The Mercers' Company Transitions Special Initiative

Year 5 Evaluation Report

Alix Robertson, Róisín Killick and Theo Wells
The Centre for Education and Youth

As Head of Engagement, Alix is responsible for ensuring CfEY's work reaches far into the education and youth sectors. She supports colleagues and clients with planning communications strategies for report launches, writing blogs and op-eds, pitching to the press, and social media messaging. Alix organises and runs online and in-person CfEY events, speaks at external events, and supports colleagues with their own speaking opportunities. Alix also co-produces CfEY's Youth and Education Podcast.

Alix has carried out research on a range of topics, conducted several evaluations and delivered evaluation training. Alix started out as an English teacher and went on to work as an education journalist for sister papers FE Week and Schools Week, before joining CfEY.

Róisín Killick joined CfEY as Director of Research and Operations in January 2024 and became Interim co-CEO in March 2024. She oversees the financial and operational work of the organisation alongside leading our work building new research partnerships and securing, designing, and delivering new large-scale research and evaluation projects.

Outside of work she is also studying part-time for a PhD at the Institute of Education in UCL and is researching how the changing socio-political climate in the English education system has led to a growing number of organisations that work in or with schools but function outside of the school accountability system. She aims to explore how these organisations hold themselves to account and evidence their impact outside of a formalised accountability system.

Theo Wells is an Associate at CfEY, contributing to the design and delivery of research projects across the organisation. He has research/project delivery experience from eight years in the non-profit and education sectors.

Prior to joining CfEY in November 2024, Theo worked for *In2research*, a UCL postgraduate access programme, and for charities in education, the arts and international human rights. During COVID-19, he returned to his home area (Brixton) to work in a secondary school supporting students with SEND, SEMH and/or behavioural difficulties.

Theo studied Social and Political Sciences (SPS) at the University of Cambridge, specialising in the Sociology of Education with social research methods.

Table of Contents

1   Executive summary

1.1   Introduction

The Mercers' Company Transitions Special Initiative began in July 2019 to support young people to make successful post-secondary transitions. The Initiative has funded 15 partner organisations ('partners'), delivering careers-focused work to young people across London. The work of the third cohort of 7 partners is explored in this report.

Each individual partner is evaluating the impact of its own Mercers'-funded work. The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) is evaluating the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative as a whole and drawing together the key lessons learned from delivering these individual projects.

1.2   Programme Data

CfEY explores trends in the partners' quantitative programme data, across the following areas:
- delivery
- overall satisfaction
- self - and organisational - efficacy
- aspirations
- pathway awareness
- destinations

1.3   Delivery

Across the fifth year of the Transitions Special Initiative, the seven partners worked with 799 young people; 38 schools, virtual schools, or colleges; and 68 employers. Several programmes are targeting and engaging high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals (FSM) or those who are care-experienced.

1.4   Overall satisfaction

Among the organisations for which we have data, young people, school staff and employers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the partners' programmes. Across all stakeholders and programmes, satisfaction rates were above 80%.

1.5   Self - and organisational - efficacy (how the partners develop young people's life and workplace skills)

The Transitions Special Initiative appears to have a strong impact on **participating young people's** soft skills and helps them to develop new workplace skills

1.6   Aspirations

Available data from partners suggests that their programmes are positively influencing the aspirations of many of their young people, through making them feel more positive about their future. **However, the proportion of young people who report feeling more positive about their future varies across programmes.**

1.7 Pathway awareness

Partners' data **provides strong evidence** that programmes positively influence young people's awareness of different pathways into further education, training, or work, to varying degrees. **Available** partner data also suggests that the programmes positively influence young people's professional networks.
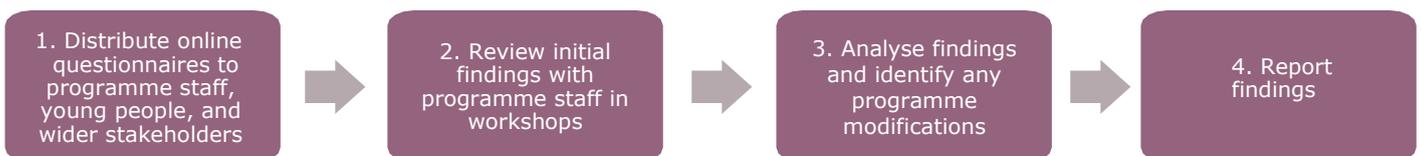
1.8 Destinations

Data collected by the partners on young people's destinations following their involvement in the programmes suggest that **following participation in the funded programmes,** many participants go on, or intend to go on, to further education, training, or employment.

1.9 Theory of Action

Following positive feedback from last year, CfEY has continued to use a methodology rooted in the 'Theory of Action' (ToA) approach, described in Professor Chris Brown's article, 'Using theories of action approach to measure impact in an intelligent way: A case study from Ontario Canada'.

CfEY's work this year followed the same structure as last year, shown below:

1. Distribute online questionnaires to programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders → 2. Review initial findings with programme staff in workshops → 3. Analyse findings and identify any programme modifications → 4. Report findings

1.10 Successes

The Theory of Action process highlighted the following successes this year:
1. Engagement and recruitment (with young people, schools and employers)
2. The provision of positive employability experiences
3. The practical support and advice provided by mentors
4. The improvement of soft skills among young people
5. Improved resources
6. The development and influence of effective and positive relationships
7. The improvement of data collection and communication of impact

1.11 Challenges

Feedback highlighted the following challenges with programme delivery:
1. Recruitment and retention challenges (schools, young people, volunteers)
2. Poor communication between stakeholders
3. Impractical requests beyond the scope of the programme
4. Scheduling challenges beyond partners' control
5. Conflicting preferences around delivery
6. Wider social issues

These issues were discussed with programme staff in the feedback workshops. This section summarises themes arising from these discussions.

1.12 Cohort 3 partners' reflections on progress against 2022-23 targets

Following last year's individual and general recommendations, Cohort 3 partners reflected on how their delivery has changed. Each partner highlighted different levels of success, which are set out by organisation in this section.

1.13 How the Cohort 3 partners can refine delivery in 2024-25

Individual targets have been identified by each partner for optimising their own programme delivery in 2024-25, with reference to the following themes:
1. Planning and timelines
2. Session structure and delivery
3. Programme content
4. Evaluation
5. Programme resources
6. Pastoral support

1.14 Areas for improvement - Refining delivery for 2024-25

In addition to individual targets identified by each partner for how they aim to improve delivery in 2024-25. There are four cohort-level recommendations for refinements, building on the work of previous years. Cohort 3 partners should:

1. Consider how marketing and promotion approaches can be improved
2. Further develop the differentiation of programme content according to the needs/interests of participants
3. Consider or build on existing work around post-programme engagement or support
4. Consider how qualitative evaluation processes can be further embedded into existing monitoring and evaluation processes

2 Introduction

2.1 The Transitions Special Initiative structure

The Mercers' Company's Transitions Special Initiative began in July 2019 to support young people to make successful post-secondary transitions. The Initiative has provided funding to 15 partner organisations ('partners'), delivering careers-focused work to young people across London. The first cohort of four partners completed their work with The Mercers' Company in 2022, and the second cohort of four partners in 2023. The work of the remaining seven Cohort 3 partners is explored in this report.

The Initiative's current timeline of support from CfEY is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Timeline of CfEY's support of the Transitions Special Initiative

Cohort	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
1						
2						
3						

2.2 The partner organisations

Details of the seven Cohort 3 partners are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Cohort 3 partner organisations

Organisation	Organisation type and focus
Blueprint for All	A charity that aims to build careers, enrich society, and support communities through a range of programmes. Blueprint for All supports young people aged nine to 30 from underrepresented backgrounds by providing careers advice, supporting skills development and offering opportunities to achieve qualifications, among other activities.
Envision	A charity that provides social action programmes to help young people build essential skills, while making changes in their schools and communities. They do so by partnering young people from Key Stages 4 and 5 with Envision programme coordinators and mentors who develop skills and plans to tackle social problems affecting their community, as per the structure of the programme.
In2scienceUK	A STEM-focused charity providing young people an opportunity to gain practical insight into the STEM sector as well as the knowledge and confidence to progress to university. Through their First-Year University Mentoring Programme, they support young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds as they transition to university to do their undergraduate STEM degrees. The programme matches young people with a near-peer mentor, a young person in their second year of university or beyond, who supports the mentee in their first year at university. This year, they are supporting an increased number of first-year students as they embark on their university careers.

Making the Leap (MTL)	Making The Leap is a societal change charity that aims to transform the futures of young people from less-advantaged socio-economic backgrounds. They provide training to raise young people's aspirations, to develop their skills, confidence and outlook, and give them the chance to succeed in their chosen career. In addition to their direct delivery, Making The Leap use what they learn to raise awareness of the importance of social mobility among UK businesses and organisations, and encourage them to take action to improve it.
Power 2	Power2 unleashes the power of children and young people so that they can build happy and fulfilling lives. With its support, they improve their wellbeing, re-engage with school and learning, build networks and access opportunities. Its Power2 Advance programme supports young people in the care system to improve their wellbeing and develop independent living and employability skills.
Street League	Street League uses the power of sport to tackle poverty and give young people the opportunities they need to succeed in life and the workplace. Through a range of programmes, staff support young people to overcome practical and personal barriers to employment.
XLP	XLP operates in nine boroughs around London, working with 4,000 young people each year through education, mentoring, employability, community youth work, sports, and the arts. Its mission is to create positive futures for young people growing up in inner-city communities in London. Some of these young people may struggle daily with issues such as family breakdown, unemployment, and educational failure, and may be living in areas that experience high levels of anti-social behaviour and gang violence. Through positive, long-term relationships, XLP hopes to restore young people's trust in people, nurture the belief that things can change, encourage positive goal setting, and the drive to achieve those goals.

2.3   Evaluation framework: aims and structure

Each individual partner is conducting its own evaluation of the impact of its Mercers'-funded work. The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) is evaluating the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative as a whole.

2.3.1   Evaluation framework

The partners involved in the Initiative deliver very different programmes. In collaboration with The Mercers' Company and the four Cohort 1 partners, CfEY previously designed an evaluation framework against which to report the partners' impact. This framework allows us to compare findings across the programmes, while considering partners' different modes of delivery and impact.

Our framework explores the Initiative's impact in relation to the following five areas:
1.   **Delivery** (which activities the partners deliver, when and with whom).
2.   **Self - and organisational-efficiency** (young people's life and workplace skills).
3.   **Aspirations** (young people's aims for the future and where they see themselves).
4.   **Pathway awareness** (young people's knowledge and understanding of different academic and vocational pathways into work).
5.   **Destinations** (young people's post-programme places in education, training, or work).

We continue to use this framework to conduct the evaluation which, alongside the Theory of Action approach, has helped guide our analysis of partners' qualitative data.

2.3.2   Evaluation aims

CfEY has been guided by the following aims in its work with The Mercers' Company and the partner organisations. We are seeking to:

- describe and capture the partners' (very different) work
- explore the work that partners are doing individually; while ensuring we can talk about the initiative from a 'bird's-eye view'
- compare outcomes across the years.

This evaluation does not seek to provide detailed information about each individual partner's impact. Partners will report separately to The Mercers' Company on their achievements. Rather, the evaluation aims to capture the impact of work underway across the Initiative, providing The Mercers' Company and the partners with a picture of impact in the round, and implications for delivery, evaluation, and programme recommendations in future years.

2.3.3   Evaluation structure

This year our evaluation has followed the structure presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation structure
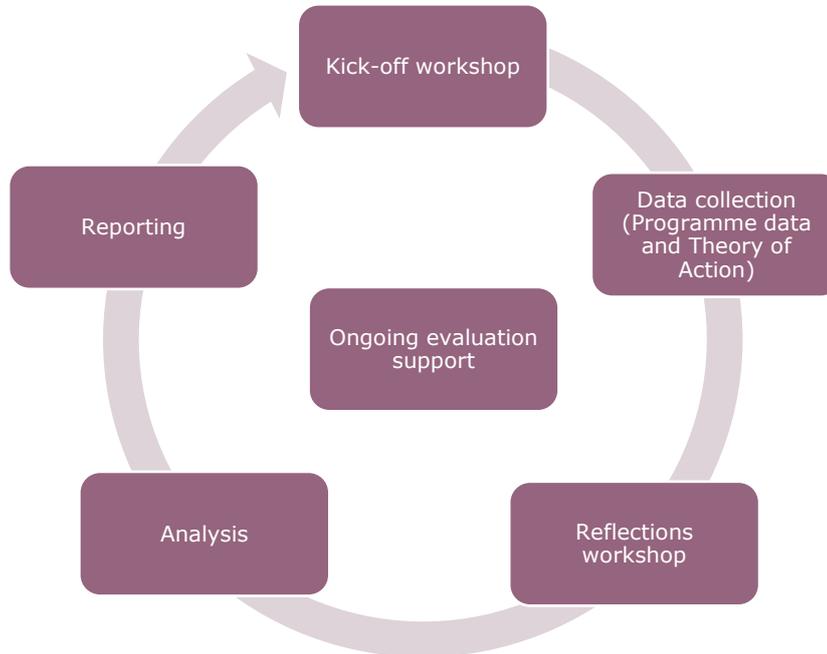
Meetings and workshops

In November 2023, The Mercers' Company held a Learning Symposium at Mercers' Hall in London, to celebrate the work of Cohort 2 from 2020 to 2023, and to share their learnings with the Cohort 3 partners and other attendees from across the education and youth sectors.

CfEY then began this year's new evaluation cycle for Cohort 3 with a kick-off workshop in which we brought the partners together to remind them of each other's programmes and their work. We reviewed the journey so far, reminding them of the Theory of Action approach (detailed below), and discussing their experiences of last year's evaluation. The partners were briefed on next steps, and had the chance to share any questions, thoughts, or problems.

After the data collection process, in September 2024, CfEY held a Reflections Workshop where Cohort 3 partners met to look back on the year, share best-practice approaches and troubleshoot problems together. This session was moved to autumn instead of summer in this evaluation cycle, as the partners said this better suited their delivery timetable.

Data collection

Throughout the 2022/23 academic year, CfEY collected data using two methods:
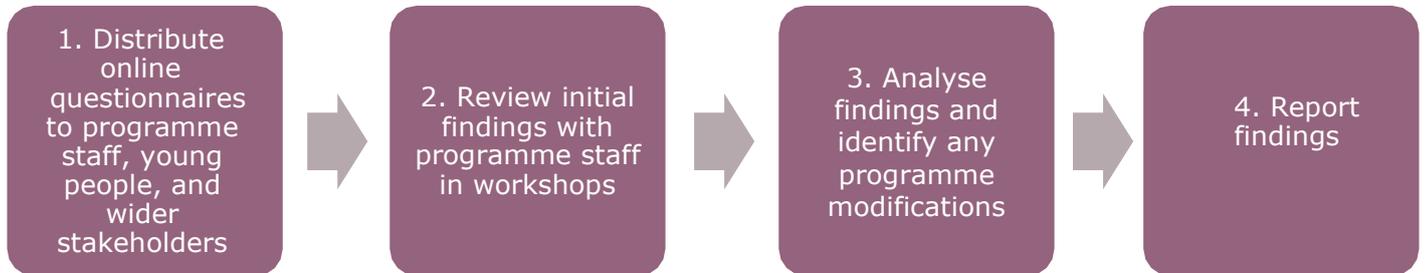
Individual data submissions

As in previous years, the partners submitted their own, internal evaluation data to CfEY. We then synthesised the partners' data to present overarching findings about the impact of the Transitions Special Initiative. This year, we permitted the partners to submit any additional, relevant data they wanted to share with us, if they felt it did not

fit into the categories already specified in the spreadsheet. Some of the partners were still unable to submit complete datasets this year; CfEY has reported on the information that was provided.

Theory of Action

We continue to use a methodology rooted in the 'Theory of Action' (ToA) approach, as detailed in previous years' reports. The approach follows the structure outlined below:

| 1. Distribute online questionnaires to programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders | → | 2. Review initial findings with programme staff in workshops | → | 3. Analyse findings and identify any programme modifications | → | 4. Report findings |

- **In Phase 1** we reviewed last year's online questionnaires and then shared them with the partners, to be answered by their programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders such as school staff, employers or mentors. Respondents provided open text responses about their participation in and experiences of the programmes.
- **In Phase 2** we convened one-to-one feedback workshops with programme staff from each of the partner organisations, where we reviewed findings from Phase 1 and reflected on what these mean for future delivery. In these sessions, we also gathered feedback from the Cohort 3 partners about their progress on the areas for improvement and recommendations from last year's ToA work.
- **In Phase 3** we analysed the findings from the questionnaires and workshop discussions and identified possible programme modifications for each of the partners, and also made overarching recommendations for the whole cohort.
- **In Phase 4** we produced our end of year report to The Mercers' Company, summarising our findings and detailing how the partners might move forward with their work in their final year of Transitions Special Initiative funding in 2024-25.

All participants gave informed consent to engage with the research.

Ongoing evaluation support

Across the year, CfEY also provided the partners with individual support in relation to their own evaluations throughout the year, offering ad-hoc guidance as required.

Reporting (interim and final)

As in previous years, CfEY provided an interim report in February, before this full end of year report, summarising the findings from this cycle of evaluating the Transitions Special Initiative.

2.3.4   Reflections on Theory of Action

The Theory of Action approach has been well-received by the partners this year.

Online consultation forms

We received 108 of responses to the online questionnaires this year. This included feedback from 56 young people and 32 programme staff. Fewer responses were

received from other stakeholders such as teachers and employers (20 responses). The numbers of questionnaire responses gathered varied across the partners, with some receiving high numbers of detailed responses from their stakeholders, especially young people. Some partners managed to gather feedback from either teachers or employers but not both, and some had no responses from either group of stakeholders. As suggested last year, CfEY recommends that the partners brief their stakeholders in advance, to ensure they are aware that they will be required to complete this evaluation questionnaire midway through the year.

Feedback workshops

The feedback workshops proved a valuable space for discussion again this year, particularly when exploring how the partners had been able to work on the targets and recommendations from last year. It should be noted that the structure of the one-to-one feedback workshop for Power2 was adapted this year, as the organisation was only able to gather feedback from two programme staff this year, and none from young people or other stakeholders. Considering this, CfEY structured Power2's session to focus instead on the successes and challenges that staff felt they had faced in delivering original programme plans this year, what they feel they have learned from learned from their experiences, and how these learnings influenced new, adapted delivery plans for 2024-25.

Reporting

In the reporting process, CfEY has included key themes from the surveys, alongside an exploration of the points that the partners specifically drew out in the feedback workshops. We conclude with Cohort 3's suggestions for how they might refine delivery of their programmes in the coming years of the Transition Special Initiative, as well as some recommendations for the cohort as a whole.

3   Programme data

In this section, CfEY explores trends in the partners' quantitative programme data, across the following areas:
- delivery
- overall satisfaction
- self - and organisational - efficacy
- aspirations
- pathway awareness
- destinations

As in previous years, CfEY gathered programme data from the partners regarding their Mercers'-funded delivery and impact in 2023-24. This data was collected at different points throughout the academic year by each of the partners and received by CfEY in late August.

The partners shared with CfEY the data that they had available and have submitted more detailed individual evaluation reports to The Mercers' Company directly.

The following sections provide an overview of programme performance across the cohort. However, it is important to note that not all partners were able to submit data for each area. In most cases, where a partner has not provided data across one or more areas, it is due to the specificity of the data not matching the partners' existing data collection frameworks.

It is also important to acknowledge that although some broad comparisons are drawn between the partners' work in this report, each organisation works differently, with different cohorts of young people and using different evaluation systems and therefore, these comparisons are not like-for-like and should be considered with the appropriate caveats.

This year, partners also submitted data that they collect as part of their existing monitoring and evaluation activities that falls outside of the standard reporting categories above. A summary analysis of this data is integrated into the relevant sections below.

4   Delivery

Section summary: Across the fifth year of the Transitions Special Initiative, the seven partners worked with 799 young people; 38 schools, virtual schools, or colleges; and 68 employers. Several programmes are targeting and engaging high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals (FSM) or those who are care-experienced.

During the 2023/2024 academic year, the 7 Cohort 3 partners engaged with 799 young people; 38 schools, virtual schools or colleges; and 68 employers. The number of students engaged was 86% of this year's target number of students for the cohort overall (926 students)[1]. The number of schools, virtual schools or colleges engaged by the cohort overall was also slightly short of the target, 93% of the target of 41. However, the total number of employers engaged across the cohort (68) exceeded the target (37) by 84%.

The number of young people, schools, and employers engaged at a cohort level in 2023-2024 is significantly lower than during 2022-2023, this is due to a combination of factors. Firstly the 2022-2023 delivery year straddled two cohorts and 11 partners, whilst the 2023-2024 delivery year involves just Cohort 3 of the Mercer's Transition Special Initiative fund, made up of 7 partners. Secondly, the type of activities and programmes ran by this year's partners were designed in a way that engaged with fewer individual young people.

The majority of Cohort 3's programmes run with young people aged between 15 and 18. Street League run a programme for slightly younger students aged 14-16 and In2scienceUK's programme covers a broader target age range of 18-34 due to the nature of their work with first-year undergraduate students at university.

Participant data on gender was provided by all partners. Overall, partners supported more non-binary and female-identifying students than male-identifying students.

Of the seven partners, only XLP had a larger male-identifying cohort, at 55.1%, and two partners – Blueprint for All and In2scienceUK – had a female-identifying cohort greater than 60%. The particularly large female-identifying cohort within In2scienceUK's programme (67.5%) reflects their remit to support access to STEM fields for under-represented groups, as women are a significantly under-represented group in the sector. One partner (Power2) had more of an equal split in gender identity among their participants between those who identified as male, those who identified as female and those who expressed another gender identity.

---

[1] During the 2023-2024 delivery year one partner has a challenging year, and struggled to recruit and retain programme participants. Their data has been included in these overall cohort numbers for delivery but is excluded from the rest of the quantitative data analysis.

Table 2: Percentage of young people's self-reported gender across Cohort 3 during 2023-2024

Organisation name (no. of programmes for which data was submitted)	Percentage of students identifying as male	Percentage of students identifying as female	Percentage of students identifying as non-binary/other[2]	No reported gender
Blueprint for All (1/1)	39.3%	60.7%	1.8%	0%
Envision (1/1)	46.2%	48.3%	2.1%	3.4%
In2scienceUK (1/1)	30%	67.5%	2.5%	0%
Making the Leap (1/1)	44.4%	47.8%	7.8%	0%
Power2 (1/1)	28.2%	38.5%	33.3%	0%
Street League (1/1)	42.1%	57.9%	0%	0%
XLP (3/3)	55.1%	45.6%	0%	0%

According to the programme data we have available, several programmes are targeting and engaging high proportions of students who are from Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, eligible for free school meals (FSM) or care-experienced.

For example:

- All partners reported working with proportions of students from BAME backgrounds higher than 64% and some partners (Blueprint for All and In2scienceUK) reported working with proportions of students from BAME backgrounds higher than 95%.
- Data available for FSM eligibility amongst the cohorts of young people working with partners was mixed. However, where data was available, all of the young people working with Power2 and XLP (for those in school) were eligible for FSM and In2scienceUK and Making the Leap were working with proportions of young people eligible for FSM of 44% and 34% respectively.
- 55% of the young people working with Envision were eligible for the 16-19 Bursary, or Ever6 Free School Meals. And 92% of the young people they worked with were from their target cohort (16-19 Bursary or Ever6 FSM eligible, SEND, EAL and/or with low confidence/low-self-esteem)
- All the young people on Power2 programme were care-experienced.

---

[2] See footnote 3 above

5   Overall satisfaction

Section summary: Among the organisations for which we have data, young people, schools, and employers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the partners' programmes. Across all stakeholders and programmes, satisfaction rates were above 80%.

The table below sets out which organisations provided satisfaction data from different stakeholders on each of their programmes.

Table 3: Number of programmes providing satisfaction data

Organisation name	Number of each partners' programmes that submitted satisfaction data from the following stakeholders:		
	Young people	Schools	Employers
Blueprint for All	Proxy measure[3]	1/1	1/1
Envision	Proxy measure	Proxy measure	Proxy measure
In2scienceUK[4]	1/1	0/1	0/1
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1	0/1
Power2	Due to high dropout rates data from Power2 has not been included in this section of the report		
Street League	0/1	1/1	0/1
XLP	3/3	1/3	3/3

Young people's satisfaction with the programmes

Where data has been provided, partners reported very high levels of satisfaction amongst young people taking part in their programmes.

Figure 2: Young people's satisfaction with the programmes.
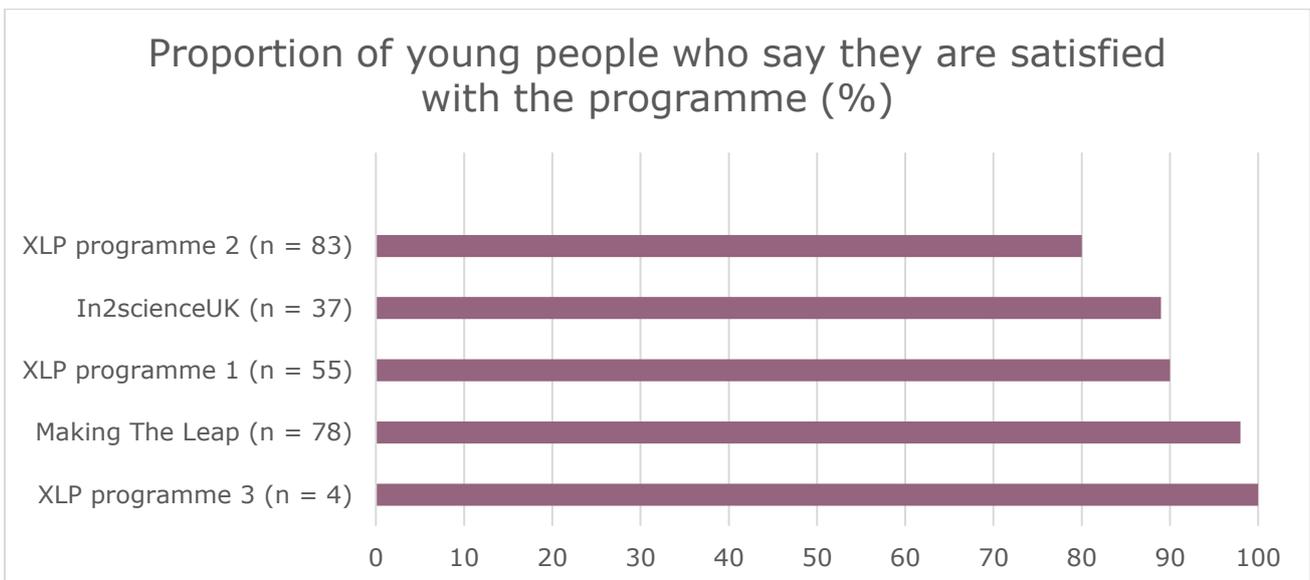
Blueprint for All and Envision reported positively on measures associated with satisfaction. For example, Blueprint for All reported that 89% of young people said they

---

[3] All proxy measures provided have been discussed and referenced in the written analysis as appropriate

[4] In2scienceUK runs a peer-to-peer programme for first year university students, which naturally does not involve schools or employers.

enjoyed the sessions and workshops. For Envision, 97% of young people said that they would recommend the programme to a friend or peer.

Schools, virtual schools, and colleges' satisfaction with the programmes

- Schools, virtual schools and colleges reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with all programmes provided by partners.
- For partners where data is available (Blueprint for All, Making the Leap, Street League and 1 of the 3 XLP programmes) 100% of schools reported satisfaction with the programmes provided by partners and 100% of schools reported that they would support the programme again in the future
- For Envision, 100% of teachers surveyed said that they would recommend the Envision programme to other schools or colleges and 100% reported that the Envision programme supported their pupils in developing their essential skills, confidence, and active citizenship

Employer or wider stakeholders' satisfaction with the programmes

- Blueprint for All, reported 100% satisfaction rates from employers.
- Similarly, XLP reported a 97% satisfaction rate across three programmes.
- Envision reported measures associated with high levels of employer satisfaction.
    - o 98% of Envision mentors felt they had made a positive difference through mentoring.
    - o 100% of Envision mentors feel proud that their employer partners with Envision; and,
    - o 100% of Envision mentors would recommend Envision to a colleague.

6   Self - and organisational - efficacy

Section summary: The Transitions Special Initiative appears to have a strong impact on participating young people's soft skills and helps them to develop new workplace skills.[5]

The table below sets out which organisations provided data on the development of soft skills and workplace skills amongst their programme participants.

Table 4: Number of programmes providing data on soft skills and workplace skills

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on young people's soft skills	Number of programmes with data on young people's workplace skills
Blueprint for All	1/1	1/1
Envision	1/1	1/1
In2scienceUK[6]	1/1	0/1
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1
Power2	Due to high dropout rates data from Power2 has not been included in this section of the report	
Street League	0/1	1/1
XLP	3/3	3/3

Across all funded programmes the majority of young people from whom we have data reported new or improved soft skills as a result of their participation.

Almost all the young people surveyed by Envision, In2scienceUK, Making the Leap and XLP on their programmes reported improved soft skills, suggesting that these programmes had a particularly strong positive impact. Although figures were slightly lower for Blueprint for All, a majority of survey respondents (59%) also reported that participating in their programme had resulted in them acquiring new soft skills. Envision specifically reported high levels of communication confidence amongst participants, with 83% of young people reporting that they mostly or always speak clearly to people or small groups that they do not know. With similarly positive results, XLP reported that 75% of their participants have improved in terms of wellbeing, resilience, relationships, self-confidence and self-control. Furthermore, XLP are considering shifting towards an evaluation framework that is entirely soft skills-based to better capture the impact of their work on the soft-skills of the young people they engage with.
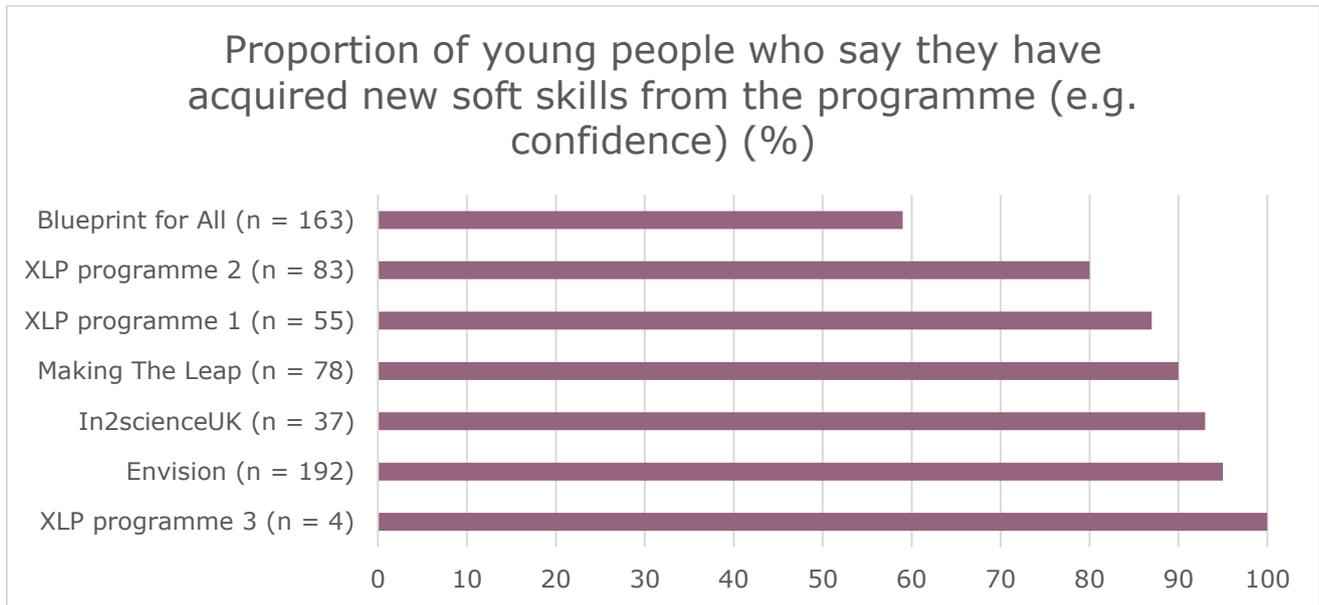
Although Street League don't collect specific data on soft skills development, they do offer the opportunity for participants to achieve a Level 1 award in Developing Personal Confidence and Awareness. This year over 2/3 of the young people on the programme achieved this (54/76), almost doubling the target Street League had set.

---

[5] Some of the partners do not collect data on soft skills or workplace skill development. CfEY has reported on the data that was made available.
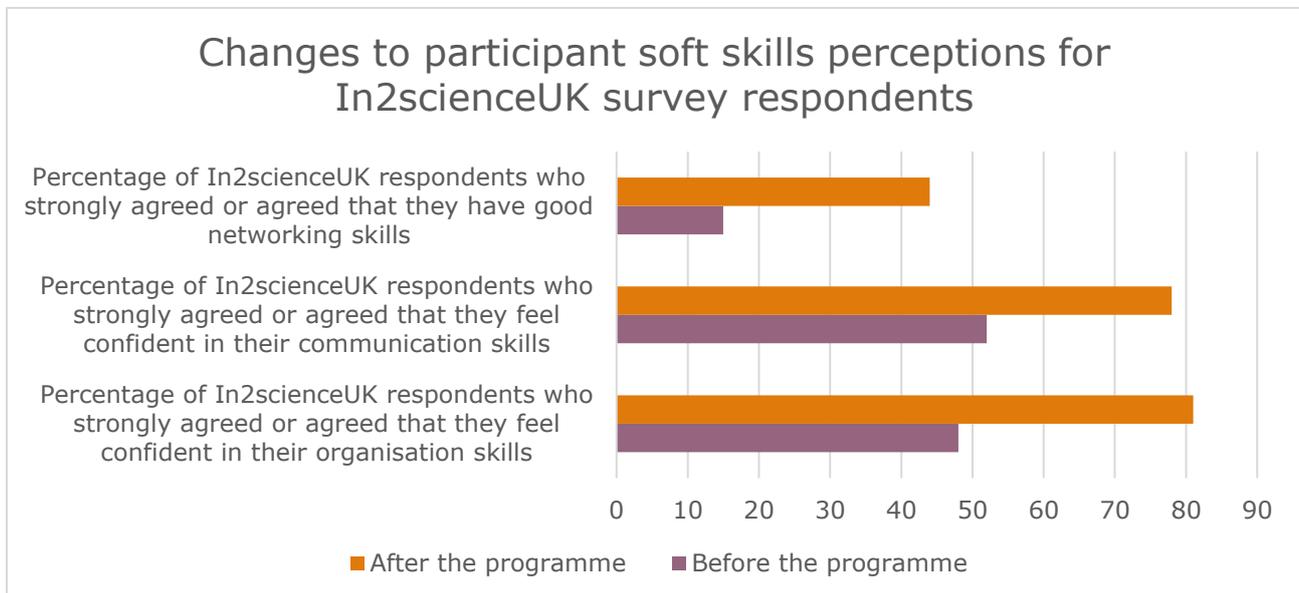[6] In2scienceUK runs a programme that is not specifically aimed at developing workplace skills, but offers support for transitions from college into university.

Figure 3: Improvements in young people's soft skills

T

Proportion of young people who say they have acquired new soft skills from the programme (e.g. confidence) (%)

Blueprint for All (n = 163)
XLP programme 2 (n = 83)
XLP programme 1 (n = 55)
Making The Leap (n = 78)
In2scienceUK (n = 37)
Envision (n = 192)
XLP programme 3 (n = 4)

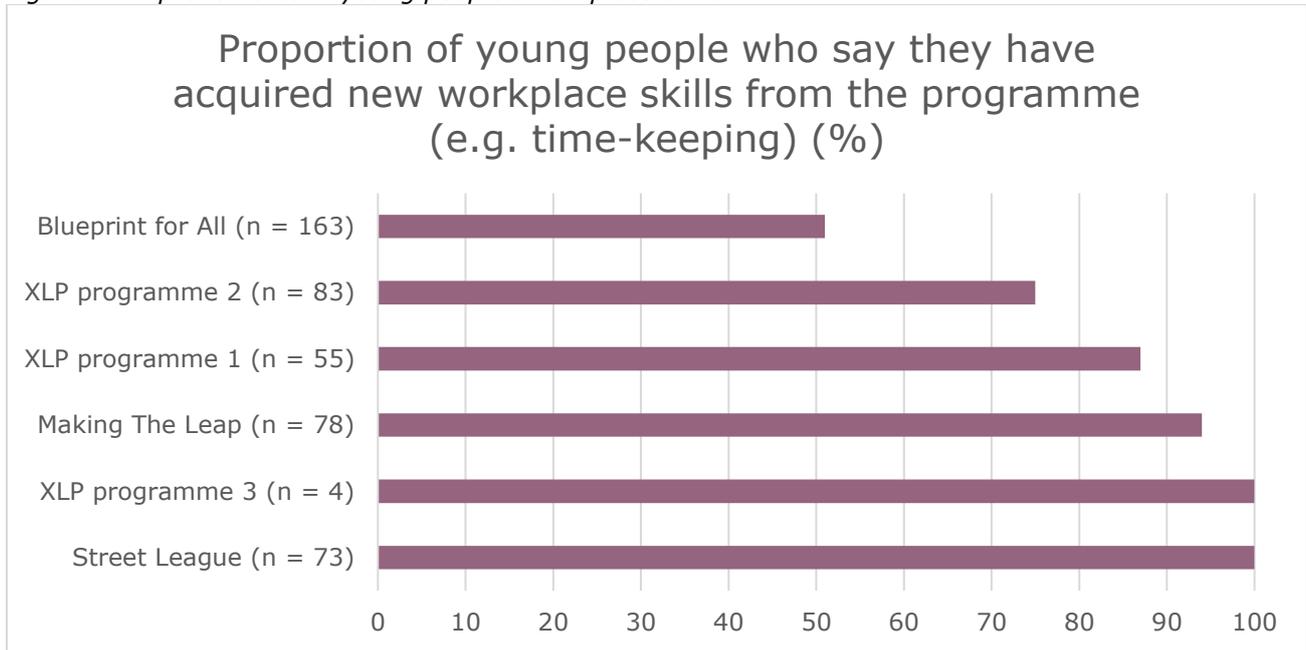0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

In2scienceUK also provided additional soft skills data demonstrating specific progress in the organisational, communication and networking skills of respondents after taking part in their programme.

Changes to participant soft skills perceptions for In2scienceUK survey respondents

Percentage of In2scienceUK respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that they have good networking skills

Percentage of In2scienceUK respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that they feel confident in their communication skills

Percentage of In2scienceUK respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that they feel confident in their organisation skills

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

■ After the programme   ■ Before the programme

On Street League's programme and one of the three XLP programmes, 100% of young people said that they had acquired new workplace skills from taking part in the programme. Making the Leap also reported a high level of young people acquiring new workplace skills (94%). Although figures were lower for Blueprint for All, over half of their respondents also reported acquiring new workplace skills as a result of taking part in the programme. Envision reported on a proxy measure for workplace skills, reporting that 97% of young people had demonstrated improvement in the essential skills of communication, creativity, determination and teamwork.

Figure 4: Improvements in young people's workplace skills

Proportion of young people who say they have
acquired new workplace skills from the programme
(e.g. time-keeping) (%)

- Blueprint for All (n = 163)
- XLP programme 2 (n = 83)
- XLP programme 1 (n = 55)
- Making The Leap (n = 78)
- XLP programme 3 (n = 4)
- Street League (n = 73)

While this is a partial sample of partners, programmes and participants, the available data suggests that partners' programmes generally have a strong positive impact on soft skills and workplace skills for most young people involved.

7   Aspirations

Section summary: Available data from partners suggests that their programmes are positively influencing the aspirations of many of their young people, by making them feel more positive about their future. However, the proportion of young people who report feeling more positive about their future varies across programmes.

In exploring young people's 'aspirations', we refer to their aims for the future and the confidence they have in pursuing these goals.

The table below sets out which organisations provided data about whether young people felt more positive about their future after taking part in their programmes.

Table 5: Number of programmes providing data on young people who felt more positive about their futures

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who felt more positive about their future following their involvement in the programme
Blueprint for All	1/1
Envision	0/1
In2scienceUK	1/1
Making the Leap	1/1
Power2	Due to high dropout rates data from Power2 has not been included in this section of the report
Street League	0/1
XLP	3/3

Young people's reported positivity about their future varied across the partners who provided data with proportions of respondents reporting feeling more positive about the future ranging from between 52-100%. However, across all partners, more than half of young people reported feeling more positive about the future after taking part in the partners' programmes.

Figure 5: Proportion of young people who feel more positive about their future

Proportion of young people who say they feel more positive about the future after taking part in the programme (%)
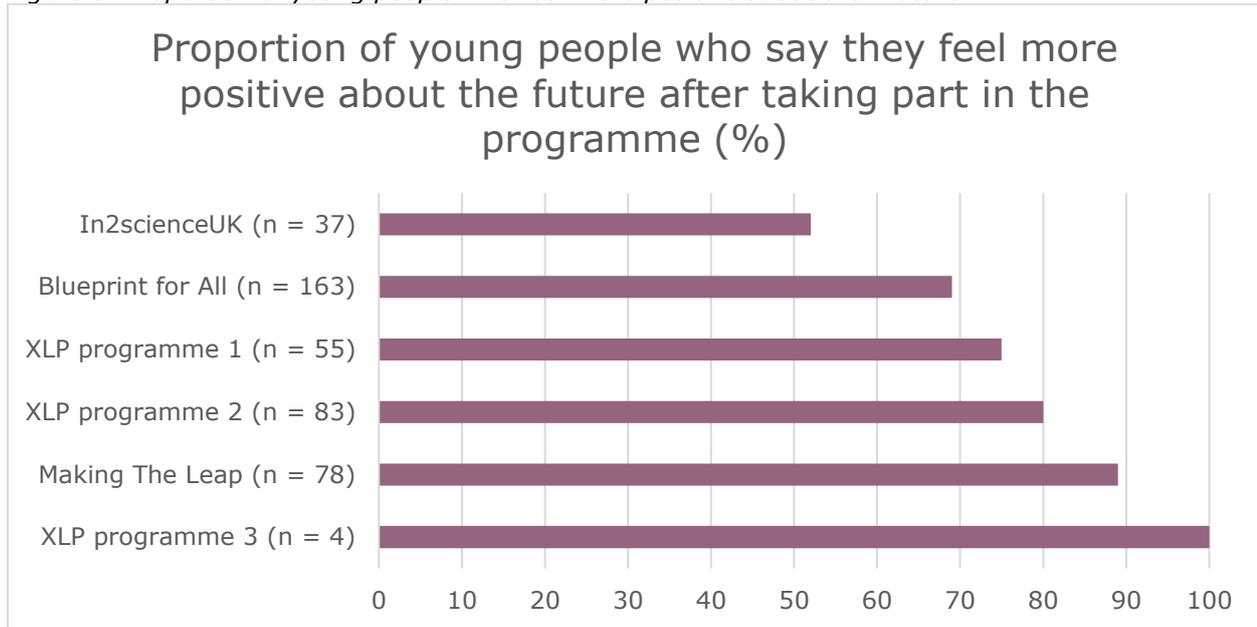
8   Pathway awareness

> **Section summary:** Partners' data provides strong evidence that programmes positively influence young people's awareness of different pathways into further education, training, or work, to varying degrees. Available partner data also suggests that the programmes positively influence young people's professional networks.

'Pathway awareness' refers to young people's knowledge and understanding of different academic and vocational pathways into further education, training, or work. The table below sets out which organisations provided data for each of their programmes.
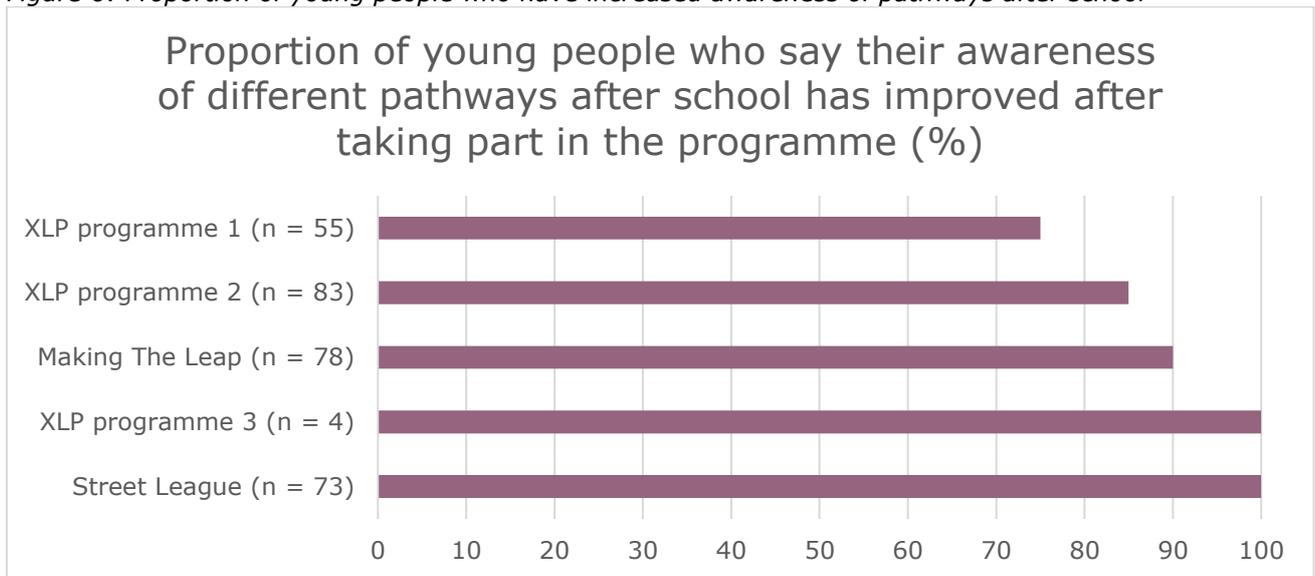
Table 6: Number of programmes providing data on young people's pathway awareness

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who have a greater understanding of pathways after school	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people who have grown their network
Blueprint for All	Proxy measure	Proxy measure
Envision	Proxy measure	0/1
In2scienceUK[7]	0/1	1/1
Making the Leap	1/1	1/1
Power2	Due to high dropout rates data from Power2 has not been included in this section of the report	
Street League	1/1	0/1
XLP	3/3	3/3

Data from partners evidencing young people's pathway awareness was strong with proportions of young people reporting a greater understanding of pathways ranging from 75-100% amongst reported data sets. Blueprint for All reported that 65% of their respondents had a better awareness of a wide range of programmes as a result of taking part in the programme. Envision provided data from teachers, 100% of teachers surveyed by Envision reported that the programme had supported their pupils to gain meaningful experiences of the workplace and engage with employers and employees.
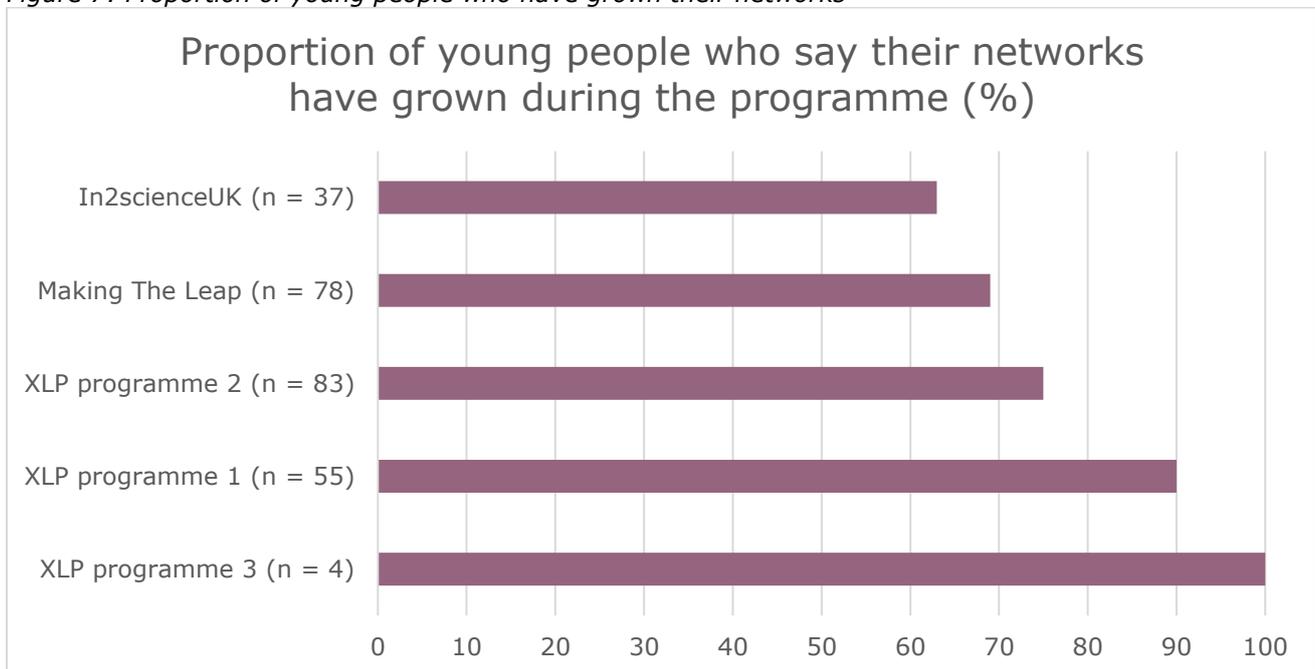
---

[7] In2scienceUK's programme is a peer-to-peer mentoring programme for those transitioning from college to university, hence they do not focus specifically on "pathways after school"

Figure 6: Proportion of young people who have increased awareness of pathways after school

Proportion of young people who say their awareness of different pathways after school has improved after taking part in the programme (%)

Programme	Value
XLP programme 1 (n = 55)	~75
XLP programme 2 (n = 83)	~85
Making The Leap (n = 78)	~90
XLP programme 3 (n = 4)	100
Street League (n = 73)	100

In addition, data showed that the majority of young people across the cohort felt that they had grown their professional networks given their involvement in their programme. Additionally Blueprint for All reported that 59% of their young people surveyed felt better connected to the career(s) that they wanted to pursue.

Figure 7: Proportion of young people who have grown their networks

Proportion of young people who say their networks have grown during the programme (%)

Programme	Value
In2scienceUK (n = 37)	~63
Making The Leap (n = 78)	~69
XLP programme 2 (n = 83)	~75
XLP programme 1 (n = 55)	~90
XLP programme 3 (n = 4)	100

9   Destinations

> **Section summary:** Data collected by the partners on young people's destinations following their involvement in the programmes suggest that following participation in the funded programmes, many participants go on, or intend to go on, to further education, training, or employment.
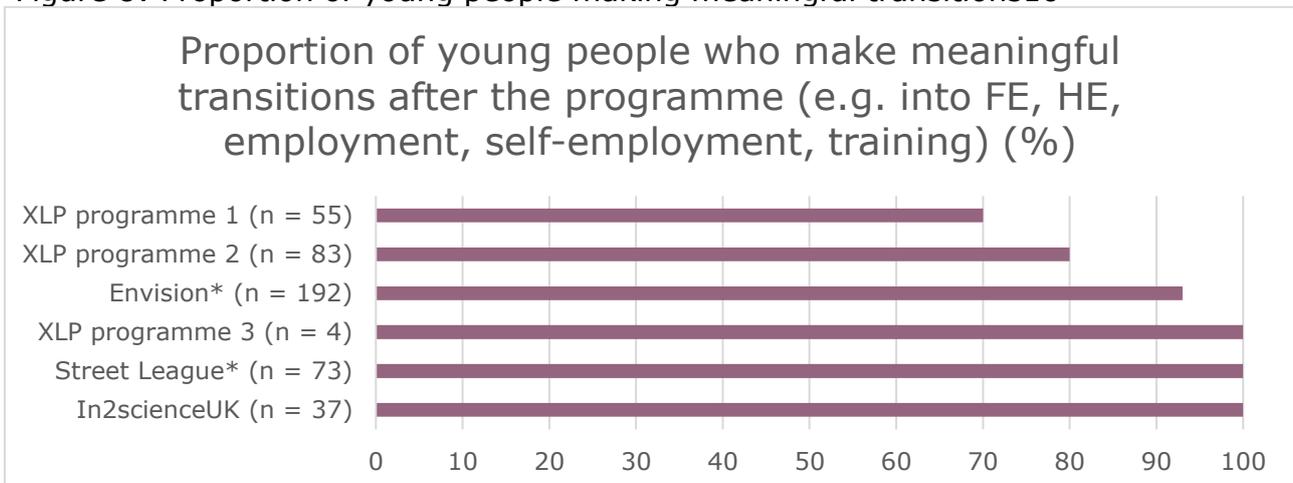
'Destinations' refers to young people's subsequent trajectories in education or work. Partners' approaches to collecting this sort of data vary. Some projects intend to collect this data in the coming months beyond the immediate data collection period for this evaluation. The table below sets out which organisations provided data from each of their programmes at the point of data collection with CfEY.

Table 7: Number of programmes with data on the percentage of people making meaningful transitions after the programme

Organisation name	Number of programmes with data on the percentage of young people making meaningful transitions after the programme (e.g. into FE, HE, employment, self-employment, training)
Blueprint for All	0/1
Envision	1/1
In2scienceUK[8]	1/1
Making the Leap	0/1
Power2	Due to high dropout rates data from Power2 has not been included in this section of the report
Street League[9]	1/1
XLP	3/3

Data on young people's destinations following their involvement in the programmes was strong. The proportion of young people who made successful transitions following their involvement in the programmes ranged from (70% to 100%) with three partners: In2scienceUK, Street League and XLP (programme 3) reporting that 100% of their respondents made meaningful transitions after taking part in their programme.

Figure 8: Proportion of young people making meaningful transitions10

Proportion of young people who make meaningful transitions after the programme (e.g. into FE, HE, employment, self-employment, training) (%)

---

10   Programme data: conclusion

In line with last year's findings, available data for 2023-2024 suggests that the Cohort 3 partners achieved high levels of satisfaction across their programmes and had a positive impact on young people's soft skills, workplace skills, aspirations, and pathway awareness.

For the 2023-24 cycle, partners were able to share additional data with the evaluation team that didn't fall into the specific shared categories. This additional data has supplemented the quantitative findings in each of the above sections. The extended timeline for data submission has been continued during this year of the cycle which has allowed partners to finish the full academic year of delivery before collating and sharing data with the evaluation team.

CfEY will review the results of these changes with The Mercers' Company at the start of the 2024-25 evaluation cycle and remains open to further adjustments where necessary and beneficial.

11 Theory of Action

In this section, CfEY explores themes from the online questionnaires with programme staff, young people, and wider stakeholders, and the subsequent feedback workshops with the partner organisations. This section sets out findings in the following areas:
- Successes
- Challenges
- Reflections on progress since 2022-23
- Areas for Improvement (individual and cohort level)

Theory of Action reflections have been identified and categorised into the six categories that the Cohort 3 partners identified last year as key areas for refinement in the 2023-24 delivery year. These areas are; planning and timelines, session structure and delivery, programme content, programme resources, pastoral support and evaluation.

12 Successes

> **Section summary:** This section summarises positive themes from the questionnaires and feedback workshops and some individual examples of the partners' successes. The Theory of Action process highlighted the following successes this year:
> 1. Engagement and recruitment (with young people, schools and employers)
> 2. The provision of positive employability experiences
> 3. The practical support and advice provided by mentors
> 4. The improvement of soft skills among young people
> 5. Improved resources
> 6. The development and influence of effective and positive relationships
> 7. The improvement of data collection and communication of impact

12.1 Planning and timelines

12.1.1 Recruiting and engaging young people has improved

For some of the Cohort 3 partners, engagement with young people has improved this year. This has been demonstrated through both recruitment processes, as well as participation in and feedback about the activities they have delivered.

The partners have taken new approaches to recruitment to improve their success, including:

- lowering the target age range to include young people aged 15 who are still in school and receiving more support from teaching staff (Power2)
- making contact with young people through a trusted adult who they already work with, such as a teacher, pastoral lead, or member of the local authority (Power2)
- using technology, such as a QR code shown in an initial, promotional assembly, as a way to sign up to parts of the programme (Blueprint for All, who secured 200 expressions of interest for 30 places)
- pushing back the start of the programme by a month, to allow young people to join and prepare for the experience during their 'settling in' time at university (In2scienceUK)
- Running trial sessions in schools ahead of a September start (XLP - Young leaders programme)

Envision reported that in only the second year of offering post-16 work experience placements, they were oversubscribed and looking at ways to expand going forward.

"We know our young people … we work really hard to make sure that we know [the work experience placements] would be accessible for our graduates … it's quite bespoke." Envision - Programme staff

Once on the programmes, young people have generally engaged well. Blueprint for All programme staff reported that interactions with students had felt "very consistent" throughout their delivery. This was supported by feedback from their stakeholders, with teachers and employers noting the inclusive approach of programme facilitators

and highlighting that typically 'harder to reach' students were engaging well in sessions and feeling heard.

"Students feel affirmed, heard, inspired and motivated. Teachers will regularly say that students who normally do not participate or speak up have felt confident to express their voice, get involved and share their great ideas." Blueprint for All - Employer

Staff at Street League had had similar success, with positive feedback from young people who were finding school difficult or had previously been reluctant to commit to extracurricular activities.

"School isn't for everyone … some young people don't engage in the school system. So they love when organisations like us come in and offer them something a little bit different, but still giving them the opportunity to get a qualification and achieve something at the end of that. I think it's fantastic." Street League - Programme staff

Young people's questionnaire responses showed they were enjoying taking part in sport, wanted more frequent and longer sessions, and enjoyed working with the programme staff. Programme staff noted this was a change from last year, when some were finding it hard to balance taking part in sport with their qualifications.

"I think that this intervention has had a really good impact on me as I have made good relationships with [programme staff]. I look forward to seeing them and playing sports because it is really fun and relaxed. It is also good that I can get a qualification as well." – Street League - Young person

"Students attend sessions weekly and enjoy them - students have fed back they like the sessions and ask when they are happening again." – Street League - School staff

Alongside this positive feedback, Street League have seen a good conversion rate in the number of students completing the programme, with only four not doing so due to changing schools or being withdrawn from the programme by school staff. There was some evidence that schools were using participation in the Street League programme as a behaviour management tool or incentive.

""I am more focused in class and less disruptive. I have not been in internal exclusion for the past two terms as I wanted to make sure I could attend Street League." Street League – Young person

On XLP's literacy and numeracy programme, it was notable that young people with dyslexia gave positive feedback about how the intervention had supported their learning.

"[The programme's impact has been] positive. The dyslexia is still a struggle, but there has been some improvement in reading." XLP - Young person

"I've gotten better at spelling and reading." XLP - Young person

12.1.2   Engagement of schools and employers has improved

Making the Leap, Power2, Street League and XLP reported improved engagement from school staff.

Power2 said the majority of virtual schools they had worked with were taking part in monthly meetings.

Making the Leap has had particular success by placing youth career leads in each of the partner schools they work with, to help bridge gaps in communication. Programme staff reported that this has really helped to build rapport and consistency for the students. This was reflected in the number of questionnaire responses gathered by Making the Leap during the Theory of Action process this year – they individually collected feedback from 24 young people, while the other six organisations collected feedback from 30 young people in total.

Street League programme staff felt that this year school staff have a better understanding of their work and valued it more highly. At one school in particular teachers had been highly supportive of the programme, choosing students carefully and helping to ensure they completed work. School staff in turn reported that sessions were more organised, better sequenced, and well-adapted to suit the specific needs of the group of students taking part.

"[There has been a] huge change this academic year compared to last. Sessions are a lot more structured with PowerPoints, reflective activities, group work and reward trips." Street League – School staff

At XLP, schools showed their enthusiasm for the work by referring new cohorts of young people, for example encouraging older students with weaker English skills to also join the literacy and numeracy programme that normally targets years 7 to 9, with the aim of helping them as they go through their GCSEs.

"Students who are regular attendees have made progress - judging by their assessments, they have developed confidence as independent learners in class." XLP - School staff

Alongside this, one of XLP's partner schools, which is extending the school day to finish at 4pm next year, has invited the organization to become a regular fixture in their curriculum delivery - inviting staff to work with young people every day. While XLP don't currently have the resources to fully take up this exciting opportunity, they are exploring potential compromises in the next academic year.

Both Envision and XLP also shared positive examples of new employer partnerships. Envision staff reported significantly increased interest from corporate partners for their work experience offer. This has helped to expand their networks and continue to grow the programme. XLP have embarked on new partnerships, for example in their work with catering company Fooditude and Appleby Blue Almshouse Community Kitchen in Southwark, which uses leftover food from restaurants to run cooking workshops. XLP young people have been able to benefit from using the resources, and also working with others from different generations, as Appleby generally support elderly people.

12.2 Session structure and delivery

12.2.1 Positive employability experiences

The partners have provided young people with a range of positive, meaningful encounters with industry experts this year.

Blueprint for All shared their work with Octopus Energy, which had enabled young people to speak in person with representatives who had taken different routes into their careers, highlighting alternatives to degree courses at university. Programme staff felt confident that the guidance shared by session facilitators was useful and well-tailored to the young people taking part, offering insights, opportunities and connections they would not be exposed to otherwise.

In2scienceUK programme staff similarly felt that mentoring and workshops available to their young people helped to challenge preconceptions about jobs and encourage them to explore wider options.

"Networking events and opportunities to meet STEM industry professionals in a supportive environment lead to sharing knowledge of individual STEM career pathways and open up a breadth of STEM careers available." In2scienceUK – Programme staff

Young people's feedback reflected the range of opportunities available to them.

"Me and my mentor had discussions about different career options that I could access with my degree. My mentor is doing a similar subject at LSE, so I found it helpful hearing his advice." In2scienceUK - Young person

"I think the programme has been great for me. There are always workshops happening that are also sent out for students to take part in which are really helpful. You can log into the site and see internship opportunities all the time. I recently applied to one and even got a reply back from the company … more opportunities are always appreciated." In2scienceUK - Young person

Young people on Making the Leap's programme also felt the experience had broadened their horizons.

"I joined the program in year 12 (October 2022) and have had amazing experiences that I never thought I would have. The program provided me different sessions that allowed me to develop the skills I lacked throughout secondary school, which improved my chances of gaining work experience and even a job. Through the program I took part in a Barclays Insight Workshop which allowed me to understand the different options that are available beyond just university." Making the Leap - Young person

XLP programme staff highlighted their new partnership with the construction firm Overbury, which is currently refurbishing US bank Citi's Canary Wharf headquarters. XLP young people were able to visit the construction site and meet the designers, learning about their plans and workflow and gaining insights into different roles within the construction industry.

"I think it gave young people opportunity to kind of see that perspective of the industry, as well as the fact that within construction you don't necessarily have to do the manual side of things, there's also the production side of things and management as well … it sort of debunks a lot of the myths surrounding the different industries." XLP - Programme staff

XLP programme staff said they had focused on making the most of opportunities offered by their partner organisations, enabling them to provide a wider variety of trips for young people. These had also included a visit to Silverstone racing circuit to visit a

racing team, which they planned to follow up with another trip to allow young people to see where the team's cars were built.

XLP have also been able to offer their apprentices secondary work placements, some of which have been directly connected to future jobs. For example, one young person who particularly enjoyed being outdoors completed a placement at a Scout Camp and has subsequently been offered a permanent role there.

12.2.2 Mentors have helped with practical tasks that boost employability

Alongside positive employability experiences, In2scienceUK feedback also highlighted that the programme's mentors had made significant contributions in supporting young people with practical employability skills. These included helping them to make relevant connections in STEM that many did not have amongst their families and friends, as well as passing on practical tips from their own learning including how to navigate aspects of university life such as joining relevant societies, how to communicate with tutors, subject-specific skills such as coding and solving maths problems, where look for jobs, and how to dress for interviews.

Young people shared a variety of examples in their feedback.

"My mentor gave me real work skills that I can continue to use in my career. The mentoring really added structure to my scheduling and organisation." In2scienceUK - Young person

"When I started, I didn't even feel comfortable talking to professors, but my mentor reassured me and reminded me that I can do that." In2scienceUK - Young person

"I've learnt from my mentor how he organises his study and makes the most of his time. He tells me his revision schedule and how he uses free time. I've been able to better manage my own time with his tips. He's also taught me new things about coding and maths problems that I wouldn't have learnt otherwise. He also showed me which hardware to buy for uni and how to get the best deals on uni days. This is all information I wouldn't have had without a mentor." In2scienceUK - Young person

12.2.3   Positive impact on soft skills

The partners' programme content continues to have a significant positive impact on young people's soft skills, which is essential for successful transition, as it has done in previous years. Young people have self-reported and have also been observed becoming more confident, which has allowed them to express themselves better. This is particularly evident through observations and reports of improved communication skills.

"Students feel affirmed, heard, inspired and motivated. teachers will regularly say that students who normally do not participate or speak up have felt confident to express their voice, get involved and share their great ideas" Blueprint for All - Business Owner

"The impacts have been all positive. I have been more confident, I am now able to have a firm handshake, make eye contact with people that I am talking to which I couldn't do in the past. Furthermore, my communication skills have been improved significantly which I am extremely grateful about. Other skills that I've gained are

teamwork and leadership which I believe is beneficial in the future when I start working and also at university." In2scienceUK - Young person.

"The activities had a great impact on the participants' essential skills, especially their confidence and teamwork. I used to visit the sessions weekly and communicate with students regularly and I witnessed how much they've grown by the end of the programme and how some of them came out of their shells." Envision - School staff.

Young people working with Making the Leap also reported improvements to their ability to self-regulate and understand their emotions. Young people recognised that the development of these skills is essential for their futures in education and beyond and they were already able to articulate how developing the skills was helping them to achieve and succeed.

"This experience has had a very positive impact on myself as it helped me open up with my emotions, increase my self-esteem and help me continue my goals which I thought were impossible to be reached." Making the Leap - Young person

"These activities have allowed me to develop skills such as leadership, public speaking, and even just to express my emotions when things aren't going great. It has been extremely positive within my life not only through helping me to apply to a job and be able to exceed in that sector of employment, but also overcoming different struggles within my life while providing a comforting atmosphere. This allowed me to move away from the stressful moments within my life, where [name] was a great mentor (beyond great) but just her being there for all our mentoring sessions allowed me to have someone to talk to when things got hard." Making the Leap - Young person

Finally, teachers and young people working with Street League explicitly noticed how the programme has been able to support young people to reflect on and adapt their behaviour, with positive results.

"Pupils are reflective of their actions and can see where self-improvement is needed." Street League - School staff

"Positive impact because I have changed my behaviour and got into less trouble at school." Street League - Young person

12.3 Programme resources

Partners that provide resources reported a particular focus on improving and expanding the resources that they offer.

In2scienceUK offers an online platform for participating young people and alumni where they are able to access workshop or mentorship opportunities and relevant knowledge to expand their knowledge of STEM sectors. The In2scienceUK team have been updating it regularly with new content as well as considering the structure behind it to ensure its use and longevity. This has been well received by young people, evidenced by the fact the platform has just over 2000 users.

"The In2careers online platform is a hub with over 2000 young people exploring STEM education and careers, transitioning through stages of education from sixth form to undergraduate to postgraduate to employment. The platform continues to be developed, delivering information about STEM employability skills and opportunities.

The In2careers platform is used to support the mentorship scheme." In2scienceUK - Programme staff

Outside of my mentoring sessions, I have loved attending all of the workshops on things like interview skills and applying to jobs, it has all been so helpful." In2scienceUK - Young person

Making the Leap have also focused on the resources they provide this year, producing interview guides and templates for mentors to share and ensuring all students they work with have relevant information sheets.

12.4 Pastoral support

12.4.1 Effective and positive relationships

Several partners discussed the importance and impact of the relationships that are developed and enabled through participating in their programmes.

Feedback from In2scienceUK highlighted that both mentors and mentees benefitted from sharing information and experiences through their programme. Mentors on the programmes are from the same backgrounds as the mentees and act as role models. Both mentors and mentees felt less alone through taking part in the process, appreciating the opportunity to understand that there were others who had had similar experiences to them. There is a clear sense of community between mentors and mentees and many plan to keep in touch after the programme or remain a part of In2careers. Additionally, many mentees become mentors in subsequent years because they see the value of the process.

"In2careers is focussed on building a sustainable STEM community where participants can meet and interact and support one another, sharing their individual STEM pathways and ideas." In2scienceUK - Programme staff

Making the Leap and Street League both noted strong relationships as a core area of success noting that strong relationships have been built over time meaning that the teams are able to work flexibly to understand those they are working with and meet the needs of schools, employers and young people in ways other organisations or people in their lives might not.

Additionally Making the Leap noted that the peer-to-peer relationships have been another particularly successful aspect of their programme. Programme alumni are invited to speak to young people who are currently involved in the programme. They support delivering sessions and are invited to share their career journeys. The young people they work with appreciate having someone they can relate to as a role model and their evaluation work shows a high percentage of young people respond well to "seeing someone who could be me".

Finally, Power2 noted that the consistency of support that they are able to provide through the mentoring relationships has been a real success. The ability to develop a meaningful relationship between the mentor and mentee over time has led to the young people they work with engaging more positively with other adults in their lives. This is often despite previous negative experiences that the team at Power2 have to work to overcome. The mentoring relationships have resulted in significant progress for the young people Power2 work with, particularly in terms of wellbeing.

"For some of our young people, having the Power2 mentors is helping them build up other positive relationships with people around them in their lives. Some of them are becoming a bit more engaged with other services - the young person I mentor is just about to start therapy, which a year ago she was completely resistant to." Power2 - Programme staff

12.5 Evaluation

12.5.1 Improved impact measurement and communication

Understanding and communicating impact has been a particular focus for some partners over the past year. The funding from The Mercers' Company has funded new external affairs and communications/marketing support at Envision.

This new communications capacity has improved how Envision communicate their impact externally. The organisation has improved their external messaging to reflect the work they do, reach new target audiences and strengthen their partnership working. Envision are now also able to collect and analyse data that they didn't have access to before which is supporting them to demonstrate impact in the areas that they want to focus on.

"If we go back a couple of years, honestly if you kind of found us online it was a bit vague maybe and we were kind of in a transition between mission and drive and structure and programmes, and we're quite tight on that now, that's been a huge piece of work." Envision - Programme staff

This capacity has also supported internal alignment within Envision. Clearer messaging means that staff are now using more consistent language to describe the work they do with young people and how it has the impact they intend.

"The work that Mercers' has funded around our external communications has also really bolstered our internal communications … we're all kind of behind the same mission … I think the programme objectives that we set internally seem to really be coming through." Envision - Programme staff

XLP have moved to a new CRM system which they now use to record much more data following sessions with young people than they did previously. This additional data has meant it is easier for the XLP team to identify trends and demonstrate progress. Additionally, the data has helped to differentiate the support that students need and has allowed the XLP team to tailor their work and meet students where they are. XLP are also now awarding certificates. A small change but one that has motivated students and raised the profile of the work XLP is doing in the schools they work in.

"We've tracked the young people's scores and improvements a lot better this year, which I think was one of our goals coming from last year, and I think that was more seen at the start as a helpful thing for the youth workers … but actually that is not just more helpful information for us, it also helps the young people recognize and kind of reflect on progress". XLP - Programme staff

Finally, Making the Leap have been using an interactive approach to evaluation and development of their programme which has resulted in positive feedback. The Making the Leap team respond quickly to student feedback through weekly meetings where

possible to shape and make adaptations to their programme. This has been well received by students. Additionally, the annual curriculum review process that the team undertakes each summer has resulted in developments that have helped the young people they work with to become more aware of the journey they have gone on over the course of the programme.

13 Challenges

Section summary: Feedback highlighted the following challenges with programme delivery:
- Recruitment and retention challenges (schools, young people, volunteers)
- Poor communication between stakeholders
- Impractical requests beyond the scope of the programme
- Scheduling challenges beyond partners' control
- Conflicting preferences around delivery
- Wider social issues
- Data collection struggles

These issues were discussed with programme staff in the feedback workshops. This section summarises themes arising from these discussions.

13.1 Planning and timelines

13.1.1. Recruitment and retention

Some partners faced recruitment and retention challenges this year. These challenges were seen across multiple stakeholder groups: schools, young people and volunteers.

Some schools working with Blueprint for All in 2022-23 did not continue on their programme for a second year and the Blueprint for All team struggled to recruit more schools to replace them. The team reflected on recruitment timelines as an area they could improve upon going forward.

"We assumed that the same school would carry on, obviously that didn't happen, so that makes recruitment a bit difficult … maybe if we started looking at recruitment earlier … maybe it's about securing them this side of summer instead of in September, so it's already in a calendar event for the next academic year." Blueprint for All - Programme staff.

Power2 faced similar recruitment challenges in 2023-24 as they did in 2022-23. Their recruitment numbers were significantly lower than they wanted. Despite incredible amounts of time and effort spent on recruitment, the Power2 team reflected that the students they are aiming to engage with their programme are typically students that are not engaging with other services in the first place. They are therefore not confident about communicating, may have poor organisational skills or may have previous negative experiences with services that means their level of trust is low.

"What drove that new plan was obviously all the learnings and challenges experienced with this delivery over the last year and the previous year, we'd made quite a lot of changes in terms of how we worked with young people… but we were still experiencing a lot of challenges in reaching the numbers …. There was so much time being spent on missed meetings or calls, that's not an effective use of time. And we felt we could use the time better pivoting to another programme." Power2 - Programme staff

XLP struggled this year with the recruitment of young people in some areas (particularly tutoring) however they also struggled generally with recruiting volunteers and ensuring commitment from the volunteers that they did recruit. This can be

particularly difficult for a young person who has built up a relationship with a volunteer before they drop out.

"They could email and say 'sorry, I'm moving to another country' or 'sorry I can't do this anymore' …. How do you expect me to explain that to the young person? … It can be quite heartbreaking for some of them, but also vice versa could happen with a young person as well. They could be doing sessions then turn around and say they don't want to anymore and it could be a real discouragement to actual tutors, so it kind of goes both ways." XLP – Programme Staff

In response to these challenges, XLP has employed a dedicated Volunteer Manager to improve engagement and retention, and shifted some tutoring responsibilities to youth workers so tutoring is no longer entirely volunteer-delivered.

13.1.2 Poor communication

Communication challenges were a common theme discussed with partners this year.

Blueprint for All, Street League and XLP noted that communicating with schools can be challenging. Blueprint for All and XLP reflected that often initial communication is good but can then decline once specific details need to be discussed. Declining communication was an area that partners discussed as making delivery much more difficult.

"I think a lot of the time, once they've kind of said yes to the programme and then we've got all the dates and we've arranged things, I think after a while the engagement, all the communication tends to decline and it's quite hard to kind of get their attention - say if maybe we need to rearrange a day or when it comes to those workplace visits and making sure we have all of the information required so we can actually share that with the organisation [hosting the visit]." Blueprint for All - Programme staff

Power2 faced challenges due to a lack of joined up working amongst the adults that support the young people they work with. This was considered to be a contributory factor to the previous recruitment challenges discussed. Conversations needed to happen with multiple professionals in order to engage with a young person and it was hard for Power2 to ensure their work was seen as a priority. There often seemed to be a lack of communication between these professionals surrounding the young person that made Power2's work more challenging.

"I think that's just been a thread all the way through - trying to get everybody in the same room at the same time, it's been proven really, really difficult … people are stressed and really, really busy and have got a hundred and one things to do. So that's been the difficulty and I would say that continues to be a challenge." Power2- Programme staff.

13.1.3 Requests and feedback that are not practical or are beyond programme/partner scope

All partners faced challenges with requests or feedback that were either not practical or beyond the scope of what they were delivering. Often feedback or requests from

different stakeholders is conflicting or does not align with the partner's vision or strategy.

Blueprint for All received variable requests around changes to content or session structure that are not always achievable within the confines of the school day. In2scienceUK also received feedback and suggestions for improvements that would be hard to implement wholesale across their programme, including suggestions for group mentoring and offering more activities like work experience.

"I do think the programme has gone well for me. Maybe we could have a group chat where we can chat with other first years in my subject. Or maybe group mentoring sessions where a few mentors and mentees attend as everyone will have different insights to share." In2scienceUK - Young person

"Activities could be improved through being involved in various work experiences, programmes which will further help improve our soft and hard skills. Also, games and anything interactive is a great way of allowing more people to be engaged. I believe that this will contribute greatly in gaining confidence" In2scienceUK - Young person

Several students working with Making the Leap requested that the programme facilitate more visits or work experience opportunities outside of school. This is challenging due to the need to work within the expectations and needs of the school timetable when there are expectations and requirements for keeping young people in lessons especially during exam years.

"More insight visits would be nice to offer a range of career paths and help us develop our presenting skills even further." Making the Leap - Young person

"I think the activities could be improved by providing a wider range of work experience opportunities." Making the Leap - Young person

"I believe that it can be improved by adding more work experiences and insight days alongside with more speakers to come in and share their experiences with us." Making the Leap - Young person

"More trips outside of school to experience the work environment." Making the Leap - Young person

Finally, Street League felt there is a mismatch between what schools want for their students at any one point and what Street League's organisational strategy is going forward. Schools wanted Street League to work with younger age groups and focus on the 'here and now' in quite a short-term approach. However, Street League wants to focus more on careers and employability longer term, which is what their programme is designed to do.

"We thought we would be working with Years 10 and 11 exclusively … and then those pathways into further education, jobs etc makes perfect sense, but when the schools are asking us to work with the younger age ranges, that's where the focus has to be on the kind of here and now rather than later as a job really is two or three years away for those young people." Street League - Programme staff.

13.1.4 Timelines and scheduling

Working within external timelines and to other people's schedules also posed challenges. For In2scienceUK the short timeframe between students getting their results and starting university poses a challenge. Contact details can change, they could change their mind about which university they want to go to, or take a gap year, or end up at a university outside of In2careers' catchment area. All these factors mean it is harder to reach young people directly.

Once young people had joined the programme it was sometimes challenging to schedule meetings between mentors and mentees at particular times of year. Mentors need to provide a certain amount of flexibility to fit in with the mentees schedules and provide support when needed to avoid the mentor-mentee relationship becoming a stressful burden.

"The meetings are scheduled to happen in particular months. It was difficult sometimes to fit in a meeting when we were supposed to because we were both so busy. It would be good if the schedule could be more flexible." In2scienceUK - Young person

Making the Leap also faced challenges organising visits to employers, as teachers often wanted to attend these visits alongside Making The Leap staff for safeguarding purposes. Making The Leap have therefore had to align their availability for visits with staff availability at schools.

13.2 Session structure and delivery

13.2.1 Differing preferences on session structure and delivery

Several partners faced the challenge of dealing with requests or accommodating conflicting preferences on session structure and delivery, creating a challenge for delivery teams when considering the extent to which their programmes can be flexed. In2scienceUK received feedback from mentees who wanted different things in terms of the structure and set-up of the meetings, demonstrating the need for mentors to understand and flex to each individual mentee.

"[I would like] A list of questions to go through each meeting." In2scienceUK - Young person

"For each meeting we had been given a list of suggested topics and questions to discuss but this felt a bit restricting and sometimes limited some of the other things I wanted to speak about as I felt like we had to check off the list of things. It would be good if we could set the agenda ourselves." In2scienceUK - Young person

Street League faced challenges in adapting their delivery to the different expectations, needs and requests of individual schools. In different schools, the Street League sessions are delivered differently (at lunchtime or during an intervention slot) and many schools struggled to find appropriate time to schedule the Street League sessions due to timetabling tensions. These timetabling tensions were difficult to balance at times, leading to sessions not being as organised and structured as school staff expected. Additionally, Street League found that often schools would withdraw

students from participating in their sessions due to bad behaviour, using the session as a reward or punishment. This was particularly noticeable if the session was timetabled during an intervention slot. Programme staff reflected that this was particularly problematic, as they aim to reach the young people most in need of support.

In schools that offered the Street League sessions during lunch times, there were often other students using the sports facilities when they were needed which was disruptive to sessions and attendance was variable dependent on weather conditions. Overall young people found the lunchtime sessions less helpful. This aligned with existing perceptions from the Street League programme team.

"Maybe not have the lesson at lunchtimes so that we can do more sports games."
Street League - Young person

13.3 Pastoral support

13.3.1 Social issues

Issues outside of the control of the partners caused several challenges this year.

General issues within the education sector - reduced budgets, increased costs and poor staff retention - have meant that Envision staff have had to provide additional capacity and funding to ensure students can be taken off-site or can be provided with enrichment activities in school time.

Power2 faced challenges reflective of wider challenges within the care sector. The young people in care that they are working with are moving around a lot and their placements change at quite short notice. Working with virtual schools can also mean that young people may be part of a virtual school in one area but live in another. This creates challenges for face-to-face contact with potentially long unexpected travel times for Power2 staff.

"With the young people in care, they are also moving around quite a lot, especially these older young people where they're probably not in long-term foster placements, and they may have kind of issues or conflicts with staff or other young people or carers … we get referred young people from a virtual school in one Borough and then it turns out the young person actually lives on the other side of London." Power2 - Programme staff

Additionally, the young people that Power2 are working with often have extreme wellbeing needs that are much higher than originally anticipated. Due to wider cuts virtual schools are referring young people at crisis point to Power2. This means that Power2 staff have had to ensure they are young person-led. To enable this, Power2's mentors have all done CAMHs, MHFA or counselling training, and follow a trauma-informed approach, which allows them to meet the needs of the young people they work with. This approach has been embedded into Power2's work for a number of years.

Street League have also faced unforeseen challenges due to the cohort of students they have been working with. One school in particular had a high proportion of young people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities who had particularly low literacy levels. This made it harder for some students to understand the content of the

sessions in a group setting and programme delivery had to be extended by one month to allow for one-to-one work with these students.

More generally, Street League have noticed that the legacy of Covid has meant that students are less confident working in groups and many young people want one-to-one support. Delivering the self-awareness qualification the programme offers involving communication skills has been quite challenging. The programme team at Street League have had to adapt their approach to make it more tailored, with flexible one-to-one support and differentiated activities.

13.5 Evaluation

13.5.1 Data collection challenges

Although some partners have made huge strides in their approach to evaluation over the past year, collecting data is still an ongoing challenge for some partners who feel that the data they were collecting was limited in depth or evidence of the impact that they want to demonstrate.

XLP and Power2 reported particular data collection challenges with the young people that they engage outside of a school setting. Outside of the structured school setting collecting survey data from young people was particularly challenging for these two partners. For XLP, who are evaluating three separate programmes, much of this was attributed to difficulty of collecting and synthesising data from multiple sources. For Power2, their challenges with engagement of young people and high drop-out rates contributed to challenges collecting data from young people. It was also felt by some programme staff that turning a mentoring session with a young person into a data-collection session would endanger the rapport that had been developed (often very slowly over a long period of time) between mentor and mentee.

These are areas that the learning partner team at CfEY can provide additional support with over the coming year.

14 Cohort 3 partners' reflections on progress against 2022-23 targets

Section summary: Following last year's individual and general recommendations, Cohort 3 partners reflected on how their delivery has changed. Each partner highlighted different levels of success, which are set out by organisation in this section.

14.1 Individual programme refinements

The Cohort 3 partners have each made progress against their individual aims for refining delivery, as well as some progress against CfEY's overarching recommendations for all partners. Individual aims were designed according to individual partners needs and areas for development and therefore not all themes are covered by each partner.

Table 8: Partners' performance against 2022-23 targets

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
Blueprint for All	**Planning and timelines**	*Request school calendars in advance before planning out programme activities.*	Strong progress (green)	*Blueprint for All gauged schools' interest in the programme before the summer holidays began, and compiled a list of those that expressed interest. A follow-up email was sent on the first Monday of the new school year. This allowed them to secure the majority of dates in their timetables for all five schools within the first month of planning.*
	Programme content	*Collaborate with session facilitators and schools to make sessions more engaging and ensure consistent delivery quality. This could*	Moderate progress (amber)	This was done with one facilitator and it worked well as an approach to improve session content and tailor the talks to the young people

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
		include streamlining session topics and getting teachers actively involved.		
	Programme resources	*Work with the communications team to create a PowerPoint presentation and resource booklet to share with schools, including QR codes that direct to other sources of helpful information.*		The digital team revamped templates and PowerPoint. They designed and developed a 6th form resource booklet for the end of sessions containing information on HE and other pathways, including entrepreneurship. QR codes are now being used to signpost to other resources and further reading. The internal team also did a content audit which will help to prepare resources for next year.
	Evaluation	*Introduce reflection cycles, periodically reviewing feedback from teachers and young people, then making refinements before the next session takes place.*		Continuing evaluation in the same way in terms of getting feedback, have re-evaluated feedback forms since last year as this helps to make data analysis more consistent across schools
Envision	**Planning and timelines**	*In beginning-of-year training, ensure messaging is consistently delivered at all levels, including teacher*		September training for all staff, especially new starters was strengthened last year. This includes creating cross-team training days to enhance joined

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
		onboarding sessions and conversations around programme objectives and end goals.		up thinking. Marketing and communications training has also supported the process of ensuring messaging is consistent
		Introduce further training on ensuring the Essential Skills Framework is communicated with all stakeholders and beneficiaries.		Tightened things in this area but will again this year Content has been rejigged to fit new timetables. In-person cross-school launch event across all schools alongside mentors bookended the programme with events to support communication and ensured buy-in.
	Session structure and delivery	*Modify session length and group sizes, as well as streamlining the curriculum structure.*		Strengthened the curriculum as part of a continuous improvement cycle to ensure session content is more concise and allows more time for focused, meaningful skills development.
		Work closely with school staff on the logistics of delivering sessions.		Consulted school staff on onboarding procedure to help strengthen resources and internal processes and training.
	Evaluation	*Ensure frontline staff members' experiences of the programmes are fed into conversations with*		Collaborative working across regions really strengthened in the last year. National meetings with programmes team are run by the

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
		the Partnerships team to improve joined-up working between the Partnerships and Programmes teams.		data and impact manager so that information from all regions is gathered in the same space. This helped to align workstreams and ensure feedback from all staff is collated efficiently. Processes for evaluating feedback from frontline teams have also been strengthened and there is now additional capacity in this area that enables frontline staff to feed their experiences into different teams.
In2scienceUK	**Planning and timelines**	*Align planning with university recruitment timelines, aiming to start recruitment during summer programmes.*		Recruitment processes much improved in 2023-24. Recruitment was started with young people much earlier and the start of the programme was pushed back by a month. Numbers of young people recruited to the programme have improved.
	Session structure and delivery	*Introduce drop-in sessions.*		Arranged informal coffee catch-ups at a London university for mentees to meet one another and chat to In2ScienceUK staff
	Programme content	*Look to provide more corporate networking opportunities and workplace visits, as well*		A number of skills clinics and webinars have been delivered this year on topics that directly respond to previous feedback.

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
		as workshops on how to successfully apply to internships (staff noticed both mentees and mentors wanted to learn more about how organisations recruit interns).		These sessions have been live over Zoom and have been recorded to share on the online platform. Additional networking opportunities between STEM industry professionals, mentees and mentors were well-received and provided good opportunities for professional conversations.
	Programme resources	*Develop a toolkit that includes:* ○ *guidance on how to be an effective mentor.* ○ *links signposting to resources that can support mentors with how to tackle difficult questions or situations.* ○ *structured activities and topics for each meeting.* ○ *advice on how to bring less confident young people out of their shell.*		The team are currently in the process of developing both materials and signposting for mentees/mentors who may be struggling with issues including mental health & financial support. There have been more opportunities to connect with mentors this year to check in on how things are going. This has provided the team with an opportunity to touch base on engagement and offer support where needed.

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
	Evaluation	*Increase the focus on the importance and impact of mentoring.*		There has been an increase in the number of experience stories captured. This has helped to tell the story of young people in their second year of the programme.
Making the Leap	**Session structure and delivery**	*Consider adapting the structure of the programme to weekly modular sessions.*		The team started delivering weekly instead of biweekly sessions. This helped with consistency for students and to build up learning, improved student buy-in.
	Evaluation	*Refine approaches to gathering feedback from young people in end-of-year focus groups, including exploring specific experiences they would have liked to change.*		Survey data has been collected with young people at the mid and end points of the programme. Case study-style interviews will be undertaken in the autumn term. Response rates have improved this year. Feedback has been used to match young people's needs with appropriate experiences as much as possible.
		Ensure the research team schedules debrief interviews with teachers before the end of the year to explore their feedback and ideas for potential changes in more detail.		The debrief interviews have been very helpful. They have provided useful insights into how the programme was received. Teachers has responded amazingly well.

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
Power2	**Planning and timelines**	*Edit the referral form to collect information more clearly, including young people's contact details, carer contact details, and school contact details.*		Referral forms have been adapted and where the forms have not been filled in fully, mentors are getting the extra information from virtual schools much more quickly.
	Session structure and delivery	*Ask virtual schools to share programme information with their students and carers to increase awareness.*		This request was made and some Virtual Schools were supportive, but the three-way meetings described below were more helpful in this regard.
	Programme resources	*Deliver presentations to virtual schools and young people before registration, and invite carers and key workers to join these sessions if possible.*		Presentations haven't happened but more three-way meetings have been taking place (see below).
	Pastoral support	*Arrange three-way meetings where possible between Power2 staff, young people and their virtual school team, social workers, and carers.*		Three-way meetings have been pursued however there have been some issues with attendance. Social workers and foster carers are key to facilitating these meetings. The initial approach was quite formal and structured but a more informal approach seems to be more successful.

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
Street League	**Planning and timelines**	*Develop a more straightforward process for enrolling students onto the programme.*		Enrollment has really improved in 2023-24. There were no issues with paperwork and Individual Learning Plans were helpful.
		Identify important dates in the school timetable to provide a clear timeframe for delivery and consider introducing a service-level agreement with schools to formalise their responsibilities and involvement.		Service-level agreements with schools were introduced and really helped. The team had stronger relationships with teachers which helped to make delivery smoother, especially at one school where students with additional support needs required extended support beyond the original scheme of work. The programme has been extended for many young people, which alongside deepening the interaction helps with timetabling issues as there is more space for flexibility.
		Ensure discussions with schools around logistics, such as room availability, occur before delivery.		Communications meant Street League was clearer about what they needed for delivery And room use was much smoother this year- the only outstanding area is the

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
			(green)	scheduling of sessions at lunchtime.
	Session structure and delivery	*Work with schools to facilitate employer engagement, establishing a clear and consistent process.*	*(red)*	Having reviewed the needs of the young people Street League is supporting and given the focus on keeping the young people engaged in school, employer engagement hasn't been explored further.
	Programme content	*Ensure programme content is streamlined and connects overall aims to future opportunities.*	*(red)*	Career progression has been harder to incorporate into the sessions due to school priorities.
		Link trips or physical activity to the qualifications delivered.	*(amber)*	Physical activity has been good although soft skills and qualifications have been the focus.
		Aim to encourage students to take ownership of the learning process.	*(green)*	Improved content has meant that young people are enjoying the process more.
		Engage pupils in more career discussions.	*(red)*	Career discussions have not really progressed.
		Reach out to local employers to encourage them to offer more talks and visits, as well as provide work experience	*(red)*	Employer engagement has not really progressed.

Partner	Theme	Target	Progress Key: Strong progress – green Moderate progress – amber Limited progress - red	Detail
		and leadership opportunities.	🟥	
XLP	**Session structure and delivery**	*Run sessions in collaboration with other youth clubs.*	🟩	Partnership working has started with two school groups and one church based group which are working well.
	Pastoral support	*Ensure targets are tailored to individuals to boost the engagement of young people throughout the programme.*	🟩	More individualised target-setting has had a positive impact on participant engagement, with XLP observing significant improvements across the board – and particularly in literacy and numeracy.
		Explore how to improve support for young people with English as a second language or who have recently entered the country.	🟩	Literacy project has proved to be very beneficial for young people with English as a second language. The team has good expertise to support these young people.
	Evaluation	*Ensure that feedback is embedded throughout the programme.*	🟧	There have been general improvements in data collections processes (demographic data and evaluation data).
		Monitor targets more regularly to assess whether the programme is progressing in line with expectations or requires adjustments.	🟩	Better tracking of data has allowed the team to monitor young people's scores and improvements more easily.

14.2 Overarching Mercers' partner targets 2022-23

Some of the Cohort 3 partners also shared their progress against CfEY's overarching recommendations for all partners in 2022-23.

1. Refine the recruitment and onboarding processes for employers and schools.
Making the Leap
- Making the Leap recruited to their programme through assemblies for students and introducing the programme to the cohort that has been selected. Schools and employers' onboarding was smoother.

XLP
- Recruitment/onboarding for XLP has been pretty smooth this year. Their literacy and numeracy groups are full, their young leaders' programme has been popular and they have the biggest-ever apprenticeship group this year

In2scienceUK
- During the recruitment process with universities in particular, the In2scienceUK team has been improving how they articulate the unique aspects of their programme in comparison to those universities may run themselves (shared background of mentors/mentees, community building aspects beyond mentoring)

2. Refine internal evaluation processes and activities.
Street League
- Street League's delivery team are working much more closely with the evaluation team internally to be more data-driven. New evaluation plans feel much more realistic and improved communication and engagement with teachers in schools will help with these processes.
- The Street League team are keen to collect more in-depth data to continue improvements in this space.

3. Involve young people in the planning process and directly communicate goals and expectations early on.
Envision
- In the last year Envision has developed a youth advisory group. They feed into work and can join sessions in different regions. This has strengthened youth voice alongside regular feedback.

Street League
- Sports is very learner-centric, and provides different activities in terms of what young people want to do
- Qualifications offered by Street League are accredited and therefore expectations are fixed and clear. However the team try to adapt the delivery of the qualifications to Young People's needs where possible (i.e. via 1-1 support)

4. Seek out low-cost opportunities for trips and visits.
Street League
- Trips have been considered but at the moment are not on offer due to difficulties arranging them with schools and budget restrictions.
- There are challenges taking young people out of class time in the school year – just before holidays is easiest. Therefore trips have been planned to coincide with graduation ceremonies at the end of the year (July)

XLP
- XLP have worked to make sure different trips are relevant to all the young people they work with, that they expose the young people to a wide range of industries and combat stereotypes about roles

15 How the Cohort 3 partners can refine delivery in 2024-25

Section summary: This section details the individual targets identified by each partner for optimising their own programme delivery in 2024-25, with reference to the following themes:
1. Planning and timelines
2. Session structure and delivery
3. Programme content
4. Evaluation
5. Programme resources
6. Pastoral support

Partners identified several individual targets across the theme areas that they will aim to implement over the 2024-25 delivery year.

Power2 in 2024-25
Power2 struggled to recruit the number of young people originally planned. A lot of time has been spent trying to make contact with the target demographic of young people that their programme is designed to support.

"So the numbers have been significantly lower than we wanted because of struggling to engage the young people, and a lot of the challenges around engagement are the very challenges that the young people are being referred for in the first place … They're not confident enough to meet people which is why they're struggling to live independently or get employment. So therefore they're not confident to meet us, because we're just yet another unknown adults. They've got very poor organisational skills. So understandably they're missing meetings." Power2 - Programme staff

In 2024-25, with Mercers' support, Power2 will continue supporting the young people they currently have engaged in their programme and will also pivot delivery to enhance the work they are currently delivering on their Teens and Toddlers programme.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
Blueprint for All	**Planning and timelines**	Begin recruitment earlier to secure school participation before the summer holidays	Secure schools earlier, start recruiting this side of summer for the next academic year instead of in September, so the programme is already in a calendar event for schools the next academic year.
		Aim to recruit multiple groups within individual schools	Blueprint for All normally works with around 5 schools across the year. This year the team worked with two groups in one school (four schools altogether). Consider working with multiple groups within each school to increase efficiencies.
		Ensure schools are clear on the communication expectations	Set out the minimum requirements and communication expectations with schools in advance (possibly through a separate explicit agreement document) to encourage continuous engagement with the programme. Consider ensuring each school has a secondary contact (possibly on SLT to ensure leadership buy-in).
	Session structure and delivery	Ensure programme content is tailored to students' needs and interests	Work with teachers and facilitators to tailor programme content to the students' interests and what they are learning e.g. this year the art students went to an architecture firm etc.
		Widen recruitment pool for speakers at career talks	Look at other groups or professions that could provide people to deliver/facilitate inspirational career talks to make sure the individuals are the right fit.
	Programme content	Consider how to use content from sixth form programme in Mercers funded work	Consider whether the content from sixth form programme that is wrapping up is relevant and useful to wrap into the Mercers funded work.
		Consider how to adapt programme content to cover more practical and employability skills	Consider how the programme can further focus on employability skills (for example mock interviews, CV preparation, applications and interviews), especially for older students.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
	Evaluation	Create a process to collate verbal feedback on a regular basis	Gather verbal feedback earlier on during delivery as well as via forms.
		Create a process to collate anecdotal feedback on a regular basis	Ensure anecdotal feedback is not lost.
Envision	**GENERAL**	Ensure work done this year is embedded and sustainable for future years	Envision have achieved a lot this year. Including launching a new 3 year growth and impact strategy for 2024-2027. The focus going forward needs to be on ensuring growth is sustainable and that the work done over the past 3 years is embedded and refined. This could involve further work to understand what is working and what is not and building on what stakeholders have fed back that they want and need as well as strengthening processes and systems that have been developed and trailed.
	Planning and timelines	Consider programme length	Continue to consider what the optimum programme length is based on further feedback following previous adaptations. Consider the optimum length and structure of programme for changing demographic needs of young people (particularly the identified needs and challenges of the post-pandemic cohort).
	Programme content	Consider longer term engagement with young people to follow up on sustainability of social action project	Consider how Envision could follow up on social action projects to understand if/what lasting change has happened. This could link with the established work on the graduate network.
In2scienceUK	**Planning and timelines**	Promote programme more widely to schools, universities and societies	Continue building relationships with schools, universities and societies to further spread the message about the programme to ensure more young people have the opportunity to access it. Consider how previous mentors and mentees can support programme promotion and recruitment efforts.
		Consider accessing students through freshers'	Consider using a stall at freshers' fairs/other promotional avenues through universities in freshers' week or working with faculty staff to

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
		fairs/other existing avenues	guide more of the young people who can benefit most onto the programme.
		Consider how recruitment can be adapted to overcome external factors and timelines	Consider how/if there are new ways to address the challenge of the short window over the summer to reach young people when they are out of school but not in university yet.
		Consider and decide upon moving the programme start date back	Potentially move back the start date of the programme further to allow more people to access it at the stage when they feel they need support. Especially the young people who might not realise straight away that they need support.
	Session structure and delivery	Refine programme introductory process	Consider how the introductory process to the programme can be made smoother and quicker. Ensure mentees feel empowered through programme introduction to determine the content and timing of their mentoring sessions.
	Programme content	Maintain enhanced in person event offer	Continue to offer in-person events - coffee catch-ups and networking events with STEM professionals.
		Maintain enhanced online portfolio	Continue to develop a portfolio of relevant online webinars for young people. Including topics that will support wellbeing and financial management. Ensure safeguarding information for online portfolio is available and up to date.
	Programme resources	Maintain enhanced resources that are available outside mentoring sessions	Continue to build a bank of online resources and signpost links to support mentees outside of mentoring sessions.
	Pastoral support	Support additional opportunities for in-person meet-ups for mentors and mentees	Provide more opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet in-person. This will help to further build a sense of community and engagement with the programme.
		Ensure sense of community is further built upon	Continue to foster a sense of community by developing further opportunities for sharing experiences and ideas.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
Making the Leap	**Planning and timelines**	Begin delivery planning earlier for business insight and work experience activities	Ensure that business insight activities and work experience planning happens earlier this year. Communicate earlier with businesses to allow time to planning and securing commitment.
	Session structure and delivery	Recruit more businesses to attend in school days	Recruit more businesses to come into schools to speak rather than young people coming to the businesses. This is more straight forward than young people going out but provides the same results.
	Programme content	Work proactively with employers to secure engagement	Use existing networks to work proactively with employers, engage them early and secure commitment.
		Increase the range of employer activities	Increase the range of activities with employers, including lunch and learn, business insight sessions and work experience. Try to secure as many of these wide ranging activities with employers as possible.
	Pastoral support	Create a process to enable ongoing contact with young people	Consider how a stronger ongoing relationship can be built with all young people who interact with Making the Leap. Building on existing work with young people in terms of monthly meetings, social events and networking, consider what long-term support and engagement with young people as they move into their future careers might look like.
	Evaluation	Develop case study approach to report on students' experience of Pathways	Highlight and report a small number of students' experience of Pathways via case studies. Ensure that these case studies promote impact of the programme on young people's journeys post-18, where the young people are going now and how has their personal development been impacted by taking part in the programme.
		Develop and implement further retrospective evaluation with the first cohort of students	Further evaluate the programme retrospectively with the first cohort of students on the programme who are completing education and will be moving into employment. Ensure that their experiences of peer-to-peer activities are included in this evaluation.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
Power2	**Planning and timelines**	Broaden target cohort	Consider widening base of mainstream schools that Power2 already works with in London, not just looked after children or virtual schools, but all young people who are pupil premium, FSM or looked after. Ask for referrals based on existing criteria (experiences of poverty, in care, SEMH needs, lack of engagement with education).
	Programme content	Develop group learning curriculum and sessions	A 16-week curriculum will be co-created with young people, focusing on different skills each week including 2 in-school sessions prior to the first nursery sessions.
	Programme resources	Prepare EYFS curriculum	Ensure EYFS curriculum resources are created by staff with EY experience.
		Prepare educational games	Create educational games and resources for young people to work with.
	Evaluation	Ensure approach to feedback and evaluation is more consistent and robust	Ensure that pre and post survey process with for Teens and Toddlers programme is established with all stakeholders. Ensure monitoring and evaluation processes are developed to improve data collection rates.
Street League	**Planning and timelines**	Plan for changes to programme that aligns with Street League's strategy	Street League's strategy around school interventions is changing. School interventions will be less of a focus in the future as there is a conflict between what schools want and Street League's core mission and strategy around supporting post-16 transitions.
		Consider extension of programme to Y10 and Y11	Consider the extension of the programme to Years 10 and 11 to allow more focus on careers and employability. This is in line with Street League's organisational strategy and the original plan for the programme). Engage with older age groups 2 or 3 times a week to ensure the work is meaningful.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
		Improve logistical planning discussions with schools.	Ensure planning discussions with schools are more in-depth and cover key areas such as; sessions organised according to schools' needs, commitments for dedicated sports space/classrooms for programme delivery, and using dedicated or embedded time during timetabled curriculum for delivery rather than lunchtime. Use discussions to highlight rationale for programme design and logistical requests to school decision makers.
	Programme content	Ensure there is more of a careers focus within the programme	Ensure the programme has more of a light touch careers focus. This may include speaking explicitly about apprenticeships and training and providing additional guest speakers aligned to young people's careers interests.
		Embed improvements from 23-24	Build on the improvements from 23-24 and ensure changes are sustainable.
	Evaluation	Further develop monitoring and evaluation approach	Work with schools to consider how best to collect additional data on the benefits of the programme including changes to behaviour, attendance and attainment.
XLP	**Planning and timelines**	Increase the volume of online tutoring offered	Build on online tutoring currently offered to Year 11s offering additional face to face and online interventions from September.
		Consider how individual project offerings can be amalgamated into a more rounded experience for individual young people	Review projects and consider how they can be joined up to offer a rounded experience. For example working with the employability team to improve the apprentice experience and consider additional qualifications, knowledge from across the organization and support that can be offered.
		Consider how to use marketing approaches to reach more schools and communities	Consider what makes XLP and the CLP programmes unique and strand out amongst similar organisations in the employability space.
	Session structure	Consider how different strands of delivery can be joined up	Consider how young people can engage with XLP programmes in a more holistic manner across the suite of what XLP offers.

Partner	Theme	Target	Details
	and delivery		
	Programme content	Ensure trips are tailored to young people's interests and needs	Review trip matching process: Assess programme participants and match them to a trip that will interest them as opposed to the other way around.
		Ensure literacy and numeracy work is differentiated according to student need	Personalise the literacy and numeracy work where possible to pupil need, joining projects up and offering pupils a range of experiences.
	Programme resources	Develop differentiated literacy and numeracy resources	Develop and provide more challenging literacy and numeracy packs for more confident young people. Ensure that the resources team keep on top of national curriculum changes and ensure XLP resources align with them.
	Evaluation	Ensure new processes and systems for evaluation are fully embedded	Consider how innovative methods can be used to collect and synthesise data from multiple programmes. Consider how the impact of young people's particpation in multiple programmes can be measured and compared.

16   Whole Cohort Areas for Improvement: Refining delivery for 2024-25

Section summary: In addition to individual targets identified by each partner for how they aim to improve delivery in 2024-25. There are four cohort-level recommendations for refinements, building on the work of previous years, Cohort 3 partners should:
1. Consider how marketing and promotion approaches can be improved
2. Further develop the differentiation of programme content according to the needs/interests of participants
3. Consider or build on existing work around post-programme engagement or support
4. Consider how qualitative evaluation processes can be further embedded into existing monitoring and evaluation processes

1. Consider how marketing and promotion approaches can be improved

Building on improvements in recruitment processes from last year, to further support efficient and effective recruitment, partners should consider how they market and promote their projects. Partners should consider the unique selling point that they offer and how they use evidence to communicate this.

Partners should also further consider the avenues that they use to reach decision-makers. They should evaluate their recruitment activities and timelines to ensure they fit into the decision-making timelines that these decision-makers have to stick to.

2. Further develop the differentiation of programme content according to the needs/interests of participants

Partners should consider how they can further develop their approach to differentiation within their programme content. This may apply to the needs, interests or abilities of the young people that they work with. Partners should consider how they efficiently understand the needs of their young people to adapt their programme content and how they monitor the effectiveness of any adaptations they employ.

3. Consider or build on existing work around post-programme engagement or support

Some partners have started to develop post-programme engagement strategies. Partners should consider what excellent post-programme support looks like for each of their programmes and what the aims of engaging young people post-programme would be. This is particularly important for the partners who offer significant pastoral support and where the end of a programme could feel like a cliff edge for a young person who has developed a significant relationship.

4. Consider how qualitative evaluation processes can be further embedded into existing monitoring and evaluation processes.

Partners should consider how they can collate further qualitative data within their existing monitoring and evaluation processes. Due to the complex nature of many partners' work, further collection of qualitative data would provide rich supporting evidence of impact in the areas they are focusing on. This area is something that CfEY

can support with.

CfEY will review the partners' plans for responding to the recommendations in the kick-off workshop for the next evaluation cycle (before the end of 2024), and then again in their Theory of Action feedback workshops next Spring. Their progress against the cohort-level recommendations will be reviewed in next year's report.

17 Theory of Action: conclusion

The Theory of Action approach was well received by the partners in Cohort 3 who reported appreciating the space and structure to reflect on their progress and the successes and challenges they had faced over the 2023-2024 delivery year.

Representatives from each partner organisation had the opportunity to collectively reflect on the Theory of Action process during a knowledge-sharing workshop in September. This provided partner organisations with a facilitated space to share challenges, discuss solutions and learn from each other's successes. This was particularly useful for some partners who were facing challenges in areas where others had enjoyed success over the past 12 months. The space for the sharing of best practice is particularly useful when considering some of the social issues identified as challenges this year, that all partners must contend with.

In refining the Theory of Action cycle for 2024-25 partner organisations requested more time to collect survey data, with surveys being made available for them to share with partners from January 2025, to fit alongside delivery timelines. Additionally, some partners wanted to explore different data collection methods that would support them to engage with the young people they work with differently. CfEY will ensure that these suggested adaptations are in place for the delivery of the 24-25 evaluation.