anxiety to engage with other peers and adults prior to programme participation, and expressed astonishment at their ability to communicate and forge relationships with others post-programme.

> *"I had no confidence… now I can leave the house on my own. I wouldn't be who I am now without this group. Now I have a job. Now I can talk to people and talk to you." (young person)*

> *"Before the programme, I wouldn't have walked into the room if I didn't know anyone. Now I can walk into any room." (young person)*

Consistent with staff feedback, several young people reflected on the fact that they suffered from poor emotional health and wellbeing prior to the programme. Others noted that they had little to no self-belief, which was reinforced by a perception that there were no opportunities available to them, or that nobody was willing to 'give them a chance'.

> *"Before taking part in the programme, I was recovering from a breakdown. It bridged me back to how I was before. The programme was so welcoming, and they kept trying, and everyone pulled together to help." (young person)*

> *"I had no hope before this – I'd be dead." (young person)*

Comments revealed that having the opportunity to get out of the house, meet new people, establish a routine and participate in a structured programme, helped young people to feel motivated, and as though they had control over their lives. Some stated that they now have an enthusiasm and drive to do something with themselves, whereas before, they had little to no inclination to leave the house.

> *"I was sitting in the house trying to get apprenticeships and stuff and wasn't getting anywhere so my self-esteem went way down but coming here meeting new people and that, it helps you learn more about yourself, about what skills and abilities and goals you have." (young person)*

> *"I've just completely changed. I'm far more confident now. I want to do stuff now and before I was happy just sitting at home." (young person)*

> *"I'm not sleeping in as much and making more use of the day. I'm more motivated." (young person)*

Confidence and agency is said to enable young people to recognise that they can make a difference to their own lives and that effort has a purpose, and is important to key outcomes such as career success (Goodman and Gregg, 2010; Dweck, 2000).

Several commented on the range of opportunities offered during the programme and were surprised, and appreciative, of the fact that they had been given the chance to avail of such chances. Specific comments were made relating to the value of international travel, as well as the opportunities arising through the personal development allowance.

> *"I've done something I'm proud of. I got loads of opportunities that I never would have had." (young person)*

The case study information further supplements some of the key messages from the interviews and the exit questionnaires. This narrative reinforces the fact that many of the young people joined the programme facing significant personal challenges. Almost all case studies depict individuals with low self-confidence and esteem. Many were experiencing mental health issues, a number had come from challenging backgrounds or were experiencing personal adversities, in the form of familial conflict, bereavement, drug and alcohol addiction, imprisonment, all of which had had a detrimental impact on the individual's social and emotional wellbeing. Some case studies reflected the fact that the young people had challenges forming and maintaining healthy relationships, in addition to difficulty with regards to self-expression and communicating with others.

What is most evident from the case studies is the fact that some young people who were at a particularly 'low' starting point in relation to social and emotional wellbeing, made significant strides across a range of personal development capabilities. Consistent with interview feedback, improvements relate to self-confidence and esteem, communication skills, determination and resilience, particularly with regards to participants' desire to make a better future for oneself and seek help where required. The following excerpts have been included to provide an illustration of the distance travelled for some young people in relation to their social and emotional development.

CASE STUDY A – Male, 20 years, from a Catholic background

A had left school at 16 with few qualifications, and had not engaged in any further education, despite being very capable. It was suggested that this may have been due to A having a very low self-confidence and a history of mental health problems. A had no involvement in services or activities within the community; possibly due to not being aware of what was available to him. A faced several barriers to participation. He had several mental health issues that sometimes acted as a barrier. A admitted that he was regularly using illegal drugs and was addicted to cannabis to the point that he did not have enough confidence to leave his apartment in the morning without smoking it. This subsequently led to financial difficulties, social anxiety and depression. A had not received any support for his mental health issues.

A was able to receive support to overcome these barriers through participation in the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. The pilot providers worked with a mental health organisation to provide a workshop to participants, which A found to be helpful and informative, as it provided him with information on how to self-help and raised awareness of the mental health services available to him. Also, the pilot programme gave A structure to his day, which had a positive impact on his mental health. A gained confidence and self-esteem throughout the duration of the programme, to the point that he was able to withdraw from illegal drugs completely. Through discussions about his living arrangements and accommodation options, A made a decision to move out of sheltered accommodation and is now living independently in private rented accommodation. These changes to A's lifestyle also discouraged him from reoffending.

Through taking part in the pilot, A has met an entirely new group of friends. This has resulted in him no longer feeling pressurised to engage in drug-taking behaviour. This has also given A much more independence and increased his self-esteem. Through tailored programme delivery, A was signposted to organisations that can help him with his mental health problems, and he is no longer using any illegal drugs.

CASE STUDY B – Male, 21 years, from a Protestant background

From the commencement of the programme, B indicated that he had poor mental health and openly said that he suffered from depression. He stated that his confidence was at an all-time low but, upon completion of the pilot programme, stated that his confidence has greatly improved. The pilot programme was the first of its kind that B has completed since leaving school, therefore it was a great achievement for him to commence the programme in the first place, never mind complete it. This has given him a sense of achievement and motivated him to continue to pursue training or employment, which is something he would not have considered before attending the programme.

Before B agreed to commit to the programme, he informed staff that he would not be comfortable introducing himself, stating where he was from or taking part in any of the activities; he made it clear he did not want to be 'put on the spot' in any situation. As the programme progressed there were several situations where the participants were asked to do this and B was able, through time, to feel comfortable contributing. This was a big achievement for B.

CASE STUDY C – Female, 18 years, from a Protestant background

When C first joined the programme she seemed to have a problem retaining healthy relationships with people and mentioned she was high tempered, causing her to frequently fight. During a personal development session with staff, C admitted that that she deals with high levels of stress and anxiety, particularly in a group situation. C worked on this through a process of one-to-one staff mentoring. Furthermore, C participated in a series of activities related to team building, good relations and employability. These activities supported C to amalgamate with the group and she started to become a lot less anxious.

Citizenship

Pilot provider staff were confident that their pilot programme has resulted in positive participation in the community, citing examples of young people going on to volunteering positions. There was general agreement that young people have an enhanced understanding of community and their role within it.

> *"Many of the young people have gone on to play an active role in their communities, for example, through volunteering. They have come to understand 'community' in a different sense. Formerly it was about identity, whereas by the end it was about understanding the different elements and facets of community life." (provider)*

Feedback from the young people reinforced this view. Several reflected on the fact that they now want to help others, particularly those who have come from similar circumstances, and appeared confident in the ways that they could positively influence change. A few reflected on previous antisocial behaviours, and noted that this is a path that they no longer wish to follow.

> *"It stopped me wanting to commit crime. The guys, the leaders and others on the programme, showed so much care and respect. I want to help other people get away from that." (young person*)

> *"It made me more of a socialist. I don't want to commit crime. It's made me want to help people and help people get over everyday life. We need more people helping other people." (young person*)

> *"I used to go rioting and all. Now I have a better respect for people." (young person*)

Performances were also indicative of the ways in which young people have engaged in positive community participation. There was an evident sense of pride related to such achievements. Some suggested that they would like further opportunities to showcase themselves and Northern Ireland more generally.

> *"Performing is fun. You get to learn new music and to show people our journey." (young person*)

> *"Let more people see us perform so they can see our country and show other people what Northern Ireland bands are really like. They mightn't know anything about it." (young person)*

Case studies provide further insight into young peoples' experiences of positive engagement with the community through the Pilot Phase. As previously reflected, many of the young people were experiencing mental health issues and / or other social and emotional difficulties, yet had never availed of relevant support services. While several were unaware of the community services available, testimonials reveal that the programme was effective in signposting and enabling young people to avail of such services.

Case studies also highlight that the young people benefited from a range of opportunities to volunteer, oftentimes in a capacity which enabled them to support those facing greater adversity than themselves. This included engagement with the homeless or those with drug and alcohol addiction. Such experiences were cited as broadening horizons and enabling the young people to see the positive contribution they could make to others. Mentoring / coaching opportunities were also highly valued and deemed influential in instilling a desire to actively contribute to the community.

It is also evident that participation in the programme has enabled several young people to reflect on family and peer relations, and to make positive choices in relation to the types of people that they associate themselves with.

It is worth noting that not all are actively integrated within their immediate community. It was suggested, for example, that some young people have withdrawn from aspects of community life as a result of paramilitary related activities in their area.

CASE STUDY D – Male, 24 years, from a Catholic background

D now feels he is more in touch with opportunities available to him in the community. He is more aware of the support that is out there for him to assist in various parts of everyday living. This includes support in looking for employment and independent living. D believes that the increased knowledge of this support will give him the confidence to engage more in mainstream opportunities that present themselves.

D has also started volunteering the pilot provider. He is positive that this will support him to develop employment skills, however D also wants to 'give something back' to support other people in similar circumstances. He feels this role is very useful for developing work related skills, as well as the chance to work and meet with people from all parts of society.

CASE STUDY E – Female, 21 years, from a Protestant background

E was tasked with organising a citizenship day, which involved organising MLAs to come in and speak to the group. The group also had the opportunity to go to Stormont, see Parliament Buildings, engage in debates and gain a better understanding of how decisions are made. This experience increased E's interest in current affairs and political decisions at a local level. E also highly valued opportunities to work with the homeless. Before the programme, E stated that she and others had no empathy for homeless people and thought it was their own fault they were living on the streets. However, by hearing the background stories and learning how the people ended up on the streets, E realised that they were homeless through no fault of their own and needed help. E also benefited from opportunities during the programme to consider the barriers that different groups in society face and how she can make a difference to people's experiences.

CASE STUDY F – Male, 17 years, from a Catholic background

F has identified that he needs to distance himself from his friends, as he wants to be seen in a more positive light in his community. He feels that his previous friendship group has had a negative impact on the way in which he is viewed in the community. By participating in the pilot, F has recognised the value of local community services, particularly in times of need. Family relationships have been a big part of the process and he has recognised that he has people around him for support and people who care about him. This has changed F's perceptions of the community for the better.

Good relations

Interviews consistently reflected the fact that the programme had a significant positive influence on young people's attitudes towards others. All of those interviewed stated that they had the opportunity to meet people from different community backgrounds, and in many instances, would now refer to them as friends. Some stated that they hadn't interacted with someone from a different community background prior to the programme.

While not all had the opportunity to engage with those from a different ethnic minority background, comments generally indicated that the young people had gained an improved respect and understanding of other cultures and religions. A number commented that "they are just like me".

> *"At the start people were uncomfortable about religion and all but as time went on and you got involved, all the groups got involved and it just started to not matter. All the team building and ice breakers made it easier. All the activities bring you together because you have to be involved, communicate and work together." (young person)*

"I used to judge those coming over here. Now I realise that they aren't over claiming benefits or taking money. They don't deserve to be judged more than we are. They come for a better life not to steal our money and to send it back to their own country. I thought that before the programme. I didn't like them before. (young person)

"A big part of it was meeting other people from other communities. I would never go near anyone from a different community before and now I would and I would talk with them. We all figured out that we were all the same." (young person)

"You view people different. At home you hang about with your own but when you start to get to know people better, you're more accepting of their religion, sexuality and all." (young person)

Some of the pilots were transformative in the extent to which they changed young people's perception of those from other community backgrounds. One staff member reflected that participants had an acute suspicion of 'the other side' at the beginning of the programme. By the end, this group were actively engaged with and performing alongside one another.

Case studies further corroborate distance travelled for young people in relation to good relations. Testimonials suggest increased awareness and understanding of other cultures and religions as a result of participating in the pilot programme. Such awareness has come about through participation in cultural diversity workshops, good relations exercises, international travel, as well as through exposure to and interaction with young people on the programme with different backgrounds. The case studies reflect the fact that some young people have come from highly divisive backgrounds, with entrenched sectarian views. Many of the young people had never previously engaged with someone from the other 'side of the community', and have grown up with significant distrust of other religions, sentiments passed down through the generations. Nonetheless, the case studies powerfully illustrate the journey for many young people in becoming more aware of, tolerant and respectful of those from other community backgrounds.

It should be noted that, during interviews, some pilot provider staff reflected on the fact that the good relations element, particularly with respect to cross-community activity, was less relevant than the other outcome areas. There was a view that young people are more accepting of those from different community backgrounds than policy makers and wider society give them credit for. Some young people indicated that they frequently engaged with those from different community backgrounds prior to the programme. This reflects the fact that young people are at different starting points, dependent on circumstances and is also possibly due to prior exposure to and experience of good relations work. Case studies reinforce this finding, to some degree, nonetheless the influence of the programme in unifying young people and improving relations is quite evident.

CASE STUDY G – Male, 19 years, from a Protestant background

G reported that he came from a staunchly 'Protestant' home, with strong views and had never previously mixed with Catholics. He suggested that the pilot programme had been 'amazing' as it enabled him to mix with different people, become friends with those from other communities, and to feel less intimidated by those from other traditions. G has made some strong friendships with participants from other community backgrounds. He benefited from the opportunity to learn about other religions via debates about other traditions, social and societal issues.

CASE STUDY H – Male, 17 years, from a Protestant background

H joined the pilot programme with a distrust of other cultures and religions; he had previously been referred to as having joined the programme with a lingering xenophobia. However, through participation in a number of sessions related to cultural diversity, as well as an international travel experience, H had the opportunity to learn about and engage with young people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. As the programme progressed, H's language increasingly reflected that of promoting diversity. H had previously been involved in rioting with those from Nationalist / Republican backgrounds. Through the programme, H demonstrated development in his political and social views and formed good relations with participants from the Catholic tradition. Prior to the programme, H would never have considered or had the opportunity to develop such relationships.

CASE STUDY I – Male, 19 years, from a Catholic background

I comes from a Nationalist community in North Belfast. He joined the pilot programme with highly negative perceptions of Protestants, views which have been embedded over the years and influenced by other members of his community. Both I and his family were initially very apprehensive about the programme; they thought that the Catholics and Protestants would never be able to interact successfully and without conflict.

However, as the programme progressed and with the support of the staff, I had the opportunity to forge relationships with the other participants, engage in activities which brought the group together, as well as avail of opportunities to learn about other cultures. This included hearing the experiences of refugees and learning about the challenges and conflicts they have experienced. Since completing the programme I has maintained friendships with those from other community backgrounds. He states that he and his family are really pleased with the journey that he has gone through.

Employability

It is recognised that youth work with its focus on non-formal education and learning can offer a significant contribution in terms of skills, structures and supports for young people accessing and progressing in employment (Council of the European Union, 2012). This is achieved through the development of employability skills, particularly the 'soft skills' such as communication, planning and problem solving, team work, flexibility, adaptability and transferability (Blades et al, 2012; Kirkman et al, 2015) and developing career aspirations (Bielby et al, 2009). Blades et al (2012) divide the various descriptions, definitions and interpretations of the skills and capabilities needed in the labour market into four main categories. These are:

- Personal (for example, confidence and self-esteem)
- Interpersonal (for example, social and communication skills, teamwork, assertiveness)
- Self-management skills (such as reliability)
- Competencies in initiative and delivery (for example, planning, problem-solving, prioritising).

These are the types of so called 'soft skills' that are said to be most needed in the workplace by over 100 employers and 1,000 individuals (employed and unemployed) in the Republic of Ireland (Shanks et al, 2013). The skills correspond closely to those gained through engagement in youth work as reported by young Irish people involved in the Structured Dialogue process (a European wide consultation programme), during the 2013 Irish EU Presidency. In Table 8, the four categories are used to highlight the linkages and connections between the outcomes and skills acquired in youth work, and the requirements of the labour market.

Table 8: Correspondence between skills in youth work and the labour market

Overarching skill categories	Skills identified by young people	Outcomes identified in the research literature	Skills identified by employers
Personal (e.g. confidence and self-esteem)	• Confidence • Developed sense of self and what you want in life	• Increased confidence and self-esteem • Self-awareness (personal and social) • Readiness to take on new and more diverse experiences	• Adaptability and flexibility
Interpersonal (e.g. social and communication skills, teamwork, assertiveness)	• People skills • Teamwork • Learn to work with different people • Cooperation • Tolerance in working with others • Increased interaction with others	• Improved teamwork • Increased communication • Improved pro-social behaviour • More open to people from diverse backgrounds • Positive peer relationships • Enhanced leadership	• Leadership • People management and teamwork • Influencing • Communication
Self-management skills (e.g. reliability)	• Learning to work individually • Career direction	• Motivation, commitment, resilience • Increased life skills	• Innovation and entrepreneurship
Competencies in initiative and delivery (e.g. planning, problem-solving, prioritising)	• Research skills	• Critical thinking skills • Planning, decision-making • Developed and focused career aspirations	• Change management • Project management • Decision-making • Time management

During interviews, staff reflected on the myriad ways in which pilot programmes made a positive difference to the young people's employability skills. Consistent with the literature, and reflective of the qualitative feedback from interviews and case studies which stressed the foundational nature of personal development capabilities in supporting attainment in other outcome areas, staff initially mentioned 'distance travelled' in relation to social and emotional capabilities i.e. 'softer skills', and then considered development of practical skills including Essential Skills, accreditation achievement, and work / interview experience.

Without exception, the young people stated that the pilot programme they had taken part in had equipped them with knowledge, skills and confidence to gain employment. Many commented on the accreditations achieved, including Essential Skills and OCN qualifications, plus some with a vocational dimension. Most of the accreditations are linked to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Achievement of qualifications is an important indicator of success for many young people in the target group, a large proportion of whom had no qualifications on entry to the pilot.

Table 9 illustrates the number of courses completed by participants. It demonstrates that a large number (c.932) of courses were successfully undertaken, the majority of which (c.806) were accredited. A number of participants achieved OCN Level 1 or 2 accreditations, in a range of areas, such as '*Diversity and Good Relations', 'Personal and Social Development', 'Vocational Skills', 'Youth Work', 'Peer Mentorship', 'Peer Leadership and Challenging Offensive Behaviour',* amongst others. While the courses were largely pre-vocational in nature, a range of workplace knowledge and skills was recognised and the accreditations also included recognition of achievement of knowledge and

skills relevant to good relations, understanding of diversity etc. Some young people achieved Essential Skills, whilst several completed short accredited courses in areas such as First Aid and Health & Safety.

Table 9: Overview of courses and qualifications

Pilot	Level 1 OCN	Level 2 OCN	Essential Skills	Short accredited course	Other course with accreditation	Total accreditations	Non accredited course	Accreditation status unknown*	Total courses
1	12	6	0	0	0	**18**	0	0	**18**
2	0	35	0	0	0	**35**	18	0	**53**
3	7	18	2	4	7	**38**	0	14	**52**
4	0	17	0	38	5	**60**	0	19	**79**
5	21	21	11	18	3	**74**	0	20	**94**
6	51	0	13	12	10	**86**	0	0	**86**
7	200	10	0	57	0	**267**	10	11	**288**
8	0	0	0	0	11	**11**	0	0	**11**
9	0	0	0	4	0	**4**	0	0	**4**
10	0	0	0	24	24	**48**	0	0	**48**
11	0	75	0	18	19	**112**	0	0	**112**
(12, 13) 14	22	20	0	9	2	**53**	26	8	**87**
Total	**313**	**202**	**26**	**184**	**81**	**806**	**54**	**72**	**932**

*Unknown for a variety of reasons e.g. where it was unclear if a young person has proceeded to pass their driving test after taking lessons, or in some cases if a course wasn't immediately recognisable as having accreditation

Table 9 does not reflect the range of opportunities available to young people through the provision of a 'personal development allowance' within some pilots. This £200-250 allowance contributed towards the provision of other courses and tasters, such as driving / motorcycling training, fitness / sports coaching, hairdressing, First Aid, and studio recording / digital media training. With the exception of those who took their driving test, the remainder of other opportunities through the personal development allowance were non-accredited, apart from within one pilot where young people undertook OCN qualifications in areas such as youth work and ICT.

During the interviews with young people, many stated that, had it not been for participation in the pilot programme, they would not have had the opportunity or the drive to obtain any form of accreditation. Some also reflected on practical opportunities, such as work placements and interview experience. They felt they had more to offer prospective employers as a result of these experiences.

> *"I'm still working part time and I'm now applying for more jobs. I'm more confident and have interview skills so things are on the up." (young person)*

Almost all stated that they have clearer aspirations for the future as a result of participating in the programme. They cited examples of preferred career paths. Many indicated that they would like to become involved in youth work or to support those facing adversity. Comments suggested that the opportunity to act as leaders, and / or the influence of practitioners, impacted on this propensity.

> *"I feel more like I have an idea about the job I want, I want to do youth work and do what they* [the staff] *did with us because I really enjoyed it." (young person)*

> *"I now have a career path and I've started on that career path. I want to eventually train the police in dealing with people with a mental health problem. Without this programme, I wouldn't have thought about that." (young person)*

> *"I want to get back into full time employment. I've started to talk to the employment adviser to support me into full time employment." (young person)*

It was also evident that the routine of the programme, the sense of fulfilment in lasting to the end, as well as the incentive payment, had given participants the confidence, drive and enthusiasm to achieve more from life than previously considered.

> *"You believe in yourself more.* [Music] *practices are hard work and intense but good to know you can come through it; know that you've the ability to stick with something." (young person)*

Case studies further reinforce the positive attainment for young people in the area of employability. Similar to the interview feedback, testimonials evidence hard and soft employability outcomes, with the former reflecting on the practical experience gained through the programme, as well as the range of accreditations achieved by participants, and the latter emphasising improved interpersonal capabilities. Case studies unanimously reflect the fact that young people have developed positive aspirations for the future. Furthermore, they indicate a strong sense of confidence and commitment to building on the opportunities offered through the Pilot Phase. Without exception, the case studies demonstrate a desire to 'carve out' a better future for oneself, with clear and specific aspirations for the future. Several testimonials reflect the fact that the young people have progressed to a positive destination; this includes employment, further training or voluntary opportunities.

The case studies confirm that the young people come from a range of educational backgrounds, and therefore, the employability 'journey' for participants is not uniform. Whilst several commenced the programme with no form of accreditation, others had a handful of entry level qualifications, some GCSEs, others A Levels. In a few instances, young people had commenced an undergraduate qualification, however had not completed the course. The following excerpts are two of a number of positive accounts related to the distance travelled for young people in relation to employability.

CASE STUDY J – Female, 17 years, from a Catholic background

J had very low confidence in terms of her educational ability, due to missing out on schooling and having a low educational attainment. However, the provision of one-to-one assistance helped J to address the areas that she struggled with, resulting in her completion of seven OCN accreditations throughout the duration of the programme and a noticeable increase in her self-esteem.

As part of the pilot programme delivery, J was able to put together an up to date CV, gain experience in filling out application forms and participated in a mock interview. In addition, the young people also attended job fairs and so J was able to gain information on employment opportunities available to her. Throughout the programme, J attended a work placement with the pilot provider. This has inspired J to pursue a future career in youth work. J also used her £250 personal development fund to pay for her SIA security licence. This professional qualification should aid J to gain employment in this field.

The programme has provided J with many new skills, which will improve her chances of entering employment, including employability qualifications and hands-on work experience. Her work placement has inspired her to pursue a career in youth work, and she is enrolling on a programme to complete her Level 2 qualification in Youth Work.

CASE STUDY K – Male, 18 years, from a Protestant background

K left school after completing his A-Levels and began a course in university before dropping out within a short time. He realised the course was not what he wanted to do and will now go on to repeat one of his A-Levels to get the grades required for his desired course at university. K joined the pilot programme as a shy, unconfident 18-year-old who wasn't completely happy with where he was after dropping out of university. However, he left as a confident young man who had experienced a huge personal change, particularly related to social skills development. Various factors, including the fact that K completed the pilot programme, achieved OCN qualifications and was able to avail of support from staff, all contributed to this personal change.

K is able to use his new-found knowledge from gaining relevant OCN accreditations to stand up to his friends and spark behavioural and attitudinal change towards those from other community traditions. K had the opportunity to avail of numerous coaching opportunities and now remains with the pilot provider in a voluntary capacity. He wishes to continue this role while studying to repeat his A-Level.

K has high aspirations for his future. He has always wanted to take part in an international programme and is now considering making an application, as the pilot has not only given him the coaching experience he requires, but it has also shown him that he can do anything he challenges himself to do, and do it well. He intends to complete his degree and then his Master's degree, and hopes to gain some experience abroad along the way.

Participant destinations

The positive impact of the Pilot Phase on participants' employability is further depicted in the following analysis of completers' primary destination data. Table 10 demonstrates that a significant proportion of participants who completed a pilot (62.9%) proceeded to employment or a programme of training, while just under 80% proceeded to a positive destination overall, i.e. employment, further training / education of different types or a volunteering experience.

Table 10: Overview of participants' destinations

Primary destinations of completers and / or early leavers	As a % of all starts (n=413)	As a % of all starts who spent four weeks or more (n=353)	As a % of completers (n=270)
Completers to employment (n=49)	11.9%	13.9%	18.1%
Completers to employment or training programme (n=170)	41.2%	48.1%	62.9%
Completers to employment, training programme, course or volunteering i.e. all possible positive destinations (n=209)	50.6%	59.2%	77.4%
Completers and early leavers who took up employment or training programme (n=201*)*	48.7%	56.9%	_
Completers and early leavers who took up employment, training programme, course or volunteering i.e. all possible positive destinations (n=240)	58.1%	67.9%	-

This information about positive destinations is significant because it provides some early indications that productive engagement in purposeful informal education and learning can lead later to other beneficial outcomes.

Summary

A distinctive focus on the four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations, and employability, allows providers to respond creatively and holistically to the multi-faceted and layered needs, situations, interests and aspirations of young people. The result is that almost 300 young people have been assisted to achieve a wide range of beneficial outcomes. While the current evaluation cannot comment on the extent to which these outcomes will be maintained in the long-term, there is sound evidence to reflect the positive influence of participation in the Pilot Phase on young people's short-term outcomes. In addition, the number of destinations reached would appear to offer some initial vindication of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase underpinning rationale that improvements in the capabilities of young people can lead to further outcomes such as employment or engagement in training or education. There is evidence that in supporting young people to fulfil their potential, the new United Youth Programme could assist government departments, state agencies and social partners to achieve their own policy and organisational objectives. If scaled up, and providing that quality standards are maintained, a Programme based on the Pilot Phase model has the potential to make an important contribution to the achievement of wider social and economic policy objectives.

Key lessons – outcomes as distance travelled

- The Outcomes and Principles Framework including the four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations and employability, is key to direction and the purposeful nature of all activity. These are also integral to seeing young people 'in the round', and to the holistic approach adopted by providers in their programme of activities.
- Participants consistently report learning and development across all outcome areas.
- A significant proportion of participants (62.9%) proceeded to employment or training, while just under 80% proceeded to a positive destination overall, i.e. employment, further training / education or volunteering experience.

- Results provide some early indications that productive engagement in purposeful informal education and learning can lead later to other beneficial outcomes.
- Distance travelled is not uniform, since it depends on the starting point of each individual, as much as on the opportunities available, and the quality of the work with young people.
- It is important to understand the sequence of development - starting with personal development, building up the group, enabling members of the group to work with each other, and supporting the group to engage with issues external to the group.
- The way that external factors influence outcomes needs to be fully appreciated – for example, the way in which some young people deliberately choose not to engage in their local community for fear of being caught up in entrenched conflicts.

Section 5: Financial aspects of the Pilot Phase

This section of the report covers:

- The efficacy and integrity of the payments to participants, including welfare benefits flexibilities and associated processes
- Financial management and Pilot Phase performance in terms of cost effectiveness.

Payments to participants and welfare benefits flexibilities

It was expected that a number of participants would have an entitlement to social security or welfare benefits, including Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). In addition, the T: BUC Strategy made provision for the payment of a stipend for young people participating on the United Youth Programme and also indicated that existing benefit entitlements should not be impacted while they took part. For the Pilot Phase only, agreement was reached with the Social Security Agency that participants could receive an incentive payment for each day of attendance (a daily rate of £8 up to a maximum of £40 per week) without either this payment or their participation in a United Youth Programme pilot impacting on their benefit entitlement. However, for young people on JSA, the requirement that they must be available for and actively seeking employment remained. The incentive payment was not meant for living expenses, and was to be given regardless of whether or not the young person was in receipt of social security benefits.

Those who attended for three days or more per week would satisfy the 'actively seeking work' requirement (a weekly declaration to this effect was required from every participant in receipt of JSA during their period of engagement with a pilot, via the pilot provider). Where attendance was less than three days per week they would be required to provide evidence that they had been actively seeking work. In addition, pilot participants on JSA would not be required to attend their Jobs and Benefits Office / Social Security Office to make a fortnightly claim for their benefit, although they would have to attend every 13 weeks for an interview. Overnight travel outside the UK would impact on payment of JSA. Participants had to sign-off before travel and make rapid reclaim for JSA on their return.

The incentive payment was to be available only for the days that participants attended their pilot and there was provision for authorised absence in a limited range of circumstances. However, shortly before the Christmas holiday period in 2015, discussions between the United Youth Programme Team and pilot providers revealed concerns around the non-payment of the incentive payment over the holiday period and the potentially detrimental impact that providers felt this would be likely to have on retention of participants and on the number of participants returning in January 2016. Approval was secured to enable providers to pay the incentive over the Christmas period provided that they could evidence that their participants had engaged in relevant United Youth activities within their communities or otherwise. This arrangement was brokered within a very short time period and providers were advised just prior to the holiday period that they could make the relevant payments.

Pilot providers received an administration fee of 5% for their key role in the administration of participant payments including incentive, travel and childcare expenses.

The relevant administrative procedures are detailed in Section 5 and 6 of the Pilot Phase operational guidelines. The overall programme conditions with respect to participant enrolment, start / leave notifications, ongoing attendance monitoring / recording / reporting and payment of incentive and expenses have included a requirement for completion of the following forms:

- Participant Enrolment Form
- Equal Opportunities Monitoring Questionnaire (requested from participants)
- Start Notification Form (which initiated a unique identifier for each participant)
- Change of Circumstances Form
- Leaver Notification Form
- Attendance / Absence Records (on a daily basis).

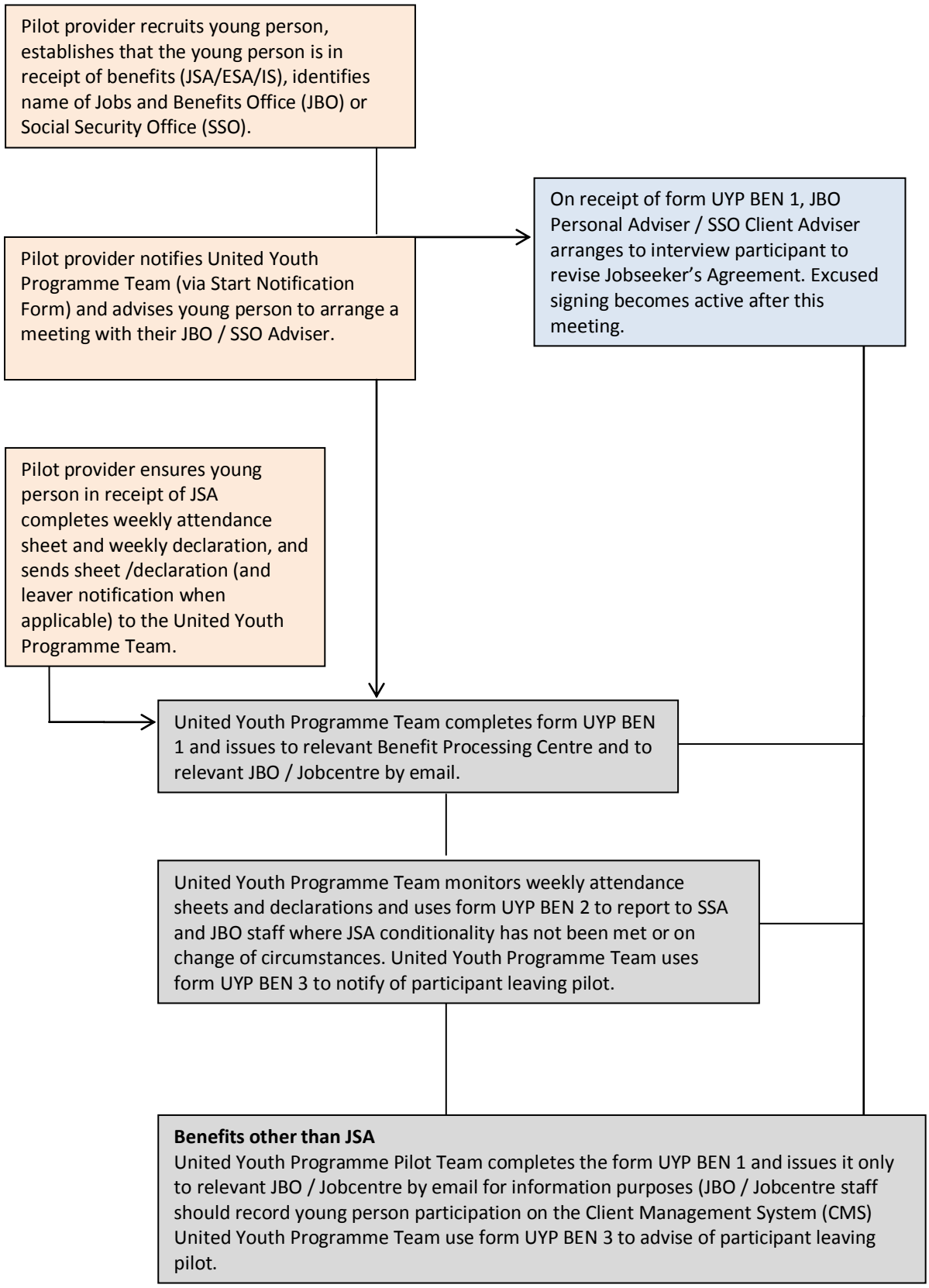
Pilot providers were required to retain all relevant records for monitoring and audit purposes for a period up to seven years after their pilot ends.

Specific arrangements for payments applied to:

- The attendance-linked incentive payment
- Authorised absences, unauthorised absences and sickness
- Travel expenses
- Care of dependent expenses, including childcare expenses.

Figure 3 summarises the process associated with retention of welfare benefits payments.

Figure 3: Summary of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase participants and benefits process



Impact of welfare benefits, payments and flexibilities

For this part of the evaluation we sought the views of participants, pilot provider practitioners / managers / administrators, and the United Youth Programme Team. From the participants we were interested in the value added by payments and welfare benefits flexibilities to their engagement with their pilot programme. For practitioners we were interested in whether the various payments represented a help or a hindrance to the work with young people. The views of pilot providers, in particular the administrators or manager, were sought about the administrative aspects. We also needed to speak to the United Youth Programme Team regarding fidelity to the process that they had established.

In face to face interviews, provider staff and managers were asked how they had found the operation of the payments to participants, while young people were asked what they thought of the payments they received. In addition, staff and managers were asked to complete a questionnaire asking for more detailed feedback about the payments and processes for participants, and wider aspects of the financial management process (see Appendix 6).

Retention of welfare benefits

There is consensus amongst providers that in improving the financial security of young people, the retention of welfare benefits was important in helping young people to participate in their pilot programme. A common view was that as many young people could not have afforded to sign off, they would otherwise not have been able to participate. It meant that the young people were free to get involved in a pilot without worrying about negative effects on their welfare benefits.

Feedback from the young people reinforced the importance of benefit retention and the fact that participation would not be viable for them without this.

> *"'I wouldn't have been able to pay rent or feed myself."*
>
> *"It's great that you can keep your benefits - you can't live without them."*
>
> *"I wouldn't do it then [*if there was an impact on my benefits*], I would just sit in the house."*

Nonetheless, a number of challenges were also noted. It was reported that Jobs and Benefits Office advisors were not always encouraging to young people about joining the pilots. In some cases, other programmes were suggested instead. There were instances of young people being questioned about why they would "bother with it" when it was not something that they were required to do. There was inconsistent understanding at Jobs and Benefits Offices around the relationship between *Steps to Success* and the Pilot Phase. While DEL staff were supportive and liaised with their colleagues in JBOs to ensure understanding of the United Youth Programme, some JBOs directed young people away from taking part in a pilot.

Flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA

Providers consistently report that the young people on JSA were extremely positive about only having to 'sign on' once every 13 weeks. This helped to avoid the practical difficulties of signing on every week while enabling the young person to fully take part in the pilot. It was noted that fortnightly attendance, on different days and times, would have been extremely disruptive to the flow of the pilot programme and group and staff bonding. Moreover, as young people commonly report feeling stigmatised and embarrassed by having to sign on, the 13-week rule was welcome, and improved engagement and participation. Providers also point to the psychological benefits for participants, with young people feeling that they were in a work situation and no longer on welfare

benefits, and the positive impact on young people's inclination and drive to gain employment, post pilot programme participation. It also sent a message to the young people that the programme was valued and valuable.

> *"It was good for the young people to experience what it was like to not have to go to the Jobs and Benefits Office (every fortnight)". (provider)*
>
> *"One of the biggest incentives for young people to join the programme was that they did not have to sign on fortnightly in the Jobs and Benefits Office. This was a big confidence boost for a lot of them." (provider)*
>
> *"On the project you didn't need to sign on (every fortnight), this was a good thing for anyone on JSA, because it saved on the travel costs going to the Jobs and Benefits Office." (young person)*

The 'three days a week' attendance rule (thereby meeting the JSA condition of actively seeking work) was generally perceived to work well. Comments from specific providers reflect the ways in which the system was effective. For example, in the instance of one pilot that was largely based on residential three day blocks, the young people knew that attending each residential covered their JSA requirements, and it didn't feel to them like they had extra work to do to keep their benefit. Another provider reports that the young people were aware that attendance was important as the youth worker had to be able to stand over the accuracy of their forms going into DEL. Some providers reported issues in respect of participant illness or hospitalisation, which meant that the young people lost their benefit due to non-attendance. One respondent took the view that JSA participants having to sign the declaration every week was useful in that it did remind the young person that even though they were on this programme, they were supposed to be actively seeking work. A small number felt there was a lack of clarity relating to authorised and unauthorised absences, as the guidelines did not account for eventualities that they felt were important to consider (e.g. if a participant's child is unwell).

There is general agreement amongst providers that while it did provide an accurate account of participant activity, the weekly declaration of attendance was regarded as an extra administrative burden on the staff. A number commented on the fact that it was completed in addition to the daily attendance form, so it was a duplicate record. A few reported that on a number of occasions DEL records indicated missing forms for participants when these had in fact been returned. This took up significant amounts of time as staff rechecked and re-supplied the forms. One provider estimated that staff were required to scan three pages for each participant every week. Whilst there was general acknowledgement of the requirement for accountability measures, most providers felt the process could be streamlined.

Incentive payment

The T: BUC Strategy made provision for the payment of a stipend for young people participating in the United Youth Programme. In the Pilot Phase, this took the form of an incentive payment of £8 per day, up to a maximum of £40 per week, as a means to encourage engagement and attendance. Whilst the provision of the incentive did not impact on retention of welfare benefits, the JSA requirement that young people must be available for and actively seeking employment remained.

There is unanimity amongst providers and the United Youth Programme Team that the incentive payment added value, and served as a motivational factor for young people to get and stay involved. Given that payment of the incentive was directly linked to young people's attendance, a few providers suggested that it encouraged recognition of the value of money.

> *"I think for my young people if there was no incentive payment they would not have been on the programme, they first came because of the money. I think it was good that it was done day by day, some of them were getting a buzz to have to do something to get that money, that's a good transition from the way it is with benefits to the way it is in employment." (provider)*

Feedback from the young people generally echoed this sentiment. Several stated that the provision of the incentive was one of the initial motivators for taking part, whilst others reflected the fact that it acted as a motivator to attendance, particularly at times when inclination was low.

> *"I don't think many people at the start would sign up without the incentive." (young person)*

> *"The money helped bigtime. It was a 'Monday' incentive* [i.e. to attend after the weekend]." (*young person)*

A small number of young people reflected the fact that, while the incentive was a 'bonus', it was not the primary reason for becoming involved. In such instances, participants stated that they were more interested in other opportunities, such as qualification attainment. Others stated that, whilst it was a 'hook' at the beginning, that as participants began to reap the benefits of the programme, it became less of a primary reason for attending. However, it should also be noted that some participants were not claiming welfare benefits, therefore the incentive was their only form of financial subsistence.

> *"It* [the incentive payment] *may have gotten you up in the morning, but wasn't a big part." (young person)*

> *"The incentive payment was just a bonus; I already had so much incentive to go there." (young person)*

> *"To me it* [the incentive payment*] was just a bonus, wasn't something that drew me in." (young person)*

> *"It's easy to say after it that you'd do it without the money but, really, at the start the money is a great incentive." (young person)*

Interestingly, in one pilot, on the advice of young people who were involved in planning the recruitment of others, the incentive payment was not advertised as it was felt that it was important to gauge interest before mentioning this. Even for those who had a genuine interest in the programme regardless of the incentive, the payment still helped to retain and engage them. It provided legitimacy to the programme for the young people and also for family members and friends supporting them to attend.

> *"It was good to have the incentive, gave a wee bit more than your benefits. If it hadn't been there it might not have made much of a difference but it definitely helped. Helped you be more motivated." (young person)*

> *"Receiving the* [incentive payment*] benefit was everything for me. I share a house with friends, so I needed the money for food, and travel. It was amazing." (young person)*

> *"It did help out, when you were broke." (young person)*

On the subject of intrinsic motivation, it is notable that in in order to attend the pilot, some participants signed off JSA due to being mandated to attend *Steps to Success*. This meant that they were solely reliant on the incentive payment. In the event of unforeseen circumstances such as ill health, hospitalisation, or caring for dependants, they were not entitled to receive the payment, which could leave them in quite a vulnerable position. The fact that some were willing to place themselves in this potentially financially precarious situation implies the programme value to these participants.

> *"I had a struggle with the benefits, they told me I had to do Steps to Success or lose my benefits. I decided to stay and do this course and sacrifice my benefits." (young person)*

Providers stated that the incentive was very important in retaining the young people on the pilot programme over the Christmas period. For participants that had no other source of income and relied on the incentive, the continuation of this payment was a major relief. However, feedback suggests that the procedures to agree continuity of provision were very confusing and communicated at the last minute. More information was needed about the requirement from young people. One suggested a Christmas bonus upon return instead of weekly payments.

One or two young people alluded to the fact that a few tried to take advantage of the provision of the incentives, by coming in for just one or two hours only and expecting to receive payment. Others recognised that some were simply there for the incentive, yet did not actively engage in the activities or contribute. Some expressed frustration that this was the case. However, practitioners reflected that this non engagement was oftentimes symptomatic of other external factors, as well as evidence of the fact that the young people were at different 'starting points' in terms of motivation and engagement.

> *"There were people who were just showing up for money – trying to show up for one hour – but they were told that it wasn't on." (young person)*

> *"There were some that came in and just lay about in sofas but there were others in the group who wouldn't allow them to behave like that... For those young people the money was a positive, but not the main thing, especially as time went on." (provider)*

According to one provider, the incentive also operated well in practice in terms of helping young people to develop budgeting skills.

Payment of expenses such as travel and childcare

Providers were able to offer many examples in which the payment of expenses helped to remove potentially significant barriers to participation. One provider reports that the high proportion of young parents on their pilot programme would not have been able to engage without the childcare expenses. Another provider states that although most of the participants lived within walking distance of the programme, without travel payments those from further afield would have found it difficult to attend.

Interview feedback quite strongly emphasised the importance of travel and childcare expenses. This was particularly apparent in relation to the provision of travel costs; a number of providers, both urban and rural, indicated that it would be practically impossible for young people to attend if travel was not provided, given the distance and cost of transport. The fact that providers had a degree of flexibility in sourcing transport (i.e. some used trains, some private taxis, some buses and / or private coaches) providing that there was a justification and / or the means of transport demonstrated value for money, also supported the process.

"Travel can be expensive…I wouldn't have been able to participate if it hadn't been paid for, I was strapped for cash." (young person)

"If I didn't have a taxi, I wouldn't have been able to go…it's physically impossible to get there by bus." (young person)

One challenge reported is that expenses are only paid for days attended by participants on a pilot programme. In respect of childcare this can be an issue, as to retain a place with any childcare provider it is normal practice that payments need to be made for every day. This includes Bank Holidays, the Christmas period and so on. If payments are not made, the childcare place is lost, which means that participants can incur retainer charges while participating on a pilot. It is also worth noting that childcare costs are often more expensive than the DEL rate in operation during the Pilot Phase, and again the difference must be made up by the participant. Furthermore, a number of providers reported that the processes associated with claiming travel were cumbersome; a few reflected on requests for receipts which had already been submitted. Others expressed frustration that original receipts, rather than copies as earlier required, were requested midway during the programme.

"Travel was a bit of a nightmare, so much paper work and providing a rationale." (provider)

Several providers took the opportunity to comment on the value in refreshments. Provision of food and drink was deemed essential to the attendance of some young people.

"For me, the food was more important than the incentive. They wouldn't have come without the food." (provider)

One suggestion was for all expense payments to be centralised and transferred to participants' banks by DEL / DfE staff on receipt of claim forms - perhaps then travel-passes could be issued to participants and the management of payments and associated procedures would be streamlined significantly.

The 5% administration fee

There is a unanimous view that a fee of 5% to cover administration of participant payments does not cover the amount of time associated with making payments. One provider detailed what is involved including: having attendance and other information from staff working with young people, checking and re-checking payment and claims, inputting data on the IT system, authorising the payments, claim verification, bank transfers, budget re-profiling. They noted that each of these procedures involve a different member of staff. Regularly, for this provider, there were four staff involved with weekly payment procedures.

One respondent made a comparison with administering Education Maintenance Allowance to young people in the context of European Social Fund / Collaboration and Innovation Fund provision, for which they were paid a fee of 10%. Their view was that this was more in line with the administrative burden this placed on staff time. Many report underestimating the amount of time required to complete participant claims for the pilots. There is widespread agreement about the desirability of reviewing and streamlining the associated paperwork.

"The level of administration required did not seem proportionate to the amount of money that they were getting from DEL. Took a lot of time for the finance officers to work through it." (provider)

Impact of the *Steps to Success* programme on the operation of the pilot

This question drew consistently negative and critical comments from all respondents. One respondent reports how the *Step to Success* programme prevented two young people from engaging in the pilot as they had already been mandated onto that programme before the pilot began. This was judged to be counterproductive for the young people in question as the pilot offered a holistic approach to personal development through the four outcome areas, in contrast to *Steps to Success* with its emphasis on employment. In further explanation, the respondent stated that there can be other barriers to employment beyond qualifications and experience, in that some people may lack the confidence or skills to be successful if they are given a work placement or secure a job. An initiative like the United Youth Programme can be an excellent way of developing these skills or confidence.

One pilot lost 70% of its recruits overnight amounting to almost 20 young people, which led to a complete revision and shortening of the pilot programme schedule, in order to enable engagement in an alternative pilot experience planned over a shorter programme timeframe. The problem was compounded as participants often did not know they were on *Steps to Success*, and did not understand why they could not attend the pilot programme when from their perspective, so much was being offered.

A further provider explains how they managed to recruit above the number targeted but this process would have been quicker and more effective if the issues around the interface with *Steps to Success* had not arisen. Reluctantly they had to tell some young people who very much wanted to join their pilot programme that they couldn't. In some cases, this caused a great deal of distress to the individuals. Another reports that without DEL acting as an intermediary between the pilot and the JBOs it would have been difficult to ascertain who was eligible for the pilot, when *Steps to Success* ended for some of the young people already on it, and to negotiate a place on the pilot for those who were eligible. It was evident from young people's interactions with the JBOs that they seemed to be under pressure to 'push' *Steps to Success* as opposed to other programmes. Young people were often questioned as to why they were choosing to join the pilot and not *Steps to Success*.

As one explains, if participants were fortunate they had a period of 12 months (nine months plus three months deferral of the requirement to join *Steps to Success*) within which to undertake a United Youth pilot. However, this period not only limits the potential for programmes to run beyond 12 months but also limits the time available for participation by young people who have been in receipt of JSA for a period of time prior to coming into contact with a pilot. It is challenging to target unemployed young people who meet this narrow eligibility (particularly as many participants are unaware they are on *Steps to Success*). This becomes even more difficult if a programme is targeting a particular segment or niche of youth population such as the example within the Pilot Phase of members of marching bands. This provider was in no doubt that *Steps to Success* had a negative impact on their pilot and more importantly on individual participants who were upset that they could no longer attend the pilot, or had to pull out half way through because they were mandated.

One respondent reports that young people are greatly concerned about having to join the *Steps to Success* programme and not having a say in this decision, even though they may already be participating in other training which they feel is better suited to their needs. This was also the case with the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. The 90-day deferral is not long enough for a young person to complete the pilot or indeed many associated qualifications such as Essential Skills.

Summary

This first part of Section 5 has considered the operation, integrity, and impact of the arrangements for welfare benefits, payments and flexibilities in the Pilot Phase. The evaluation finds that the processes involved were undertaken by providers with due diligence and that the systems developed by the United Youth Programme Team in conjunction with other DEL and SSA staff were robust. There is consensus amongst the young people that the retention of welfare benefits, payment of an incentive, and payment of other expenses, greatly assisted with their participation and active engagement in the pilot. As we have shown in Section 4 of this report, active engagement enabled young people to achieve employability outcomes, as well as to undertake courses and achieve accreditation relevant to the labour market. Information about destinations shows that many were able to move on in their journey towards work. Going forwards a key consideration concerns the way in which the *Steps to Success* programme impeded engagement with the target group of 'hard to reach' young people.

Key lessons – payments and processes

- The incentive payment, retention of welfare benefits, flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA, and support costs in terms of travel and childcare expenses, are essential elements in the United Youth Programme as they enable and incentivise participation and engagement.
- The payments and processes system is robust, and the requirements were adhered to with integrity. Assurances were provided that the participants were meeting the actively seeking work requirement. It is clear that due care and diligence has been built into the system.
- While there needs to be a common approach across the programme, and given the characteristics of the target group, in some cases discretion in relation to authorised absences is necessary in the interests of maintaining young people on the programme.
- There is consensus about the need to simplify the payments and processes system, as far as this is possible. One proposed example is by issuing participants with a prepaid travel card instead of reimbursing costs. On the basis of the experience of the Pilot Phase, providers and the United Youth Programme Team are in a good position to jointly review, simplify and streamline the system through the co-design process.
- If the burden of administration associated with participant payments remains the same, consideration should be given to increasing the administration fee from the current 5%. Alternatively, potential providers need to be assisted to make more explicit provision for administration of this aspect in their bid for funding.
- JBO / SSO staff are important gatekeepers in the system and need to be fully aware of the merits of the United Youth Programme.
- The situation with regard to the *Steps to Success* programme needs to be reviewed for the future successful implementation of the United Youth Programme. The focus needs to be on how the two can complement one another at both a policy and operational level rather than work in opposition.

Cost effectiveness

As the evaluation has already dealt extensively with other aspects of Pilot Phase performance, this part of Section 5 focuses on cost issues in the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase. While being economic with resources is important, cost effectiveness is not about the cheapest route to delivery. It is about ensuring that funds are spent in line with policy objectives, on time, and in a way that clearly leads to the desired outcomes for the intended beneficiaries. A number of issues appear to be most important with regard to cost effectiveness, and therefore in terms of lessons going forwards:

- The need for an enabling context for financial performance
- Accuracy of financial forecasting

- Distribution of costs between budget headings
- Variations in budget and spend between pilots
- Relationship between spend and activities at pilot level
- Unit and participant costs
- Objectives, achievements and outcomes
- Capacity building and learning.

The figures below take into account the fact that two providers closed during the Pilot Phase for reasons unconnected with the United Youth Programme. All figures are based on data provided by the DfE United Youth Programme Team.

The context of financial performance

The context of performance is the overall systems, procedures and controls established for programme management. It is clear that due care and diligence has been built into the system. Control started with the application form, which required applicants to detail their financial plans, explain their competence to manage funds, and demonstrate viability. Successful applicants were required to present these plans in an agreed business case format, which, following internal scrutiny and approvals by the Department in line with appropriate governance arrangements, formed the basis for the agreed Letter of Offer. Spend was monitored on a monthly basis from the start, with all providers using the same template for returns. In due course, and following informal meetings with providers, the United Youth Programme Team identified that there was a need to further refine the financial forecast, and they instituted the mechanism of a midpoint performance and financial review, in addition to normal monthly monitoring via the claims and payments process. As will be explained below, this mechanism enabled remedial action where required, and significantly closed the gap between initial budgets and likely expenditure.

Due to the innovative and demand led nature of the Pilot Phase (young person centred, co-design approach), there were inevitable uncertainties concerning how providers would perform, as well as having implications in terms of establishing initial costings where there were no precedents, existing rules or guidelines. Procedures and forms were established for the Pilot Phase, which in the event have proved to be useful and have served their purpose. Constant and open communication between providers and the United Youth Programme Team at the centre meant that issues could be dealt with as they arose. This was critical in ensuring resolution of issues in an open and reflective manner. For example, addressing any necessary change to activities, additional pilot activities or potential overspends could be considered on the basis of a robust business rationale which linked activity to pilot objectives, as well as demonstrating other factors such as affordability and value for money. All returns were collated centrally, and compliance from providers meant that information was up to date. The United Youth Programme Team were able to make available all necessary financial information to the evaluation team in an accessible form.

It is commonly held amongst providers that the Letter of Offer, while received later than anticipated, was issued as early as possible from the United Youth Programme Team, and the finalisation of the business case and agreement on the budget was relatively smooth. However, providers report that the delay in receiving the Letter of Offer, impacted negatively on the staff and management of projects because it put back the starting date and put pressure on their ability to deliver on their planned activities. As one provider explained:

> *"It wasn't possible to get staff working until the Letter of Offer was received* [start of August] *which impacted on recruitment of young people and the programme delivery start date – four weeks from Letter of Offer." (provider)*

The view is that more time is needed in terms of Letter of Offer for programme planning, recruitment of staff, and recruitment of young people, than was allowed by this particular four-weeks stipulation. Another notes that although much work was involved in the initial negotiations, the late start meant that in the end there was a short space of time to manage a large budget. There is common agreement that all communication was courteous and DEL staff were extremely supportive.

Provider feedback suggests that the Pilot Phase arrangement for payment of the 25% pilot budget advance and the subsequent process for monthly reclaim of the advance, suited their needs and enabled them, for example, to provide pilot project partners with upfront payments, which were essential for their cash flow. They also report that:

- The payment of the advance was straightforward
- The process for reclaiming was clear from the start
- The conditions for repayment were clearly set within the Letter of Offer and remained consistent throughout the pilot so that it was easy to follow
- The advance was invaluable as it allowed for the timely payment of staff salaries, programme costs, running costs, management and administration.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the extensive data generated through the management and administrative systems developed for the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase, produces valuable qualitative and quantitative information. While necessary for keeping providers on track, the information also has the potential to enable system-wide learning and development.

Financial forecasting

Accurate and realistic forecasting helps to keep providers on track in terms of achieving their objectives, as well as to avoid over or under capacity and potential wastage of staffing and resources. To determine accuracy, it is useful to consider the difference between the starting budget and the revision at midpoint during the Pilot Phase. The total budget for the 13 pilots was £2,340,408. At mid-point the revised budget was £2,173,783; a difference downwards of £166,625 or 7.1% of the initial budget. Discounting the figures for the impact of the two pilot closures, gives a starting budget for the remaining 11 pilots of £1,842,002.

At midpoint only two pilots had their budgets revised upwards. One was by just over £1.5k and the other by just over £5k. The rest were under budget, ranging from -£1,096 at one end, to -£67,336 at the other. Within this range, one was under budget by £24.3k and the rest under by less than £20k. Not including the two pilots which closed at mid-point gives a revised total budget of £1,675,378. Between the revised budget and final expenditure there were three overspends with figures of £4,135, £17,454 and £6,947 respectively. The rest of the pilots were under budget with two under by more than £12k, one under by more than £11k, two under budget by less than £10k, and the rest under by less than £5k. With regard to the pilot which at midpoint was £67k below the initial budget, the difference between the revised budget and final expenditure was +£17,454.29.

The difference between the revised total budget of £1,675,378 and the final total expenditure of £1,645,536 was less than 2%. This is a creditable performance in terms of forecasting, given the inevitable uncertainties and unknowns associated with a pilot initiative. The 2% figure also indicates that the mechanism of budget revision at midpoint enables necessary adjustments, especially in terms of minimizing overspend. Going forwards, however, consideration could usefully be given to the reasons for underspend at key points.

Table 11: Original and revised budget and expenditure (discounting the two pilots that closed at mid-point)

Original Budget (£)	Revised budget (£)	Difference in original budget and revised budget (£)	Difference in original budget and revised budget (%)	Actual expenditure (£)	Difference in revised budget and actual expenditure (£)	Difference in revised budget and actual expenditure (%)
1,842,002.78	1,675,377.93	-166,624.85	-9.0%	1,645,535.83	-29,842.10	-1.8%

Some providers noted difficulties with the budget reprofiling and pointed to the length of time involved in the process. One related how organisational reports contain different costs centres and budget headings than those in the Pilot Phase forms, which were not introduced until after the pilot had started. In one case, the provider didn't have the opportunity to match the United Youth Programme Team budget headings with their own. A number of suggestions for improvement were made including the suggestion that it would be helpful if the claims were submitted with a more simplified breakdown of costs, and the reprofile of budget sent separately. All were of the view that it would be useful if the claims process was reviewed and streamlined. Lastly, as they had to convert all documents for use / check functionality, and develop forms as needed, it would be useful if all finance documents are provided in Excel.

Distribution of costs between budget headings

Table 12 shows the overall distribution of costs in terms of figures and percentages under the four main budget headings of staff, programme, participant and overheads.

Table 12: Overall distribution of costs in the Pilot Phase

Budget heading	Total (£)	Percentage
Staff	738,426	44.9%
Programme (activities)	604,673	36.7%
Participants	213,206	13.0%
Overheads	89,231	5.4%

The range in terms of total expenditure at pilot provider level is from £33,998 to £245,941.

Staff costs

It can be anticipated that staff costs will form the major part of expenditure where value is added through regular and frequent face to face contact between staff and participants. There was a diverse range of staffing models across the pilot providers. Some staff were full-time with various responsibilities or were dedicated to a specific role, while others were part-time or recruited to deliver a specific aspect of the pilot programme. Another variable is the pattern of working which also differed depending on the pilot programme. Some operated over four or five consecutive days on a weekly basis, for example, while others involved residential events spread across a number of months. The range of staff costs in the Pilot Phase was from £18,145 to £131,326, with the relative percentages of total expenditure being 39.3% and 54.9% respectively. One possible measure of efficiency concerns the relationship between staff cost and number of places in each pilot. In some cases, the respective staff costs per place did not appear to differ greatly, but the highest staff costs per place was £4,372 and the lowest was £1,462.

An adequate ratio of staff to young people is critical due to the demands on workers of the multi-faceted nature of provision at pilot level, and the nature of the complex needs of the young people targeted in the Pilot Phase. Conversely, too high a ratio (fewer workers and larger numbers of young

people) and inadequate administrative support can place much strain on workers, with consequences for the quality of provision for young people. Working with pilot project partners, and meeting administrative requirements also makes additional demands in terms of time and effort. Table 13 illustrates the staffing approach taken in two pilots.

Table 13: Staffing costs in two pilots

Pilot X (staff costs per place = £4,372)			**Pilot Y (staff costs per place = £1,956)**	
Item	**Cost (£)**		**Item**	**Cost (£)**
Programme Co-ordinator 100%*	18,917.84		Project Co-ordinator 75%*	5,067.25
Programme Administrator 100%	13,512.00		Area youth worker 53.57%	6,514.91
Head of Youth Development 50%	16,407.00		Area youth worker 100%	5,390.14
Youth Outreach Mentor 100%	18,960.60		Area youth worker 71.43%	5,791.28
Youth Outreach Mentor 100%	18,960.60		Administration worker 12.5%	1,433.76
Youth Outreach Mentor 100%	18,960.60		Head of Youth Programmes	2,625.00
Youth Outreach Mentor 100%	18,960.60		NI Contributions	1,437.34
Staff Travel	2,224.00		Staff Travel	841.61
Recruitment	1,000.00		Recruitment	50.00

*Percentage of the staff members' total time that is spent on the pilot

With reference to the number of places delivered by each pilot, the information in Table 13 indicates that in pilot X there would appear to be seven young people per mentor, and in pilot Y, five young people to each youth worker. Both pilots have budgeted for administrative support although at different levels. Appropriate and adequate staffing is not simply about the number of staff employed, however, as much depends on the type and extent of the activities involved in the programmes. Pilot X is a five days per week pilot that includes a high level of one-to-one work with participants and is delivered over multiple sites, while pilot Y is a three days per week pilot delivered at a single site.

Programme costs

Programme costs are significant because they provide for the activities and experiences that enable participants to develop competences in relation to intended outcomes. In an initiative such as the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase, which seeks to provide a wide range of engaging, intensive and stimulating activities, experiences and opportunities, linked to the achievement of planned outcomes, over a period of participant contact of between six and seven months, it may be anticipated that programme costs account for a good portion of overall expenditure.

The overall expenditure on activities across the pilots amounted to £604,673 or 36.7% of total spend. The range was from £8,083, with eight intended places for young people, to £104,639, with 24 intended places. These figures appear to show a significant variation, with the relative percentages of total expenditure at 23.8% and 49% respectively. The cost per place ranged from £1,010 to £4,359. As with staffing, however, there is no simple way to assess cost effectiveness with regard to activities.

One reason for the difficulty is that some pilots, for example pilot X (Table 13), favoured a more individualised approach with a strong focus on mentoring, while others emphasised group activities. While each approach can be justified in terms of achieving individual pilot objectives, each has

implications for staffing ratios and therefore costs. For example, in the case of the pilot with the lowest programme cost per place (£1,010), the programme was largely built around a series of linked residential events, with some cultural visits, and one to one contact in between the events. In contrast, the pilot with the highest programme cost per place (£4,359) had a more extensive range of weekly activities involving use of specialist resources, cultural visits, a series of residential events, and an international experience for the young people.

A spectrum of activities at provider level is required to meet the varied needs and interests of young people. While some activities are relatively low cost, others will cost more, and both types as utilised within the pilots can be justified in terms of reaching objectives and achieving outcomes. Residential work and international work are commonly considered to be at the higher cost end of pilot provider activity, but, in overall terms across the pilots, residential work was 15.8% of programme costs while international work was 19.8%. In other words, 65% of programme costs supported a range of other activities.

Table 14: Cost of residential and international / overseas work

Residential work		**International / overseas work**	
Budget (£)	**Spend (£)**	**Budget (£)**	**Spend (£)**
156,277.89	95,537.01	110,098	119,688.22

With regard to residential work, with the exception of two pilots, all had an underspend. There was an overall underspend of £23,562.21, when the costs associated with the two pilots which closed and the subsequently re-formed pilot are discounted. Regarding international work, there was a difference of +£12.6k between budget and spend in the case of one pilot, and differences of +£14.2k, -£18,829 and -£11,043 in the case of three others. Across the pilots there appears to have been an overspend of £9,590 for international work. As these two areas seem to be less predictable in terms of accuracy of forecasting, going forwards, work might be needed to assist providers to be more accurate in budgeting with regard to these two items. The effect of the co-design approach may be at work here, however, with young people deciding on events and activities in ways that cannot be easily predicted in advance.

Participant costs

Participant costs across the pilots were £213,206 or 13.0% of total expenditure. Given the importance attached to payments, by participants and staff, in terms of an incentive for recruitment and retention, this would appear to be a reasonable cost in terms of the overall investment in the Pilot Phase. Cost-effectiveness is dependent, amongst other factors, on achieving the number of intended participants in order to optimise funding. As Table 15 shows, in terms of accuracy of forecasting there is virtually no difference between the original and the revised recruitment target agreed as a result of the ongoing implementation planning and review process with individual pilots. The two closures are included in the table, as provision was made for the young people so that they could complete their pilot programme as far as possible. The figure of 413 starts exceeds the revised target figure of 347 quite significantly.

Table 15: Pilot recruitment and participant retention

Pilot	Original target	Revised target	Starts*	Leavers	Completers	% Retention starts v completers
1	8	8	11	4	7	63.6%
2	24	24	23	6	17	73.9%
3	32	28	42	16	26	61.9%
4	20	20	26	8	18	69.2%
5	32	28	32	13	19	59.4%
6	48	48	54	19	35	64.8%
7	60	60	90	36	54	60.0%
8	24	24	22	3	19	86.4%
9	10	8	9	3	6	66.7%
10	15	15	22	9	13	59.1%
11	24	24	26	5	21	80.8%
12	30	30	22	11	11	50.0%
13	30	30	34	10	24	70.6%
Total	**357**	**347**	**413**	**143**	**270**	**65.4%**

*Some young people were recorded as having started but left immediately or soon afterwards for various reasons including engagement with the *Steps to Success* programme

The total number of leavers (143) as a percentage of starts (413) is just under 35%, which appears to be high. Some young people left at a very early stage for various reasons including engagement with the *Steps to Success* programme. When the young people who left a pilot within four weeks of starting (60) are removed from the figures, the number of remaining early leavers (83) as a percentage of 'true' starts (353) is 23.5%. The retention rate therefore is 65.4% or 76.5%, depending upon which leavers figures are considered. It is widely accepted that the young people targeted by the programme are difficult to engage and retain. Furthermore, as noted elsewhere, retention rates were negatively impacted by *Steps to Success*. The figures of 65.4% and 76.5% completion must be seen, therefore, in terms of the nature of the target group. In any case, leavers may also have obtained benefits from their participation prior to leaving. The figures appear to show some success in terms of recruitment, as the number of starts exceeds the revised participant target by 66.

Overhead costs

The overhead costs claimed by the pilots ranged from £969 to £20,399, and as a percentage of individual total pilot expenditure from 1.7% to 11.2%. The total amount claimed for overheads across the Pilot Phase was £89,231 or 5.4% of total pilot expenditure. Given that across the Pilot

Phase claims for overheads costs were capped at 20% of staff costs, this figure can be compared to 20% of the total Pilot Phase spend on staff of £738,425.79. This indicates that the amount incurred on overhead costs overall of £89,231 was considerably lower than the maximum amount of overheads of £147,685 which might have been anticipated.

This aspect of financial management has attracted mixed responses from providers. A number report that the level of administration in general relating to staff timesheets / salary details being requested each month was time consuming. As one explains:

> *"The amount of detail required in the budgets and reprofiles meant that a lot of time was required in the preparation of claims. Much time was needed to split payments and assign them to specific budget items. This can be difficult to match if the person completing claim documentation is not the person who sets the budget." (provider)*

Another reports that:

> *"The monthly claims process was confusing at the start as there were changes and differences in how specific budget categories were claimed. For example, staff salary costs / overhead costs were claimed on the basis of fixed budgeted amounts, participant costs were claimed via the monthly claim form, and programme costs were claimed as actual expenditure incurred during each month." (provider)*

Others note, however, the quick turnaround for claims once they had been submitted and that they were checked and paid out within a week or two. This was deemed helpful for cash flow as it minimised delays between spending and reclaiming funds. On the other hand, one notes that:

> *"New requirements were introduced throughout the duration of the pilot such as names needing to be attached to receipts. Some of the forms did not include the detail that was required, which meant that we had to create our own. Forms with numbers would have been helpful as Excels and not Word documents." (provider)*

Overall unit costs

Pilot providers' total expenditure ranged from £33,998 to £245,941. While the average cost of a place on the programme (total expenditure ÷ places) was under £6k at £5,734, there was a wide variation between providers in cost per place, which was from £3,599 at one end, to £8,896 at the other. These are large variations which, as explained above, appear to be accounted for primarily by differences in programme activities and staffing, with providers making judgements about the intensity and length of their programmes in relation to the perceived needs of young people. Going forwards, however, the United Youth Programme Team could usefully look further at the different elements associated with cost per head, not least to ensure equity of provision for young people taking part in a new United Youth Programme.

Table 16: Unit and intended places costs (based on 11 pilots)

Expenditure (£)	% of total expenditure	Final target number of places	Cost per place (£)
1,645,535.83	100	287	5,734

Costs in relation to objectives, achievements and outcomes

As explained in the rest of this evaluation report, the Pilot Phase engaged with the young people that it was meant to reach and pilot objectives were consistently largely achieved. A significant proportion of participants (62.9%) proceeded to employment or training, while just under 80% proceeded to a positive destination overall, i.e. employment, further training / education or voluntary placement (see Table 10, Section 4). This latter is important given the nature of these young people, many of whom have complex problems and some of whom live in difficult circumstances. Retention is a critical indicator of effectiveness. A retention rate of just over 65%, or 76.5% when young people leaving within the first four weeks are discounted, signals that many young people valued the experience, which, in turn, reflects well on the work of the staff and on the opportunities and activities provided.

At this point, it can only be assumed that this expenditure could also lead to future savings down the line, if the initial successes translate into improved take-up of services and a reduction of claims on the state as health and education improve. Along these lines, *Against the Odds* (Audit Commission, 2010) indicates that in addition to having poorer life chances than their peers, a young person in the so called 'NEET' category could cost approximately £56,000 in public finance before retirement age (including welfare costs, cost to health and criminal justice services, loss of tax and National Insurance revenue), and £104,000 in opportunity costs (loss to the economy, welfare loss to individuals and their families and the impact of these on the rest of society).

Furthermore, a rough comparison with two other programmes (A and B) provides an illustration of how the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase compares with regard to unit cost. The cost per participant associated with programme A, an integrated good relations programme with similarities to United Youth in terms of aims, content and target group (i.e. those most removed from the mainstream) is £6,460 for an equivalent eight month period. Programme B, a mainstream employability-focused training programme for young people, is in the region of £3,400 per participant for a similar period. Therefore, the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase unit cost sits slightly above the midpoint between the two programmes. This comparison should be treated with caution as, although the costs for programmes A and B have been calculated based on a near equivalent duration to the United Youth Pilot Phase (eight months with, in the case of the Pilot Phase, six to seven months participant contact time within this), the programmes differ in terms of frequency and intensity of contact, nor can they be easily compared in relation to the types of activity undertaken, the financial provisions made for participants, or the outcomes achieved.

Capacity building and learning

Finally, there are two further dimensions of cost-effectiveness that need to be taken into account. Although difficult to quantify in strictly monetary terms, over and above the cost effectiveness implied through pilot performance alongside the figure of £5,734 per place, there has been an increase in provider capacity to plan, monitor and report on all aspects of programme development and implementation. This is due to compliance with the arrangements for administration and financial regulation built into the Pilot Phase. Moreover, as evidenced in feedback compiled during the final IPR meeting with providers, the commitment to co-design has enabled both the United Youth Programme Team and providers to use these arrangements to elicit information for learning and development purposes, including for example the capacity to reflect on the most effective practices to support a diversity of need, and to ensure achievement of objectives in a more systematic way. In other words, built-in systems enable dialogue, monitoring and evaluation that can inform programme development.

Summary

The overall picture is one of sound financial management due to systems of support and control operating in consort. The mechanism of revising the budget based on early returns allowed for a more realistic assessment of requirements, which facilitated the co-design approach and contributed to overall expenditure being close to budget. The variation in costs between the pilots appears to be a function of their different programmes of activity and staffing requirements, though further analysis would be useful concerning costs per head. There is no single model of effectiveness at the level of pilot providers, but overall the experience of the Pilot Phase offers the potential to establish some general parameters around budgeting that can help the United Youth Programme Team and future providers to be more systematic in their planning across all four main budget headings. Identification of areas for action could usefully be facilitated through the co-design approach.

Given the frequency and regularity of contact between workers and young people, the range of outcomes across the four pillars, and the number of destinations achieved**,** it would appear that the Pilot Phase has been an effective and economic use of public funds, being delivered as intended, on time and within budget.

Key lessons – cost effectiveness

- Cost effectiveness depends on the clarity of the requirements built into the system, especially where these are expressed in user-friendly templates for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- Successful financial performance is more likely when the requirements are clear from the start, beginning with the application form. While information is essential, care must be taken not to overburden providers with too much reporting, while retaining accountability.
- Good performance also depends on the extent and timeliness of the guidance and support available to providers.
- Open communication between the United Youth Programme Team in DEL / DfE and providers enabled problems to be discussed and dealt with in productive ways.
- The mechanism of budget revision at midpoint allows for a more accurate forecast, and more effective financial control. Cost effectiveness is aided by a rigorous application process, in which appropriate information and support for applicants is more likely to secure accurate budgeting and forecasts of expenditure.
- Given inevitable variation in unit costs between providers, going forwards funders might wish to consider that the most useful focus for cost effectiveness is not on specific variations between individual providers per se, but on the overall performance of the programme.
- The experience of the Pilot Phase may provide a rough guide as to what can be expected in terms of the distribution of funds across budget headings in any programme going forwards. The same notional distribution could apply at provider level.
- On the basis of the experience of the Pilot Phase, it might be useful to establish typical or maximum costs for certain types of provision, including residential and international work, which could be facilitated through the co-design approach.
- Establishing parameters around costings can help policy makers and programme designers to budget more accurately, as well as enabling local providers to be more knowledgeable about the financial implications of their choices. Potential bidders for delivery of a future United Youth Programme might also be advised of these parameters in advance.
- Support at overall programme level can assist efficiencies at provider level, for example through central support for advertising, recruitment, and staff training.

Section 6: Measurement, monitoring and evaluation

Linking outcomes, indicators and measures

The terms of reference for the evaluation of the Pilot Phase required consideration of the learning from the approaches to measurement and evaluation employed by the pilot providers and centrally, and how learning from these and from other relevant work could be applied within a new United Youth Programme.

A quantitative approach to matching outcomes with cost, risks and opportunities is necessary in relation to the inputs and outputs involved in programmes. Because cost is mainly invested in time and people, however, capturing the relational dimensions of the work also requires a qualitative approach. According to Blades et al (2012: 3), however, measurement of non-formal learning is often inconsistent between organisations, and is lacking in national policy. Services involved in developing employability skills are commonly not required to have assessment tools for measurement of skills, and where methods do exist for measuring informal and non-formal learning, the ability and awareness in organisations in utilising these tools is limited.

It is important to know that the distance travelled by young people in relation to the four main outcome areas is being measured effectively. During the Pilot Phase, in addition to the participant questionnaire and case study tools supplied to pilots by the United Youth Programme Team, providers were asked to use their own methods and adjust them appropriately to align with the United Youth outcomes and capabilities. The use of different methods across the providers can be seen in Table 17. The most common methods are questionnaires, interviews, case studies, personal development plans, and sharing progress with participants. The table provides evidence, however, of a range of methods with informal and spontaneous approaches at one end, and formal, planned and systematic approaches at the other. The former is characterised by the methods that non-formal educators use naturally in their work, including experiential learning and creative methods (see Comfort et al, 2006). These typical methods include young people being encouraged to tell their stories through, art, videos or performance, keep diaries, or to complete personal development plans and records. The latter occurs when social scientific research methodologies are used to explore or evaluate outcomes and processes. Although there appears to be less activity at this end of the spectrum, some providers are using universally accepted standardised measures such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. In addition, providers report using other methods, including steering group meetings between managers and Expert By Experience young people, event evaluation feedback forms, online staff surveys, and session evaluation forms. All pilots were also granted permission to engage an external evaluation resource, which should result in a useful source of additional information when all pilot level evaluation activity has been fully completed.

Providers were encouraged to refer to the United Youth Outcomes and Principles Framework when planning their measurement, and given guidance how to approach this. The use of a common outcomes framework is optimised when it is coupled with a shared approach to measurement. As Copps and Plimmer (2013) argue, a shared approach to measurement of impact enhances the visibility, effectiveness and efficiency of the work, and enables increased communication and information sharing within and across organisations. A common taxonomy helps to facilitate communication within and between organisations, and at local, national and international levels. Assessment systems, including self-assessment and peer assessment, can improve organisational capacity and effectiveness, and clarify the impact of non-formal education. They can also enhance young peoples' awareness and understanding of skills learned. Souto-Otero et al (2013) note that organisations utilising assessment and educational plans report the greatest levels of skills improvement.

Table 17: Typical measurement methods used by pilot providers

Pilot	Methods												
	Questionnaires before / after	Interviews	Case studies	Personal plan or record	Progress shared with participant	Stories	Reflective activities	Reports	Own Scales	Validated scales	Questionnaires	Diaries	Instrument – e.g. Outcome Star
1				✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
4	✓	✓	✓										
5	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
7			✓	✓						✓			
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
9	✓	✓		✓				✓					
10	✓			✓									
11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								

Feedback from the United Youth Programme Team makes it clear that there was an intention to explore a shared measurement approach across the Pilot, which could be developed further in a new programme. Some useful methods were embedded in the system such as the exit questionnaire, and the case study approach used by all pilot providers. The matrix of tools developed by The Young Foundation (McNeil et al, 2012) provides methods for measuring the development of attitudes, behaviour change and the development of skills. A review of the research literature with regard to measuring employability skills involving the personal, social and transferable skills relevant to all jobs (Blades et al, 2013), also features a range of tools and quantitative and qualitative indicators linked to case-studies, which assist in gauging the progress made by project participants. These methods could be incorporated into a new programme where there is the potential to establish a clear and consistent link between outcomes, indicators and measures which cover the full spectrum of possible methods.

Figure 4 provides an overview of how these three aspects could be linked. At the centre are the four key outcome areas identified for the United Youth Programme. These are surrounded in the first layer by associated indicators, which could be further explained with reference to the literature, and expressed in the language used by practitioners and young people. The outer layer includes a range of possible measures, some of which are currently being used in the Pilot Phase to assess distance travelled. While in theory any method can be used to measure distance travelled in any area, in practice it is worth considering extending or linking the Outcomes and Principles Framework to a core set of indicators and measures for common usage. For example, in relation to personal development, resilience could be a core indicator that is measured by every provider using a robust tool chosen through the co-design process.

It is important for practitioners to understand how the use of data gained through measuring progress can improve services. The United Youth Programme Team and future programme managers might usefully consider how centrally provided training could enhance the capacity for measuring distance travelled across the programme, especially in relation to the core set of indicators should this approach be adopted.

Figure 4: Linking outcomes, indicators and measures

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Creative, interactive and informal methods</td><td>Case study</td><td>Questionnaire
‘before and after’</td><td>Interview</td><td>Focus group</td><td rowspan="2">Creative, interactive and informal methods</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relationships
Communication
Empathy
Leadership</td><td>Personal qualities
Self-awareness
Confidence
Creativity</td><td>Contributing
Addressing community division, sectarianism, racism</td><td>Awareness
Knowledge of values, beliefs, customs and traditions of others</td></tr>
<tr><td>Self-rating scale</td><td>Problem solving
Determination
Resilience
Agency</td><td>Personal development</td><td>Good relations</td><td>Diversity
Respect for diversity and sensitivity to beliefs, customs and traditions of others</td><td>Observation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Testimonials</td><td>Service
Engagement in services
Volunteering</td><td>Citizenship</td><td>Employability</td><td>Aspiration
Education
Training
Work</td><td>Action Plan</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Creative, interactive and informal methods</td><td>Knowledge
Own role
Community
Society</td><td>Participation
In structures
In change initiatives
In democratic processes</td><td>Performance
Commitment
Demeanour
Learning</td><td>Achievement
Qualifications
Work experience
CV</td><td rowspan="2">Creative, interactive and informal methods</td></tr>
<tr><td>Questionnaire
‘before and after’</td><td>Portfolio</td><td>Project records</td><td>Portfolio</td></tr>
</table>

Combining internal and external evaluation

There is consensus in the literature that evaluation processes in publicly funded social purpose programmes need to combine internal and external approaches requiring interactions between researchers and practitioners. As Ellis and Gregory state: 'The previously predominant model of an expert carrying out evaluation at project completion is giving way to increased self-reliance and also to partnership between external evaluators and internal staff, with work carried out at the project start, and a combination of internal and external methods' (2008: vi). Feedback from providers suggests that this approach would be welcomed. Clearly, investment is needed in order to develop a wider range of evaluation techniques and to effectively combine multiple methods. Individual provider evaluations are valuable in their own right but more useful when they contribute in a systematic way to a larger effort focused on understanding the whole. Once again, this larger effort could be assisted by incorporating measures into a common assessment framework with the United Youth Programme outcomes at the centre.

One informative example of evaluation at programme level that is relevant to a new United Youth Programme, comes from the work of Gore and Wells (2009) in the UK, who draw from the mid-term evaluation of the 2000–2006 South Yorkshire Objective 1 Programme (one of the European Union's main funding streams to support regional and employment policy), to reflect on the role of governance in shaping and framing the specification and implementation of 'horizontal priorities' in European regional policy.

As Gore and Wells explain (2009: 158), the term 'horizontal priorities' is used by the European Commission to denote issues that have relevance across its principal policy domains, and refers to priority areas such as, opportunities between men and women, environmental sustainability, and employment. Their focus is on the implications for evaluation in a programme where more traditional notions of policy implementation through top-down management processes, give way to conceptions of governance in which those responsible for implementation exercise considerable discretion in interpreting policy and over activities. In this scenario, programmes develop through networks that are characterized by multi-level governance that cuts across management tiers.

The argument is that a more complex system of policy enactment requires a more sophisticated approach to evaluation. Criteria formulated for the assessment (developed with stakeholders) reflected the main issues set out in the EU specification for the evaluation. This gives rise to a matrix with the horizontal priorities and criteria. A scoring system of 0 (no evidence of activity) to 3 (activity fully embedded) was agreed against the criteria, which gave the possibility of comparing and ranking progress with regard to the different priorities. Table 18 provides a hypothetical illustration of such a matrix in the case of a new United Youth Programme.

Table 18: Measuring overall performance in priority areas

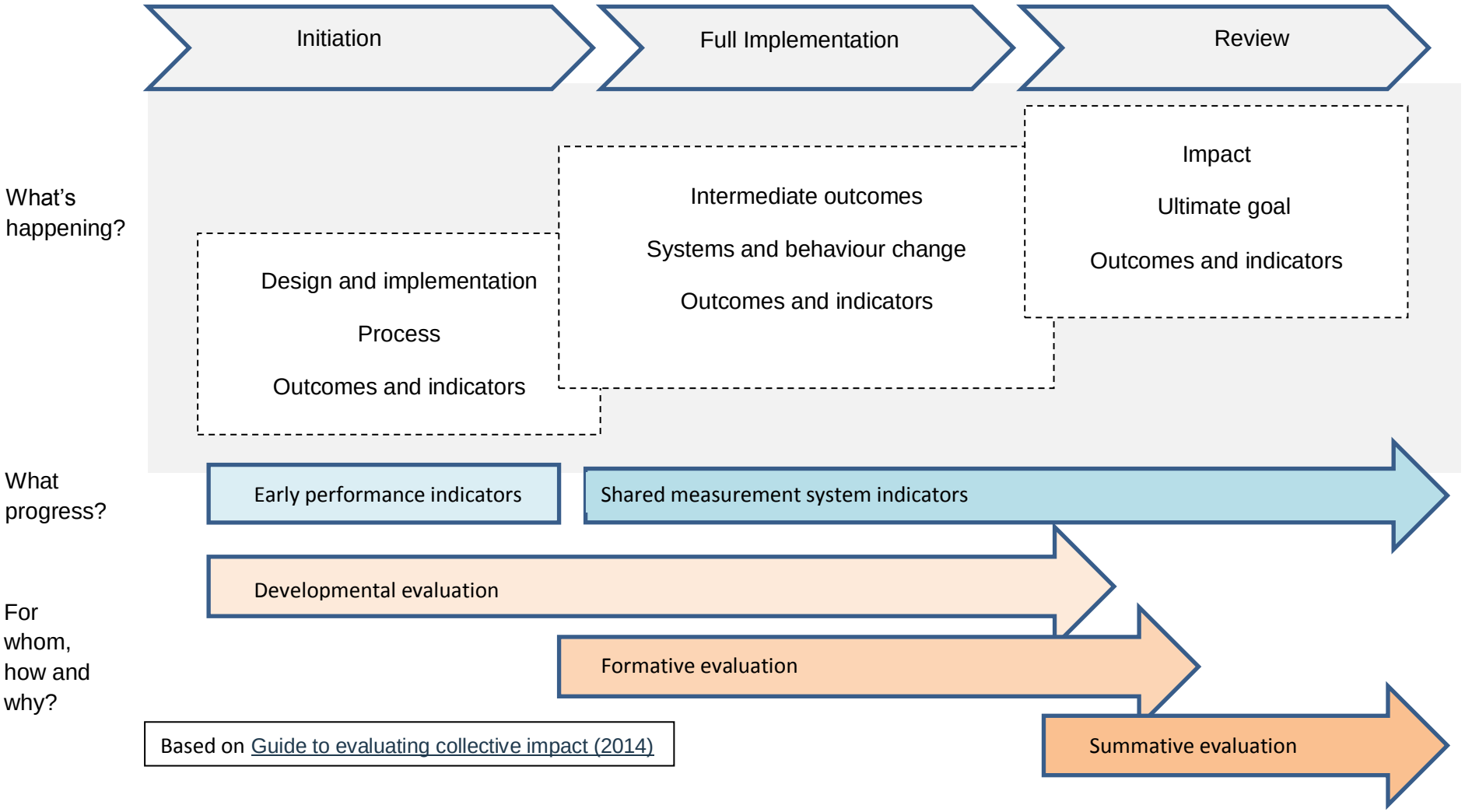
Priority areas	**Example criteria**					**Score 0 - 3**
	Needs analysis	Programme and process	Co-design	Networks and linkages	Outcomes	
Citizenship						
Good relations						
Employability						
Personal development						
	Total scores under each criterion					Total

Adapted from Gore and Wells (2009)

In drawing from agreed and publicly available criteria, this type of matrix scoring system offers a degree of rigor in a qualitative process, although quantitative measures could also apply by informing judgments about performance with respect to any given criteria, or forming all or part of individual criteria. The schema could be applied and used for self-evaluation purposes at local level, for example, concerning the performance of local entities in working to national programme goals. Assuming a degree of standardization in its use, it could also be applied and used for external evaluation purposes by comparing and contrasting performance between different parts of a programme, for example, between local entities engaged in similar work and working to the same national goals. Finally, it could also provide an overall composite picture of programme performance by aggregating the scores from the different parts into a collective whole.

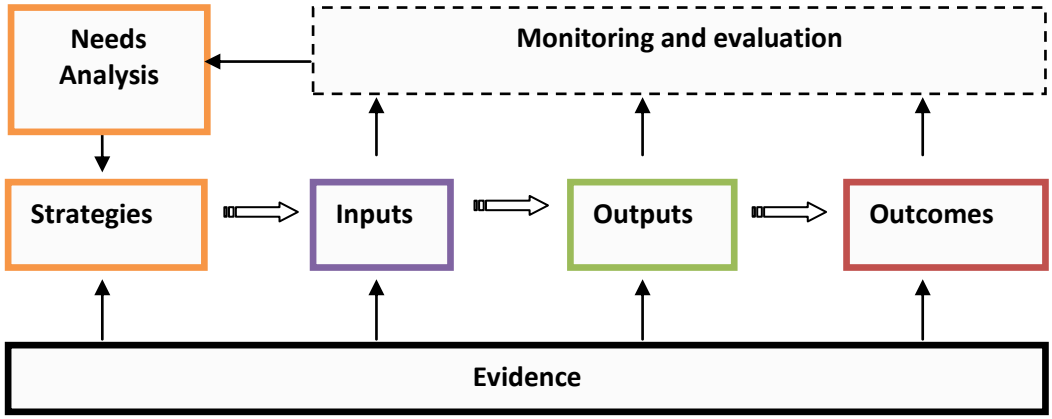
It is also important to appreciate the different purposes of evaluation with regard to the different stages in the life-cycle of a programme, i.e. exploration, initiation, implementation, closure and review. Figure 5 provides a framework for thinking about this relationship between purpose and stage.

Figure 5: Evaluating collective impact



To assist evaluation, consideration could be given to requiring providers to produce a theory of change to clarify and make explicit the various inputs, outputs and activities, and outcomes that the programme or intervention hopes to achieve and how these are conceptually and practically linked. Pilot providers were asked to do this, with help via their evaluation resource if necessary. Logic models graphically express the theory of change, and so help with monitoring and evaluation. The core elements of a logic model are shown in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Logic model core elements

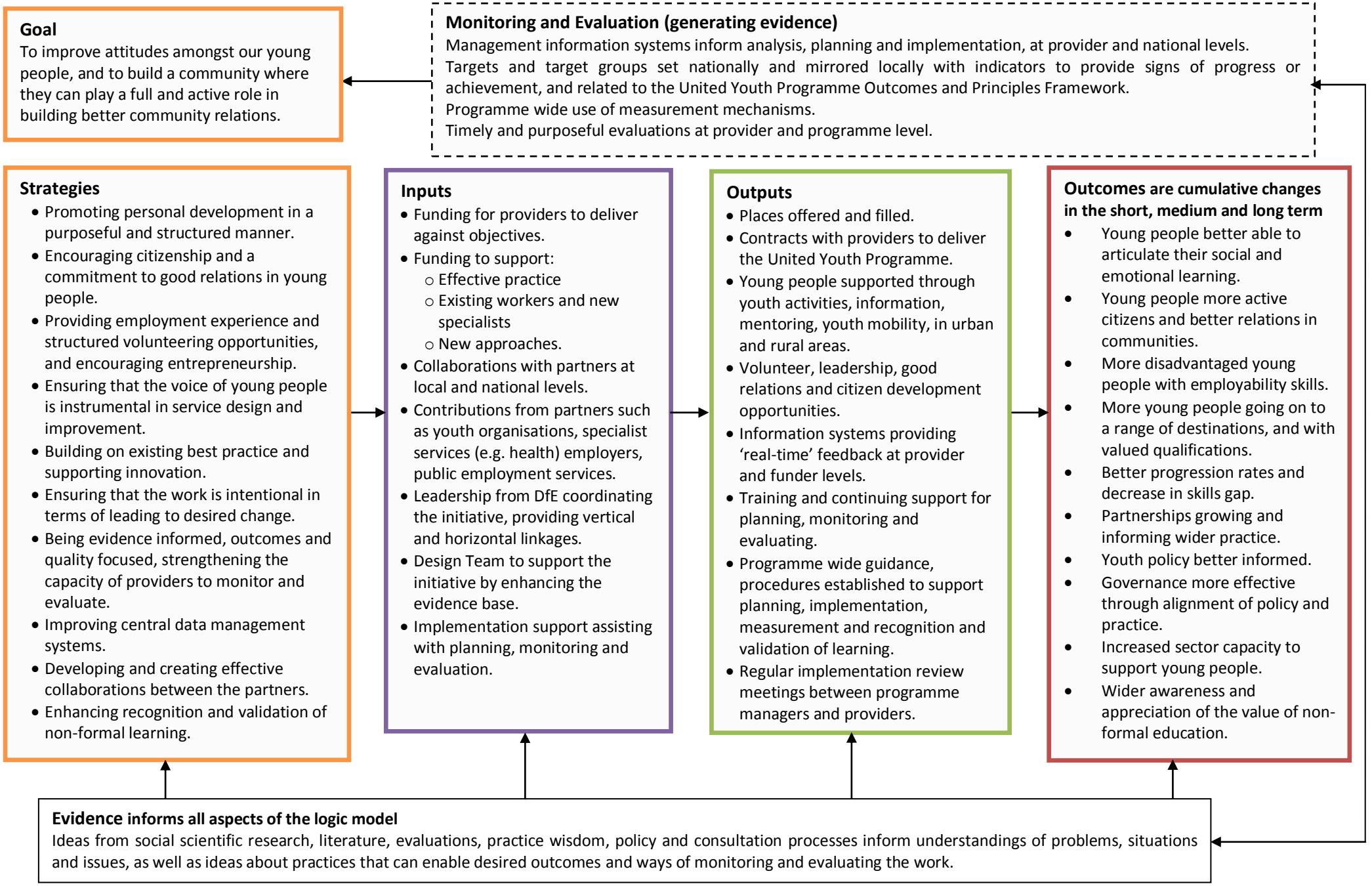


The two additional elements are monitoring and evaluation, which can help providers to keep track of progress and learn from results, and evidence that can be accessed to support choices, for example, about strategies or activities.

Ideally, the theory of change at provider level would be informed by and complement the theory of change at national level. Figure 7 illustrates a possible United Youth Programme theory of change. An overarching model would assist local planning, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes. Constructing local level logic models could be part of the co-design process between providers and programme managers within the new United Youth Programme. This could aid learning, development and implementation in a number of ways:

- As a tool to support service and programme design
- As a framework to develop vision and goals in a tangible, measurable way
- Helping to identify and understand the systemic nature of the work, the key linkages and cause and effect relationships
- As a basis for quality assurance procedures
- As a tool to balance priorities, allocate resources and generate realistic plans
- As a means of informing funders and other stakeholders about the work.

Figure 7: Illustrative United Youth Programme theory of change



Summary

This analysis of measurement methods, monitoring and evaluation suggests that there is a range of ways of measuring 'distance travelled' used by pilot providers, which can be located on a spectrum of activity from informal at one end to formal at the other. Going forwards, these can be supplemented by good practices and approaches that are now becoming more generally known in this sector, and incorporated into a common outcomes and measures framework. Training could assist practitioners to use a core set of indicators and measures, which would help them to understand how data can inform practice development. Common measures could also contribute to a programme wide assessment of distance travelled.

It is clear that there is a need to inform practice at a sector-wide level, and a need to communicate results to a range of stakeholders who are invested in the welfare of young people. There is a need, therefore, to improve the capacity for self-evaluation, while making best use of external evaluation. It is important to include evaluation planning from the start and involve stakeholders and evaluators as appropriate depending on the stage of the intervention.

Key lessons – measurement, monitoring and evaluation

- Good measurement can help young people to know that they are progressing in areas that are important to them and their future. It can also help providers to understand the impact of their work, and be able to feed back the results into their ongoing planning and development processes.
- A robust approach to measurement also helps to show that policy is being implemented as intended and having beneficial outcomes, even if it is understood that implementation is not a simple, straightforward matter.
- Centrally provided training could build on the experience and knowledge in the pilots to significantly enhance capacity across the new United Youth Programme in relation to measuring distance travelled.
- It is important to include evaluation planning from the start and involve stakeholders and evaluators as appropriate depending on the stage of the intervention.
- There is a wider need to communicate results to a range of stakeholders who are invested in the welfare of young people. These include partner agencies as well as the communities to which the young people belong.
- There is a need to inform practice at a sector-wide level. This is about improving understanding of best practices across the range of those agencies that work with young people.
- Consideration could be given to building the capacity for self-evaluation amongst providers to ensure a consistent approach.
- The co-design process could be used to assist providers to develop theories of change that are informed by the United Youth Programme, programme level, theory of change.

Section 7: Conclusion, key lessons and emerging themes

This section of the report covers:

- A conclusion about the overall performance and effectiveness of the Pilot Phase
- Key lessons for the Department for the Economy, and government generally, in relation to the operation, management and oversight of a new programme
- Emerging themes for consideration by programme managers now and in the future.

Conclusion

It is worth restating that the concept of the United Youth Programme is a direct response to the Northern Ireland Executive's *Together: Building a United Community Strategy* (T: BUC) (OFMDFM, 2013), which seeks to build the capacity of young people, aged 16 to 24 years, with the intention of preparing them for leadership and improving community relations. There is a commitment within T: BUC to create 10,000 one year placements in a new 'United Youth Programme'. The objectives are to:

- Build better community relations
- Create better citizens
- Provide employment experience and structured volunteering opportunities, supported by a stipend, for a potentially lost generation.

In the Budget 2015-16, the NI Executive set aside £30m for a 'Change Fund'. The fund aims to support the transformational change required to sustain medium to long term efficiency measures by:

- Encouraging innovation in the public sector and supporting the introduction of new and / or proven ways of working
- Improving integration and collaboration between government departments, arms-length bodies, the private sector and the third sector
- Supporting a decisive shift towards preventative spending, with a focus on improving outcomes for citizens.

In line with this requirement for transformational change, the United Youth Programme represents a platform from which key foundation capabilities can potentially be developed, and sustainable, positive change by and for the young person pursued. It may be understood as a last chance to engage with hard to reach young people with complex needs, situations, and interests, as well as an opportunity to help young people who have made progress but encountered obstacles and challenges, to re-engage. In seeking to connect or reconnect them to services that they need, the United Youth Programme aims to support these young people to achieve their potential, while enabling government departments, state agencies and social partners to fulfil their own policy and organisational objectives.

The terms of reference for the evaluation required a focus on design and development, on pilot performance in terms of achieving objectives, and on the outcomes achieved by young people. To meet this requirement, we have conducted group interviews with young people and staff, with members of the United Youth Programme Team, and with members of the United Youth Programme Design Team. We have supplemented the information obtained from the interviews with analysis of an extensive array of documentation which was made available by the United Youth Programme

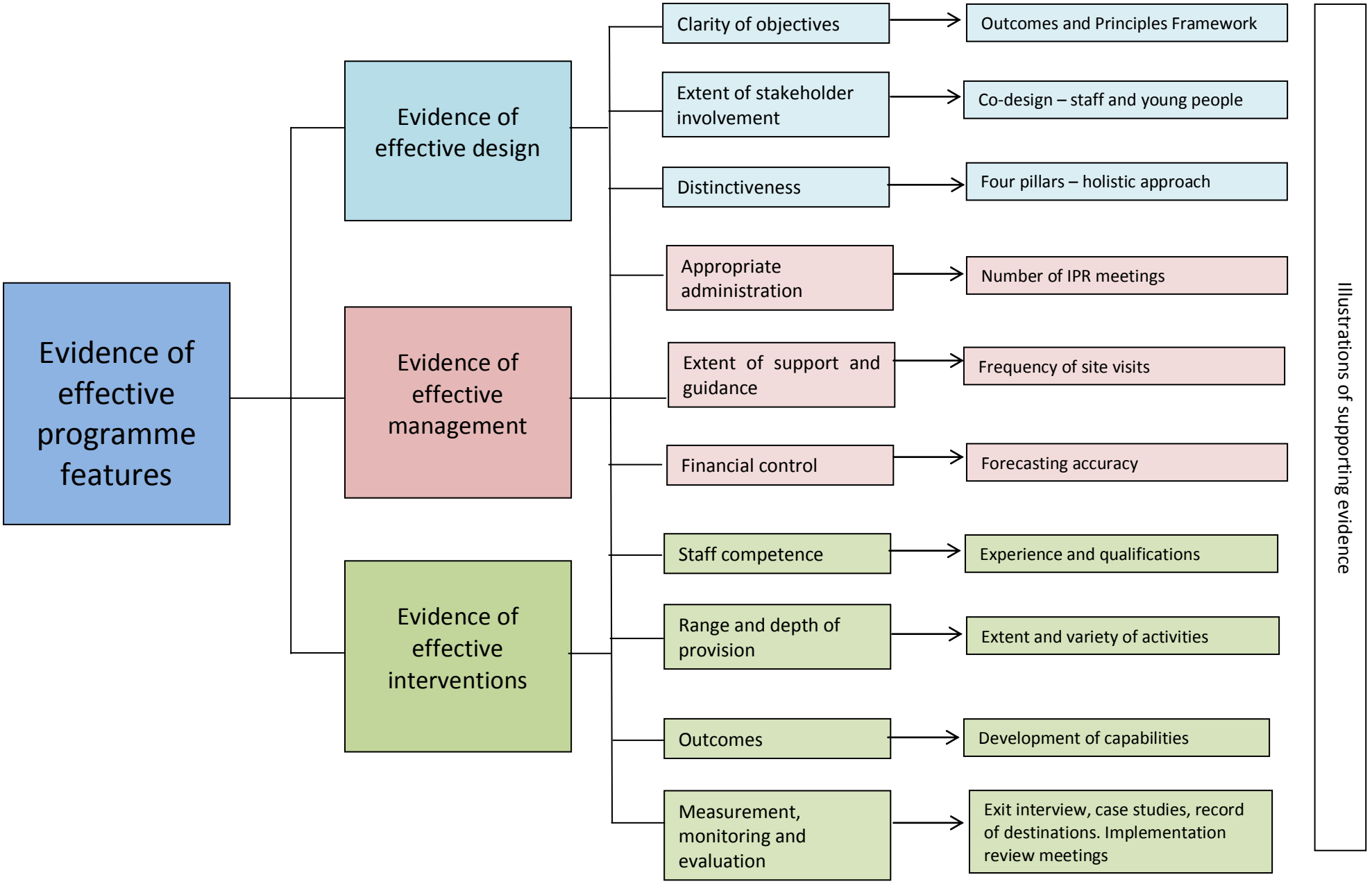
Team. This documentation was part of the management systems and processes developed by the team to ensure compliance with certain requirements, while also providing guidance and support to the providers. We are satisfied that we have had sufficient data to address all the issues of interest to the commissioners of the evaluation.

Figure 8 provides an overview of our findings about the effectiveness of the Programme. In brief, we have found strong evidence of effectiveness in relation to the design and development, and the management and administration of the Pilot Phase, and the interventions delivered to and with young people. The third column in Figure 8 breaks down these three categories into their component parts, while the fourth column provides illustrations of the sorts of supporting evidence that we have found.

Overall, the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase demonstrates effective, efficient and economic use of public funds. Notwithstanding the variation in the intensity of pilot delivery models, the sum of just under £6,000 per head obtains around six to seven months of intensive provision for young people, usually with consistent contact on a daily and weekly basis with highly skilled and experienced workers. The figure supports involvement in a rich mix of activities and opportunities that respond to the varied needs and interests of the young people. The result is an impressive record of learning and development outcomes with regard to personal development, citizenship, good relations and employability. Moreover, there is clear evidence of young people going on to a wide range of destinations involving further training, education, and employment.

In large part, cost effectiveness has been assured by the soundness of the design of the Pilot Phase, by the administrative and financial control systems put in place, and by the willingness of the United Youth Programme Team to work with providers to find solutions to emerging problems. The commitment to the principle of co-design has been evident from start to finish. This commitment has spawned a more collaborative way of working between funders and providers, which has combined tight control over certain aspects of the work while making full use of provider initiative and expertise to devise bespoke programmes for young people at local levels. Implementation planning and review meetings have enabled a constructive interface between providers and the United Youth Programme Team, and the requirement on providers to produce case studies, and administer exit questionnaires, for example, has meant that data has been available upon which to make judgements about the development of the young people.

Figure 8: Overview of evidence of effectiveness



At a time when there is continuing downward pressure on public finances, with a consequent search for more efficient and effective ways of delivering public services, the Pilot Phase points towards a form of governance which has many strengths in terms of securing value for money. To assist constructive consideration of such issues, and based on our findings, we provide a summary of key lessons for the attention of the United Youth Programme Team as programme managers for the Pilot Phase, and others. These lessons range across such matters as programme structure and development, the importance of co-design, the range of effective practices, outcomes and distance travelled, measurement and evaluation, payments and processes, financial control, and emerging themes.

Going forwards the key questions in relation to the design of any new programme are provoked not by any internal flaws and weaknesses, but by the demands that will be made by increasing the numbers of participants. Depending on the scale of increase envisaged, there are questions about the extent to which the comprehensive arrangements for support and accountability, and the collaborative way of working that goes along with a commitment to co-design, can be sustained. The questions will be sharper if the unit of resource per head is reduced. In this case, future programme managers might wish to consider what, if any, or which elements of the design, either on support or delivery sides, could be lessened without undue threat to programme integrity, or the quality of the experience for young people.

Key lessons for a new United Youth Programme

On the basis of the findings from this evaluation report, it is possible to put forward a number of key lessons.

Inception

- It is vital to build on the previous work and the direction of travel of provider organisations, where this is aligned to the objectives of the programme to be delivered. This is important for ensuring quality services for young people. It also means that providers can ‘hit the ground running’ thus making a timely start and with little wastage at the beginning.

Co-design

- The practice of 'co-design' is a crucial element in successful policy delivery – in putting young people at the centre as contributors, and also in the way of working between the centre and local providers.
- Central support in the form of care and attention to detail, problem-solving, high levels of motivation for programme success, and ensuring close links between policy intentions and finance functions, is highly prized by providers.
- It is important to strike the right balance between being controlling about some things, for example requiring commitment to the Outcomes and Principles Framework, and more open about others, for example how providers choose to work with the young people.
- It is highly effective when paper systems (e.g. application forms / business case) and processes (e.g. IPR meetings) provide, and are seen to provide, an enabling structure for management and support.

Recruitment and retention

- Recruiting young people can be a more time consuming and challenging exercise than providers anticipate, and time needs to be built in prior to programme inception to ease the recruitment and early project implementation stages.

- The intention to increase the scale of activity in order to deliver the United Youth Programme will present challenges for recruitment and possibly for the availability of sufficient staff with the necessary skills and experience.
- Relevant prior experience and knowledge amongst staff is a critical factor in success, as experienced, locally based staff are needed to make key decisions based on their knowledge of the community, to effectively negotiate community gatekeepers, and to make the most of networks and to fully utilise trusted contacts.
- Good partnerships or linkages are crucial in helping with recruitment, offering a range of opportunities to participants, and with destinations for further training or work.

Support for learning

- Attention to the individual needs, interests and circumstances of participants seems essential to engaging and retaining young people, as well as ensuring relevant outcomes.
- Learning and development opportunities are most effective when they are clearly linked to the needs, interests and aspirations of young people.
- A wide range of activities is necessary to cater for the different and developing needs and interests of young people.
- Beneficial results are more likely when staff and young people intentionally pursue certain outcomes. Mentoring and one-to-one work is highly effective.

Process

- There is consensus amongst providers about the merits of aligning the programme with the academic year.
- A positive relationship between workers and participants contributes to the development of a number of important social and emotional capabilities. This is especially the case when workers interact with young people on a regular basis and support participants in achieving educational and developmental goals together.
- Taking forward a commitment to co-design will present challenges for future programme managers and providers. Careful thought needs to be given to the extent to which current arrangements can be replicated in a new programme with the proposed expansion in places.

Outcomes as distance travelled

- The Outcomes and Principles Framework including the four pillars of personal development, citizenship, good relations and employability, is key to direction and the purposeful nature of all activity. These are also integral to seeing young people 'in the round', and to the holistic approach adopted by providers in their programme of activities.
- Participants consistently report learning and development across all outcome areas.
- A significant proportion of participants (62.9%) proceeded to employment or training, while just under 80% proceeded to a positive destination overall, i.e. employment, further training / education or volunteering experience.
- Results provide some early indications that productive engagement in purposeful informal education and learning can lead later to other beneficial outcomes.
- Distance travelled is not uniform, since it depends on the starting point of each individual, as much as on the opportunities available, and the quality of the work with young people.

- It is important to understand the sequence of development - starting with personal development, building up the group, enabling members of the group to work with each other, and supporting the group to engage with issues external to the group.
- The way that external factors influence outcomes needs to be fully appreciated – for example, the way in which some young people deliberately choose not to engage in their local community for fear of being caught up in entrenched conflicts.

Payments and processes

- The incentive payment, retention of welfare benefits, flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA, and support costs in terms of travel and childcare expenses, are essential elements in the United Youth Programme as they enable and incentivise participation and engagement.
- The payments and processes system is robust, and the requirements were adhered to with integrity. Assurances were provided that the participants were meeting the actively seeking work requirement. It is clear that due care and diligence has been built into the system.
- While there needs to be a common approach across the programme, and given the characteristics of the target group, in some cases discretion in relation to authorised absences is necessary in the interests of maintaining young people on the programme.
- There is consensus about the need to simplify the payments and processes system, as far as this is possible. One proposed example is by issuing participants with a prepaid travel card instead of reimbursing costs. On the basis of the experience of the Pilot Phase, providers and the United Youth Programme Team are in a good position to jointly review, simplify and streamline the system through the co-design process.
- If the burden of administration associated with participant payments remains the same, consideration should be given to increasing the administration fee from the current 5%. Alternatively, potential providers need to be assisted to make more explicit provision for administration of this aspect in their bid for funding.
- JBO / SSO staff are important gatekeepers in the system and need to be fully aware of the merits of the United Youth Programme.
- The situation with regard to the *Steps to Success* programme needs to be reviewed for the future successful implementation of the United Youth Programme. The focus needs to be on how the two can complement one another at both a policy and operational level rather than work in opposition.

Cost effectiveness

- Cost effectiveness depends on the clarity of the requirements built into the system, especially where these are expressed in user-friendly templates for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- Successful financial performance is more likely when the requirements are clear from the start, beginning with the application form. While information is essential, care must be taken not to overburden providers with too much reporting, while retaining accountability.
- Good performance also depends on the extent and timeliness of the guidance and support available to providers.
- Open communication between the United Youth Programme Team in DEL / DfE and providers enabled problems to be discussed and dealt with in productive ways.

- The mechanism of budget revision at midpoint allows for a more accurate forecast, and more effective financial control. Cost effectiveness is aided by a rigorous application process, in which appropriate information and support for applicants is more likely to secure accurate budgeting and forecasts of expenditure.
- Given inevitable variation in unit costs between providers, going forwards funders might wish to consider that the most useful focus for cost effectiveness is not on specific variations between individual providers per se, but on the overall performance of the programme.
- The experience of the Pilot Phase may provide a rough guide as to what can be expected in terms of the distribution of funds across budget headings in any programme going forwards. The same notional distribution could apply at provider level.
- On the basis of the experience of the Pilot Phase, it might be useful to establish typical or maximum costs for certain types of provision, including residential and international work, which could be facilitated through the co-design approach.
- Establishing parameters around costings can help policy makers and programme designers to budget more accurately, as well as enabling local providers to be more knowledgeable about the financial implications of their choices. Potential bidders for delivery of a future United Youth Programme might also be advised of these parameters in advance.
- Support at overall programme level can assist efficiencies at provider level, for example through central support for advertising, recruitment, and staff training.

Measurement, monitoring and evaluation

- Good measurement can help young people to know that they are progressing in areas that are important to them and their future. It can also help providers to understand the impact of their work, and be able to feed back the results into their ongoing planning and development processes.
- A robust approach to measurement also helps to show that policy is being implemented as intended and having beneficial outcomes, even if it is understood that implementation is not a simple, straightforward matter.
- Centrally provided training could build on the experience and knowledge in the pilots to significantly enhance capacity across the new United Youth Programme in relation to measuring distance travelled.
- It is important to include evaluation planning from the start and involve stakeholders and evaluators as appropriate depending on the stage of the intervention.
- There is a wider need to communicate results to a range of stakeholders who are invested in the welfare of young people. These include partner agencies as well as the communities to which the young people belong.
- There is a need to inform practice at a sector-wide level. This is about improving understanding of best practices across the range of those agencies that work with young people.
- Consideration could be given to building the capacity for self-evaluation amongst providers to ensure a consistent approach.
- The co-design process could be used to assist providers to develop theories of change that are informed by the United Youth Programme, programme level, theory of change.

Emerging themes

On the basis of the evaluation findings it is also possible to identify a number of emerging themes and issues in relation to the intention to scale up participant numbers and the number of providers. These can be elaborated as follows:

- In a scaled up programme there could be issues with providers potentially competing for the same young people. To avoid this, one suggestion might be to draw up a list of the various providers and let young people select where they would like to enrol.
- Successful recruitment of large numbers overall might be an issue, which raises questions of publicity and promotion. Consideration needs to be given to all forms of social media, and to how the messages are put across to young people. This is an area where young people could take the lead.
- In terms of making best use of available structures, it would be essential to have more promotion of the programme from JBOs and SSOs.
- There are obvious issues with the impact on the programme of the *Steps to Success* programme. This needs to be resolved in favour of both programmes complementing one another in the best interests of young people.
- An intended increase in participant numbers and providers raises a question about the availability of suitably qualified and / or experienced workers. Put simply, will there be enough to go round?
- Given the findings in this evaluation report, administrative considerations will need to figure highly in the design of any new programme.

Reaching all young people

Increasing participant numbers affords the opportunity to expand the reach of the programme beyond Belfast into the rest of Northern Ireland, and particularly to ensure opportunities for young people in rural areas.

Recognition of learning and development

The new programme could consider a final certificate or record of participation for young people along the lines of the model developed for Youthpass. This is for participants in the Youth in Action Programme to describe what they have done and to show what they have learnt. It is a systematic means of capturing and recognising non-formal learning. It is a tool that can help youth workers to appreciate the full value of their work, while also enabling young people to self-assess their learning and record their achievements. (https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/downloads/guide)

Central support

Given the importance of high quality central support, this is another aspect that needs to feature in the design of a new programme. As well as questions about the skills and experience needed, and the commitment to the ethos of the United Youth Programme, there are also logistical considerations about the capacity to manage and support a larger programme.

An integrated approach

An integrated approach is necessary to capitalise in a deliberate and systematic way on the capabilities of the different providers. This could be in terms of expertise in one becoming a resource for the others, or strengthening connections between providers, for example where one can turn to another for help with recruitment in a particular area. Another aspect could be sharing courses or activities, or providing placement or volunteering opportunities for young people.

Access to and support from mainstream services

Providers have indicated surprise at the level of need being encountered in their work with young people. This is partly due to the intensive and prolonged nature of contact required. Providers have put forward the need for support from professional colleagues in mainstream services, for example, educational psychologists. This raises a broader question about the fit between the United Youth Programme approach and the work of other relevant professionals, and the links between them to best support young people.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: United Youth Programme Outcomes and Principles Framework

United Youth Programme Outcomes and associated capabilities

<table>
<tr><th>Personal and related capabilities</th><th>Using the capabilities – during and beyond the programme</th></tr>
<tr><td>Social / emotional / personal development / ‘soft skills’
• Self-awareness and understanding
• Confidence and agency (agency – feeling in control, able to effect change, having choices)
• Communication
• Planning and problem solving
• Relationships including leadership
• Creativity
• Resilience, determination
• Other relevant knowledge and skills for supporting own health and well-being, including emotional health and well-being</td><td rowspan="4">• Positive engagement with useful services – e.g. advice
• Positive participation in community – community, structures, initiatives, democratic processes
• Positive participation in service to the community / volunteering
• Positive family and community relationships
• Positive engagement with others from a different community / cultural background
• Positive engagement in education, training, work experience, work
• Supporting own health and well-being</td></tr>
<tr><td>Citizenship – towards positive participation in family / community / society
• Knowledge and understanding of own role in community / society – individual, collective
- for engagement with useful services
- for participation in community – structures, initiatives, democratic processes
- for service to the community / volunteering
- for positive family and community relationships</td></tr>
<tr><td>Good Relations – addressing community division / sectarianism / racism, and contributing to reconciliation
• Respect for diversity
• Awareness of and sensitivity to the values, beliefs, customs and traditions of others
• Understanding of own identity and respect for others from different community and cultural backgrounds, abilities, orientations etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employability
• Specific positive aspirations for education, training, work
• Other knowledge and skills for participation in learning, work experience, work
• Qualifications and work experience – making use of available programmes to do this</td></tr>
</table>

United Youth Programme Principles

- **Young-person-centred:** The young person is at the centre when it comes to planning and delivering United Youth Programme activities. The engagement with the young person starts where they are and is on their own terms in relation to their values, views and principles. They are actively engaged, the things that are important to them are taken into account and their experiences are used to support their learning. Knowledge and meaning are extracted from their experiences and ideas. Taking part in the United Youth Programme is an enjoyable experience which fits into and contributes to the young person's life. The contact with the young person is concerned with how they feel and not just what they know and can do – 'being' is as important as 'doing'.

- **Values and behaviours:** All interactions with young people are characterised by empathy, respect, compassion, outreach, patience and the belief that they can grow and change.

- **Engagement with young people:** Helping young people engage throughout their time on United Youth Programme – from start to progression – is recognised as a task in its own right. Approaches to encouraging participation and widening horizons are tailored to individual circumstances. Participation in the United Youth Programme is not compulsory at any stage but young people will get the support that they need to take part – not just at the start but all along the way.

- **The importance of a central, positive relationship:** The work with each young person is based on a vital, core, critical relationship between them and the person or people supporting their learning and development. This relationship is open and honest, rooted in a youth work approach, committed to nurturing the young person, and will create the conditions to help them flourish. It will provide ongoing opportunity for the young person to discuss their strengths, hopes, needs, issues, views, prejudices, to plan for the future, and will help them to stick with the United Youth Programme.

- **Voice:** Young people are supported to find and use their voice and to begin to influence their lives, and the lives of others, in a positive way. They are actively encouraged and supported to use their voice to help shape their experience on the United Youth Programme.

- **Respect for difference:** Respect for difference is key. The United Youth Programme will tackle sectarianism and racism, and other discriminatory and damaging attitudes and behaviours towards those who are perceived to be 'different'. Young people will be supported to play their part in helping to address these issues. Young people will learn from others with different backgrounds and from other experiences that they have on the United Youth Programme.

- **Safe and stimulating environments:** The United Youth Programme will provide experiences which motivate young people and which enable young people to safely explore their hopes and fears in a safe environment and, ultimately, move beyond their current horizons. A young person will be enabled to design their own journey by setting personal goals and working out steps towards these goals. Approaches to supporting the achievement of outcomes for young people are exceptionally well thought through and methods are well integrated.

- **Partnership:** Young people are partners in their learning and development. They are seen as an asset and not a problem and the process is one of working **with** young people, not 'on' them. Other 'partners' who are important to the young person can also be involved – e.g. family members, peers, professionals. Those delivering United Youth Programme will be mindful of, and seek to understand and work with, the wider context within which the young person lives their life.

Appendix 2: Participant profile

No of starters	Gender		Age on start date (all starters)								
	Male	Female	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
413	280	133	13	55	88	68	62	48	26	27	26
	68%	32%	3%	13%	21%	16%	15%	12%	6%	7%	6%

No of completers	Gender		Age on start date (completers)								
	Male	Female	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
270	172	98	8	35	57	48	35	33	21	14	19
	64%	36%	3%	13%	21%	18%	13%	12%	8%	5%	7%

Appendix 3: Focus group topic guide for young people

Warm up

- Introduce self and purpose of session
- Explain how focus groups work – there are no right or wrong answers etc.
- Explain role of note taker / use of audio recorder (where required)
- Explain confidentiality and reporting procedures
    - Ask participants to introduce themselves – first name, age, current student / working status, attendance at youth organisation (if any)
    - Ask how many have completed an exit survey. If not, establish whether CES can take opportunity to administer at end of session.

Reasons for programme participation / views on the programme

- Why did you take part in the UYP?
- Have you previously taken part in this type of programme?
- If yes, what, when, where, why?
- Explore similarities / differences between UYP and any other programmes
- What did you like best about the UYP?
- What did you like least about the UYP?
- What was most helpful to you?
- What would it be good to do more of?
- What would it be good to do less of?

Co-Design

- Would you say that you had the opportunity to influence the way in which things were done in the UY programme?
- If yes, how did you influence the way that things were done?
- Do you think it would have been useful if you had had 'more of a say'?
- If yes, how and in what ways?

Outcomes

- (unprompted) How, if at all, have you changed as a person by taking part in the UY programme? (*social and emotional outcomes*)

Prompts

- How did you feel about yourself before taking part in the programme? How did you feel about yourself after taking part in the programme? Any differences?
- What do you know now that you didn't before?
- What skills have you developed? (*employability, social and emotional outcomes*)
- Are you clearer about what you want to do in the future? (*social and emotional outcomes*)
- Have your options increased in any way? (*social and emotional outcomes*)
- Do feel more confident about getting a job? (*employability*)

- Did you get the chance to meet new people by participating in the programme?
    - How many new people did you meet from 'your own religion'?
    - How many of them would you say are now friends?
    - Do you view people of the same religion differently?
    - How many new people did you meet from 'other religions'?
    - How many of them would you say are now friends?

- Do you view people from other religions differently?
- How many new people from an ethnic minority did you meet?
- How many of them would you say are now friends?
- Do you view people from other ethnic minorities differently?
- Do you intend to maintain the contacts and friendships that you have made? If yes, how do you plan to do this?
- Do you feel better connected to or more a part of their community (or society) as a result of taking part in the pilot?

Payments and expenses

- Tell us what you thought of the payments you received while taking part in the programme? Take each in turn
  - Keeping receiving the benefit that you were claiming before the pilot
  - Incentive payment,
  - Travel expenses and childcare payment (where relevant)
- How, if at all, did other flexibilities (e.g. re attendance at fortnightly interventions, not having to produce evidence of seeking work if at least three days per week on the pilot etc.) impact on your experience of the programme?
- What difference, if at all, would it have made to your experiences of the programme if the payments were not available?

Future recommendations / final thoughts

- In general, do you think that there are enough supports / programmes / courses available for young people like you?
- How, if at all, has participation in the UY programme changed your opinion on the supports available to young people?
- Would you recommend participation in the UY programme to other young people like you?
- If you could, what would you change about the programme?
- Any suggestions for the next phase?

Appendix 4: Focus group topic guide for staff and managers

1. Why did your organisation become involved in the United Youth Programme Pilot?
2. What did you think of the programme and how, if at all, did it differ from other youth programmes?
3. What has been your experience of the co-design process? *(What does it mean to providers i.e. how did they interpret the co-design process, key 'touchpoints' in the development of the co-design process etc.)*
    a. What has been your experience of using the principles and outcomes framework? *Probe: relevance / suitability etc.*
4. What has been your experience of working with the DEL Team? What worked well, what didn't?
    a. Probe*: various 'touchpoints' between DEL team and pilot providers e.g. overall application process; business case finalisation; workshops on the pilot operational guidelines, ongoing handling of queries regarding allowable expenditure and firming up of pilot activity details following participant planning; claims and payment processes, including the 25% upfront payment made; budget reprofiling to accommodate changes to the pilot and variation in anticipated spend profile (driven by participant needs and preferences, challenges / opportunities emerging throughout); general handling of queries throughout*
5. How have you found the operation of the payments to participants? *Probe views / experiences of (1) continuation of benefit provision (with some flexibilities, but also with conditions having to be met); (2) incentive payment; (3) provision of expenses for young people.*
    a. Has it been a help or a hindrance in terms of the work with young people?
    b. Influence on participation / engagement / attendance rates?
    c. Views on management / admin and tasks associated with this.
6. Who, if any, were the key partners? How, if at all, did the partnerships add value?
7. Tell us about the type of young people who engaged in the pilot. *probe - composition of group / characteristics of YP*.
    a. What methods / means were used to recruit / engage / retain YP? Probe 'hardest to reach' young people - what worked, what it took to reach / recruit participants.
8. What outcomes (distance travelled) have the young people achieved as a result of participating in the programme?
    a. Outcomes achieved from participating in this programme compared with others. Why (e.g. experiences, exposure to unique opportunities?)
9. What evidence do you have of outcome achievement? How have you measured distance travelled, and can you give examples of this?
10. What activities, practices or programmes seem to you to have had most beneficial impact on the young people?
11. What has been your greatest challenge in the work with young people? How did you overcome such challenge(s)?
12. What processes, procedures or practices do you think must be carried forward to the new programme?

Appendix 5: Focus group topic guide for the United Youth Programme Team

1. Tell us about the origins of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase, including arrangements for management and support i.e. DEL team. Consideration of how and why it came about. Defining programme purpose.
2. How does the United Youth Programme differ from other youth programmes? What steps were taken to ensure it complemented, not duplicated, other programmes?
    a. What are the emerging issues in relation to the interface with other programmes?
3. Tell us about your experiences of the co-design process?
    a. Probe enablers / barriers to engaging stakeholders (pilot providers; young people).
    b. Probe purpose, benefits / challenges in establishing the UY Design Team.
    c. Probe experience of developing the principles and outcomes framework with stakeholders.
4. What has been your experience of working with the pilot providers? What worked well, what didn't? *(Probe: various 'touchpoints' between DEL team and pilot providers e.g. overall application process, incl concept and development stages; business case finalisation; workshops on the pilot operational guidelines, IPR process; general engagement with pilots / handling queries)*
5. How were decisions made at the application assessment stage? (probe factors that came into play in making final selections)
    a. Why 13, could there have been more?

6. Is this programme reaching the sorts of people they wanted it to reach?
    a. Enablers / challenges to recruitment / retention / engagement of YP?
7. Satisfaction with way in which the outcomes / principles framework has been used?
8. Any insights / experiences / views on outcomes (distance travelled) and measurement for participants?
9. Any views / lessons learnt relating to arrangements for the evaluation of the programme?
10. What have been the main challenges in the operation, management and oversight of the UY pilot phase?
    a. Thoughts/recommendations to overcome such challenges?
11. What key lessons do you think need to be taken into account when considering the new programme?
    a. Required qualifications /skills / attributes of staff?
    b. Considerations relating to the scale up and resource availability (with required skills?)
    c. Why 10,000?

Financial management/payments and processes

12. What is DEL's experience of the operation of the payments to participants? Probe views / experiences of what worked/what didn't – drawing where possible on engagement with JBO / SSA offices?
    a. Retention of welfare benefits (what were the positive aspects / what were the challenges?)
    b. Flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA – requirement to attend every 13 weeks; 3 day a week rule?
    c. Weekly declaration process
    d. Incentive payment

e. Provision of travel / childcare expenses
f. 5% administration fee?

13. Views / experiences of other aspects of the financial management process, including the extent to which each helped and / or hindered the operation of the pilot
    g. The early process for finalisation of the business case for the pilot and agreement of the initial budget, prior to issue of Letter of Offer of funding.
    h. Payment of the 25% budget advance and the subsequent process for monthly reclaim of the advance.
    i. The monthly claims and payments process.
    j. Budget reprofiling / adjustment activity in consultation with the United Youth Programme Team.
    k. Handling of queries and requests for approval of adjustments to budgeted spend as the pilots progressed.

Consider lessons for the way forward / considerations relating to (1) financial management and (2) payments and processes (particularly administrative component) if the programme were to be upscaled?

Appendix 6: Payments and processes questionnaire

United Youth Programme Pilot Phase participant payments:

Key payment features to be explored by Pilot Providers (Managers, Practitioners, Administrators)

Please provide responses in the expandable fields below. Thank you.

Features	Question	Answer
Retention of welfare benefits *Removal of barrier to participation as a result of participation not being affordable or hardship resulting from participation.*	1. In what ways, if any, did the retention of welfare benefits help young people to participate in the programme?	
	2. What were the positive aspects of this arrangement (including how it operated in practice)?	
	3. What were the challenges of the arrangement (including how it operated in practice)?	
Flexibilities agreed with respect to JSA *To promote continuity of engagement with the programme, participation on a UY pilot (for at least three days per week) was recognised as meeting the JSA condition of claimant actively seeking work for the week.*	4. How, if at all, did the requirement for JSA participants to attend JBO every 13 weeks (instead of fortnightly), help with engagement?	
	5. How, if at all, did this 3 days a week rule (thereby meeting the JSA condition of actively seeking work) help to promote continuity of engagement?	
Participants completed a weekly declaration (collected by pilot providers and supplied to DEL) showing their attendance on the pilot for that week, confirming that they were available for work throughout the week and confirming that they were actively seeking work during the week.	6. To what extent did the weekly declaration process provide an accurate account of: -individual attendance, -confirmation of availability for work, and -confirmation of actively seeking work?	

Incentive payment *In recognition of the distance of young people in the target group from engagement in education, training or employment, a daily monetary incentive to motivate engagement and attendance in the programme.*	7. To what extent, if at all, did the payment serve as an incentive to recruit, retain and engage participants?	
	8. What impact, if any, did the payments being made over the Xmas period have on the young people?	
Payment of expenses such as travel and childcare *To remove certain costs directly associated with participation and thereby remove potentially significant barriers to participation.*	9. To what extent, if at all, did the payment of these expenses remove barriers to participation?	
	10. In what ways, if any, did this help young people to remain engaged?	
5% administration fee *A fee of 5% of total participant costs was made available to pilot organisations to cover administration of participant payments.*	11. Is there anything that you would change about the administration of participant payments if you could?	

12. We are interested in your feedback on other aspects of the financial management process, as outlined below. Please use the following space to comment on your views and experiences of each, including the extent to which each helped and / or hindered the operation of the pilot.

Features	Answer
a. The early process for finalisation of the business case for the pilot and agreement of the initial budget, prior to issue of Letter of Offer of funding.	

b. Payment of the 25% budget advance and the subsequent process for monthly reclaim of the advance.	
c. The monthly claims and payments process.	
d. Budget reprofiling / adjustment activity in consultation with the United Youth Programme Team.	
e. Handling of queries and requests for approval of adjustments to budgeted spend as the pilots progressed.	

13. How, if at all, did the *Steps to Success* Programme impact on the operation of your pilot?

Answer

Thank you for completing this form. It can be returned by email to Rosha Canavan at rcanavan@effectiveservices.org.
Please return by: Monday 16 May.

Appendix 7: Assessment of outcome measures

The following table includes a sample of typical methods used to assess learning and development outcomes. Please indicate which of the following you have used with young people during the pilot, in addition to the participant questionnaire / case study templates provided by the United Youth Programme Team.

Method	**Have used √**
Externally validated instrument (e.g. Self-efficacy scale)	
Internally or externally developed 'before and after' questionnaire	
One-off exit questionnaire	
In-house developed Scales e.g. 1-5 rating of progress	
Outcomes wheel e.g. Outcomes Star	
Interview with individual	
Interview with group	
Case study	
Participant diary (written)	
Participant diary (video)	
Individual story	
Group story	
Structured reflective activities e.g. pairs talking and recording, sculpting, group feedback	
Progress shared with participant	
Participant personal development plan / record	
Reports to managers or funders	
Other (please specify) _____	
If required, please use the following space for comment:	

Appendix 8: Participant questionnaire

No.	Question	How was this for you BEFORE taking part in the programme? (Circle a 'before' number)	How is this for you now, AFTER taking part in the programme? (Circle an 'after' number)
1	**COMMUNICATION SKILLS** **How happy are you with your communication skills?** Communication skills can include things like speaking, listening, taking turns to speak, sharing your views, understanding others. If **0=not happy with your communication skills** and **10=very happy with your communication skills**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how happy with your communication skills you felt before the programme and how happy you feel now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
2	**SELF-CONFIDENCE** **How self confident are you?** Self confidence can be about how you feel about trying out new things, or speaking out in front of a group, or feeling that your views and opinions are important, or that what you do can make a difference. If **0=not confident** at all and **10=very confident**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how self confident you felt before the programme, and how self confident you feel now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
3	**RESILIENCE & COPING** **How resilient are you?** Resilience is the ability to stay positive (or 'bounce back', or cope, or recover) when things go wrong, or things don't go as you'd hoped, or if you are faced with things that you don't expect. If **0=not resilient** at all and **10=very resilient**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how resilient you felt before the programme, and how resilient you feel now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

No.	Question	How was this for you BEFORE taking part in the programme? (Circle a 'before' number)	How is this for you now, AFTER taking part in the programme? (Circle an 'after' number)
4	**<u>WORKING WITH OTHERS</u>** **How well do you work with other people?** This can include things like working as part of a group or team, being flexible, understanding how other people feel, or being reliable and doing something if you say you are going to do it. If **0=not happy with how you can work with others** and **10=very happy with how you can work with others**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how happy you felt with how you can work with others before the programme, and how happy you feel about this now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
5	**<u>PHYSICAL HEALTH</u>** **How happy are you with your physical health?** If **0=not happy with your physical health** and **10=very happy with your physical health**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how happy with your physical health you felt before the programme, and how happy you feel now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
6	**<u>MENTAL WELL-BEING</u>** **How happy are you with your mental well-being?** Mental well-being can include things like ability to manage feelings, stress, anxiety etc. If **0=not happy with your mental well-being** and **10=very happy with your mental well-being**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how happy with your mental well-being you felt before the programme and how happy you feel now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

7	**AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENCE** **How well do you understand young people from a different community background to your own?** This could mean young people from a different religious or political background, or from a different ethnic group. If **0=you know and understand very little about young people from a different background to your own** and **10=you know and understand very well about young people from a different background to your own**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how much you know and understood before the programme, and how much now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
8	**RESPECTING OTHERS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS** **How easy is it for you to respect young people from a different community background to your own?** (Respect isn't just about tolerating or putting up with something, it's about showing appreciation for the worth of someone or something.) If **0=you find it difficult to respect young people from a different background to your own** and **10=you find it easy to respect young people from a different background to your own**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how difficult or easy you found it to respect young people from a different background before the programme, and now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
9	**MEETING OTHERS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS** **Away from your United Youth programme, how often do you regularly meet with young people from a different community background to your own** (e.g. meeting up to go out, through other social activities, or through sport)**?** If **0=you never meet young people from a different background** and **10= you regularly meet young people from a different background**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

	best shows how often you have met or meet with young people from a different background before the programme and after the programme.		
10	**CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY** **How involved are you in activities or services within your local community or beyond?** (This can include things like youth work, community activities, sports club, volunteering.) If **0=not involved at all** and **10=very involved**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how involved you were before the programme, and how involved you are now after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
11	**KNOWING ABOUT AND BEING ABLE TO ACCESS USEFUL SERVICES** **How well are you able to access useful services for things like information, advice or support?** This could include things like knowing where to go if you need someone to talk to about worries, or help with money matters, or information on courses or training. If **0=not able at all** and **10=very able**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how able to access useful services you were before the programme, and how able after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**
12	**THE FUTURE** **How clear are you about what you'd like to do in the future?** (This can include your interest in future programmes, courses, training or job choices.) If **0=not clear at all** and **10=very clear**, circle a number in each of the boxes to the right that best shows how clear you were before the programme, and how clear you are after the programme.	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**	**0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

Appendix 9: Case study template

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ✓ Name of young person – use an initial or made up name
- ✓ Age of young person
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Community background or perceived community background – is the young person perceived as Catholic or Protestant (or is this relevant to them), or are they from another faith background or none, another racial group or originally from another country
- ✓ Name of the general area that the young person is from e.g. Ballymena, Belfast, Derry / Londonderry, Fermanagh, Newry, Lurgan etc.

B. EXPERIENCE BEFORE THE PILOT

- ✓ What was the young person doing before they joined the pilot? Did they have any previous experience of programmes for young people?
- ✓ If yes, briefly outline what kind of programmes they took part in or what types of services they received?
- ✓ How long were they involved?
- ✓ Did it help and support them, and if so how?
- ✓ It would also be useful to include what the young person's past experience of education has been – for example, what level of qualification had they attained, did they have any experience of post compulsory education such as further or higher education, or did they leave school earlier than school leaving age?
- ✓ Was the young person involved in their community prior to joining the pilot – e.g. did they belong to any groups or clubs, did they volunteer or give their time in the community or with any other organisation?
- ✓ Was the young person aware of and connected to any service(s) or activities in the community that were of benefit to them?
- ✓ Had the young person encountered or been affected by any particular 'good relations' issues – for example, these could be things relating to the legacy of the conflict that they were affected by or involved in, or any particular views, attitudes, fears or worries that they had.

C. GETTING INVOLVED IN THE PILOT

- ✓ How did the young person hear about the pilot?
- ✓ Did anyone encourage or support them to get involved with it? If yes, who was this?
- ✓ Why did they get involved? What attracted them to the pilot and what did they want out of their involvement?

D. BARRIERS AND OTHER CHALLENGES

- ✓ Were there any particular barriers to the young person's participation or challenging circumstances that they experienced? If so, how was the pilot able to help?
  (Barriers could include things like childcare, transport costs, physical access, emotional well-being, language differences, caring responsibilities, family circumstances or influences, housing difficulties, challenges around alcohol or drugs, others not wanting the young person to get involved in the pilot etc. or maybe the young person just felt 'different'? Or maybe there were no significant barriers.)
- ✓ (If appropriate, explore the value of the incentive payment – what difference did this make to the young person?)

E. STAYING INVOLVED

- ✓ Why has the young person remained involved or in what ways have they been supported to remain involved and get the most out of taking part in the pilot?

F. CHANGE IN RELATION TO THE OUTCOME AREAS

You should spend most time on this aspect of the case study. Use the United Youth outcome areas to help the young person think about the changes they have experienced as a result of taking part in the pilot.

It would be useful if the young person could think about each of the **four main areas** – 'social and emotional', citizenship, good relations, and employability – and use the bullet points below each of these to help them think of one or more **EXAMPLES** which illustrate how change has happened for them. Information on how to approach this is included in the full Case Study guidance document and the United Youth outcome areas and capabilities are included on page 7 of this template for convenience.

As indicated in the Case Study guidance, rather than start work on this question using the United Youth outcomes it may be more helpful to ask the young person to simply think about things that they feel more positive about because of the pilot, things they are more willing or better able to do or that they understand better etc. You can then use the four outcome areas to focus on particular experiences or changes as appropriate.

G. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Is there:

- Something the young person now wants to stop doing as a result of taking part in the pilot?
- Something they now want to continue doing?
- A new goal they want to set for themselves, for example, is there another course or programme they are engaging in or looking forward to moving on to?

And what stage are they at with any new plans they have? (For example, finding out more about courses, have signed up to another programme, will continue volunteering, have found work etc.)

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