

# Inspiring Futures Evaluation



**Thematic Workshop Brief 2:**

**Effective practice in supporting children and young people**

**September 2021**

**youth  
futures**  
FOUNDATION

# Introduction



**Thank you** to Inspiring Futures grantees for their time and for sharing their experiences during the workshop.



This document highlights learning based on views gathered during a two hour virtual workshop with around 55 grantees from the Inspiring Futures programme. In the workshop, we discussed 'what works' in supporting children and young people towards employment pathways during and beyond the pandemic.



Inspiring Futures, jointly delivered by BBC Children in Need and the Youth Futures Foundation, aims to support children and young people in their journey towards employment. It provides emergency funding for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in response to COVID-19 to help adapt and respond to children and young people's needs.



**The following slides** highlight some practice that Inspiring Futures grantees find useful in their work with young people.



# Identifying and referring: What we learned

- Grantees identify children and young people and gather referrals in a range of ways, such as:
  - Referrals from other professionals.
  - Self-referrals.
  - Contacting other organisations to identify young people and encourage referrals.
  - Outreach, for example in the community, at events, or at key locations such as mosques and jobcentres.
  - Advertising, for example in newsletters, via social media, and at community centres.
- A **mix of digital and in-person routes** can help avoid digital exclusion.
- Grantees find **outreach helps reach those who are hidden or isolated.**



# Identifying and referring: Key tips

## 1. **Build relationships** with key organisations and individuals.

- ✓ *E.g., police, schools, local authorities, other VCS organisations, community leaders and families.*
- ✓ **Share your eligibility criteria and service offer**, and any changes since the pandemic.
- ✓ **Regularly communicate** and have a key point of contact.
- ✓ This can help **avoid duplicating service offers**.

## 2. **Establish clear and simple referral pathways.**

- ✓ *This helps make sure **key information does not get lost**.*
- ✓ Also allow **flexibility where needed**, e.g., using Zoom or engaging outside of 9-5 hours.

## 3. It can be hard to **assess need and disadvantage.**

- ✓ **Proxy measures can help**, such as digital access or educational attainment.

## 4. **Lived experience** and **links with the community** help with identifying and engaging.

- ✓ *E.g., staff with lived experience, volunteers from the community and peer mentors.*
- ✓ **Children and young people who are already being supported** might want to help, e.g., through word-of-mouth or giving advice about where and how to engage young people who may benefit from support.



# Supporting young people: What we learned

- Grantees offer a range of types of support.
- For some, the **COVID-19 pandemic has made some types of support feel more relevant**, such as digital skills training and wellbeing and self-care support.
- Less structured sessions are also useful, **giving young people space to share and ‘offload’**.
- Grantees find it helpful to **create opportunities for young people to meet potential employers**, and to hear from those with similar experiences about their employment.



# Supporting young people: Key tips

## During initial engagement:

### 1. **Go at the young person's pace.**

2. Understand what young people want to achieve.

- ✓ **Beginning with an open conversation** allows the young person to take the lead and focus on what's important to them.
- ✓ Young people may have their own priorities for which needs to address first.

## Keeping young people engaged:

1. **Offer varied activities**, including some that do not focus on EET.

- ✓ **Offer fun activities** such as cooking classes, sports and quizzes.
- ✓ **Use children and young people's interests** as a springboard for designing activities.

2. **Explore co-producing activities** by running youth-led sessions or working with young people to plan activities of programmes.

## Ensuring accessibility:

1. **Check that timings and locations or platforms work** for young people.

2. **Build in flexibility** so activities can be shifted to online in case a young person needs to shield or self-isolate.

3. **Consider digital access and literacy** when supporting young people with digital skills.

3. **Share a scheduled programme of activities** in advance, so young people can plan and look forward to activities.

4. **Provide ongoing one-to-one support alongside group interventions**, e.g., from practitioners, peer mentors, or a 'buddy' or befriending scheme.

- ✓ *Peer-to-peer mentoring also offers the opportunity to build relationships and build skills.*

5. Offer **food and drink**.



# Exit planning and support: What we learned

- Grantees use **different types of exit criteria** such as:
  - Progress towards outcomes.
  - Reaching personal goals.
  - Age.
  - Length of support.
  - And others.
- A **clear timeline for support** can be useful for both grantees and children and young people who are being supported.
- However, grantees find that **flexibility is also important** depending on individual needs and circumstances. For example, grantees have commented that support has tended to last longer during the pandemic (see the thematic briefing from Workshop 1 for more details).



# Exit planning and support: Key tips

## Exit planning:

1. Create a **clear exit plan** together with the child or young person.

2. An **exit session** or interview can be helpful.

3. **Agree timelines and next steps.**

4. **Share guidance, information, and where to find more help** if needed, and let young people know they can stay in touch.

## Exit and onward support:

1. Consider offering more **one-to-one support leading up to and during the transition away from support.**

2. **Signpost or refer to onward support** if needed.

3. Stage **'job fairs'** or **'speed dating'** style events for young people to meet potential employers, trainers, colleges, and other support services.

4. **Follow-up at set time points**, such as in six months and one year.

5. Offer **opportunities for young people to keep working with the organisation:**

- ✓ Set up a **'youth-board'**.
- ✓ Offer opportunities to become a **peer mentor**.
- ✓ Grantees use **terms such as 'ambassador', 'graduate', and 'alumni'**.

6. Deliver or arrange **'in work support'** to sustain employment.

- ✓ This could include **advocating to employers for appropriate training, support, and accessibility arrangements.**



# Understanding the difference made: What we learned

- Grantees find a range of different approaches useful for measuring difference, including:
  - **Established measures**, such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, Hamilton Anxiety Scale, and Rosenberg Scale.
  - **Frameworks** such as the Journey to Employment (JET) Framework.
  - **Tools** such as Outcomes-Stars or emotion trees.
- Grantees also use **self-developed tools**, such as case studies; staff observations of children and young people; interviews with or between children and young people; parent and carer feedback; bespoke questionnaires; vlogs created by children and young people.
- Grantees find it helpful to consider **a range of indicators of progress** such as EET outcomes, anxiety, wellbeing, self efficiency, reconnecting with friends, trying new things, learning, enjoyment, skills, and more.
- For some grantees, **'hard' EET outcomes** have **become less of a focus during the COVID-19** pandemic, due to the impacts of the pandemic on children and young people and the wider environment (see thematic briefing from workshop 1 for more details).
- As well as outcomes data, grantees find it helpful to collect **feedback data** from the children and young people they support, such as quick anonymous surveys after each session.



# Understanding the difference made: Key tips

1. **Measure difference at multiple points in time**, including at the beginning and end of support, and regularly in between.

2. **Use information about the difference made to inform your work**, such as:

- ✓ *Knowing when and how to **adapt support**.*
- ✓ *Using outcomes measures to help structure support, for example planning and reviewing goals together with children and young people.*
- ✓ *Informing funding bids and marketing activity.*





# To find out more

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