

YUAF Young Urban
Arts Foundation

YUAF FUTURES

1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023

External Evaluation Report



Introduction

As a result of a one-year grant from Betsy Foundation, YUAF has been able to provide vulnerable young Londoners with much-needed guidance and support through our YUAF Pathways programme.

Building on a pilot started in 2020, YUAF Pathways is our after-care programme for disadvantaged and at-risk young people aged 14-19. Young people who have previously engaged with YUAF (via outreach workshops on our Media Bus, youth hubs, and our school-based empowerment programmes), but feel they need further support, can enrol on the programme. YUAF Pathways aims to empower these young people to take a lead in shaping their lives. It does this by boosting their confidence, building their resilience, strengthening their physical and mental health and raising their aspirations, whilst giving them support, skills and tools to access opportunities to further their personal development and improve their wellbeing.

YUAF Pathways offers a combination of one-to-one and group support (in-person and online) and referrals to new opportunities. This includes signposting both within YUAF's projects and to external partners, e.g. creative industry employers, community groups and mental health services.

The programme is tailored to the specific needs of each young person, supporting individuals to identify their own goals and personal challenges, overcome barriers they face in accessing opportunities in the creative industries, and access relevant mental health support. We help participants explore creative education, training, career and personal development opportunities that reflect their personal skills and interests. We then provide tailored progression and exit routes, helping them into opportunities within YUAF's own projects as well as with external partners, including companies in the creative industries and other organisations.

YUAF Pathways includes 3 strands:

- **Pathways:** One-to-one support sessions tailored to young people's individual needs. Sessions focus on helping young people to identify their personal goals and aspirations through assessments and personal development plans, and then helping them overcome challenges and obstacles to moving forward and achieving their goals.
- **YUAF Futures:** An employability, training and upskilling programme aimed at providing young people aged 16-19 from communities challenged by inequality (Global Majority, LGBTQIA, disabled teenagers and those living in poverty) with opportunities which help them progress into desirable workplaces or gain a qualification, skill or training that leads to improved possibilities. Participants take part in a series of masterclasses where creative industry professionals share their journey, offer guidance and allow young people to gain insight and network. YUAF Futures also seeks to build self-belief in the youth community, with the aim of boosting young people's aspirations whilst increasing diversity and inclusion in workplaces.
- **Awesome Coaching/Mentoring:** We understand that not all young people are ready to take the next step into opportunities through Pathways and YUAF Futures. They may have low confidence, personal issues they are working through, or haven't yet realised their potential due to their life experiences. These one-to-one mentoring sessions help young people aged 14-19 to tap into their strengths by learning how to build on their attributes, helping to increase their self-belief and wellbeing. The confidence they gain allows them to continue on the YUAF Pathways journey and seize opportunities to reach their goals and full potential.

Need

YUAF Pathways began as a pilot in 2020 in response to a critical need that we identified in consultation with our beneficiaries, and in response to a serious gap in one-to-one support for young people during and immediately following the pandemic:

- As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw an alarming rise in the number of **young people reporting anxiety about their future and a decline in their mental health and wellbeing**. 23% of young people in the UK believe they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic (Mission44).
- **Anxiety, in particular, is on the rise among young people**, as their wellbeing is affected by curriculum changes, exam pressures and technological and social change (The Sound of the Next Generation).
- Our engagement with young people throughout the pandemic showed how, if not addressed, anxiety and emotional difficulties can lead to poor mental health and **young people who don't have access to, or lack the confidence to access, opportunities that will help them to excel and thrive**.
- Since the pandemic, we have seen increasing numbers of vulnerable young people with different needs requiring tailored guidance. Many feel **uncertain about their future education or employment prospects** and need emotional and/or career development support. Many have also reported being unaware of development opportunities, while others felt overwhelmed by information online.
- The **reduction in youth services over recent years**, particularly since the pandemic, has further impacted on opportunities for young people. Many services have reduced what they deliver or have closed down completely: youth organisations such as Bigga Fish are no longer operating, Tower Hamlets Council has removed its youth service, and Lewisham Council has reduced its provision by 20% since 2015. UK Youth recently published a report, 'The Impact of Covid-19 on England's Youth Organisations', which found a 66% rise in demand for youth services.
- Among the organisations we partner with across London (including The Harrow Club, Avenues, Pembury Youth Club and Eltham Hill School), there is **little or no one-to-one support in place**. Without tailored guidance, many vulnerable young people are growing up without access to opportunities to help them thrive.
- **Mental health services, such as CAMHS and Mind, can be difficult to access, with long waiting lists**. Many vulnerable young people are not accessing support or don't feel comfortable seeking it. 72% of YUAF beneficiaries are from black and brown communities, and studies show that young people of colour are less likely to access mental health support (Power the Fight).

During its pilot year, YUAF Pathways saw 528 young people added to the new database, capturing information on support needs and aspirations. Supported by two Pathways Coordinators (one FT job share), 373 of the most vulnerable received one-to-one support. The pilot demonstrated the impact of providing tailored support alongside group workshops. It also showed that having someone to assess where they are, and help them identify their interests and challenges, can make a big difference in giving young people direction.

Following the success of the pilot, we continued to see an increase in demand for the programme, as more vulnerable young people told us they were continuing to feel the negative effects of the pandemic. The 1-year funding from Betsy Foundation enabled YUAF to respond to this demand, by giving us additional capacity to provide much-needed guidance to vulnerable young people. This allowed us to respond to the waiting lists of

those we had identified with complex needs, so that we could continue to ensure that vulnerable young people felt supported and had access to opportunities during a time when many were still struggling.

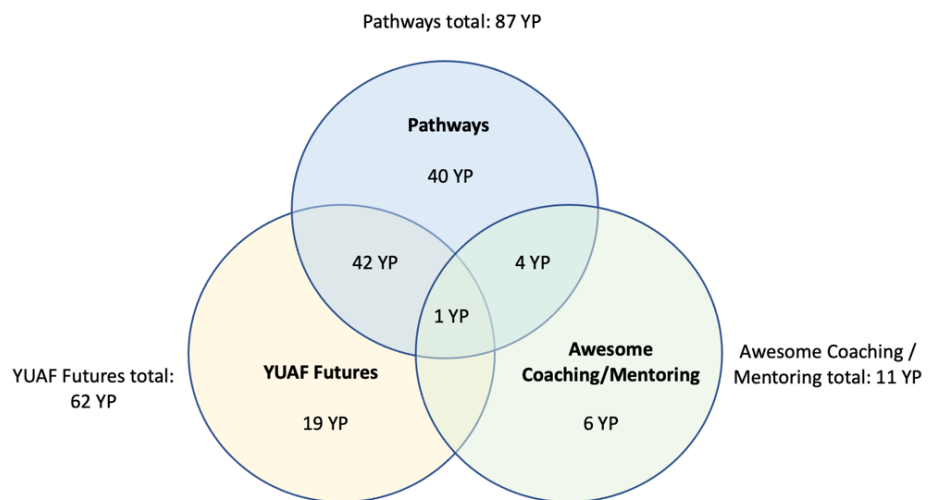
YUAF's Impact

Over the 1-year period of this grant, **YUAF Pathways worked with 115 vulnerable young people (unique programme participants)**. These included those excluded from school, young offenders, young carers, those at risk of exploitation or falling into gangs and young people challenged by inequality (BAME, LGBTQIA, disabled teenagers and those living in poverty). Over 78% came from BAME communities.

The extent to which each young person engaged with the programme depended on their individual needs: some engaged with more than one strand of the programme, while others got the support they needed from just one strand.

Across all three strands of, there were a total of **1223 unique 'events' involving young participants**. These included:

Pathways assessments, one-to-one support sessions and opportunities; YUAF Futures assessments and interactions with young people (via workshops, phone/Zoom call, emails and WhatsApp); and one-to-one Awesome Coaching/Mentoring sessions.



The young people made remarkable progress over the course of the year. They gained greater insight into their personal needs and interests, helping them to clarify their personal goals and raising their aspirations for their future; they developed new skills, boosting their confidence and helping them to overcome challenges; they improved their relationships with their peers and developed successful relationships with creative professionals; and they strengthened their mental wellbeing, helping to boost their resilience and increase their self-worth. As a result of these achievements, many young people gained the confidence and skills to go into opportunities both within YUAF's own projects as well as with our external pathway partners, giving them access to experiences that will help to achieve their goals and improve their life chances.

- Pathways participants gained access to a total of **80 internal and external opportunities**
- **YUAF Futures participants gained access to 216 unique opportunities**, including upskilling, internal opportunities, external opportunities, work experience and paid employment.
- **53 YUAF Futures participants (85%) achieved at least one outcome, with 478 unique outcomes recorded in total**. Outcomes ranged from developing new skills, improved access to opportunities and improved employability skills to improved wellbeing, raised aspirations and increased confidence.
- **40 Awesome Coaching/Mentoring sessions were delivered, benefitting 11 vulnerable young people.**

Pathways

Young people joining Pathways complete a self-assessment survey and are matched to a RAG system (Red, Amber, Green) to define and prioritise their support needs. The most vulnerable (Red and Amber), including those lacking confidence, language skills, or with learning disabilities or neuro-diversities, are referred for one-to-one support sessions with a Pathways Coordinator. These sessions provide tailored guidance on upskilling, accessing creative opportunities and managing health and wellbeing. Most young people have six sessions, but some require fewer (4 or 5), whereas others may need more (up to 8).

In their first one-to-one support session, participants review their self-assessment survey with the Pathways Coordinator to help understand why they signed up to the programme, their interests, personal goals and ambitions, their support needs, and personal challenges they face. This forms the basis of the remaining support that they receive throughout the programme. In their final one-to-one support session, the young people complete an end assessment, which helps to assess the progress they have made as well as any ongoing support needs, aspirations and potential pathways beyond the Pathways programme.

Young people at 'Green' (least risk) are able to access group workshops and 'one-off' support for opportunities, such as applying for jobs. All participants are added to YUAF's WhatsApp Group and newsletter to receive regular updates on further opportunities.

87 unique young people engaged in Pathways.

78 young people received one-to-one support.

The Pathways Coordinator delivered **514** one-to-one support calls/Zooms or WhatsApp/email check-ins with young people (exceeding the target of 360), plus many more regular extra WhatsApp chats with young people not on the caseload .

55 young people engaged in Pathways assessments: 32 completed an initial assessment and 23 completed an end assessment.

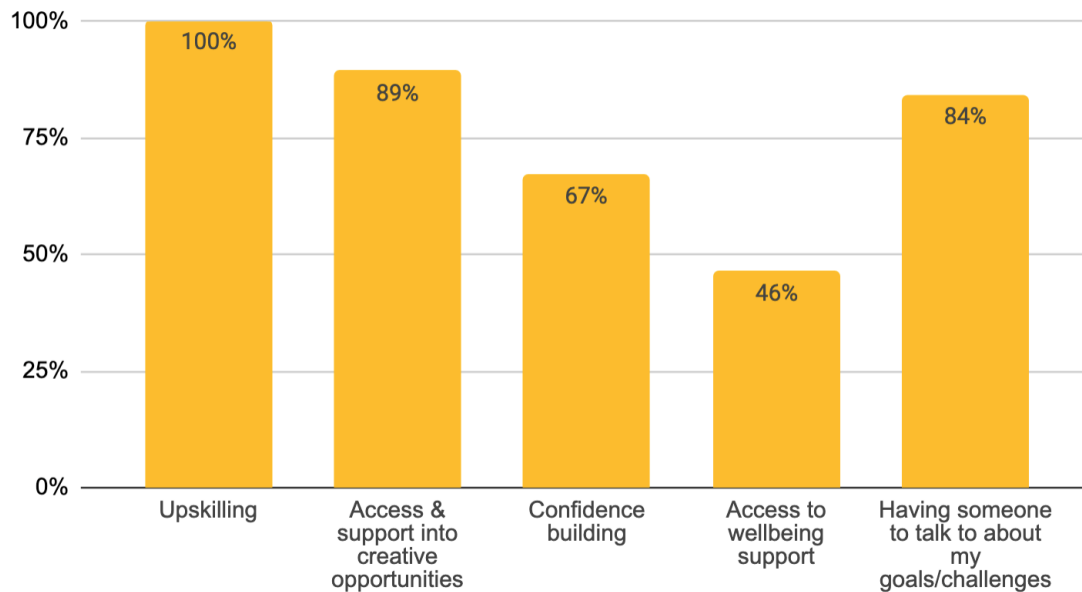
80 opportunities were provided (42 internal; 38 external), benefitting 43 young people.

Support Needs

The initial assessments highlighted a variety of different needs among the young Pathways participants. Upskilling was the most common support need identified by young people, chosen by everyone who answered a question on this. Areas where the young people wanted upskilling included music (DJing, music production, guitar and singing tuition, writing, performance), podcasting, photography, drama, poetry, fashion, basketball, money management and life skills. Access and support into creative opportunities was the second most popular support need, with young people keen to gain access to opportunities in theatre/drama, music production, dance, podcasting and photography, while one wheelchair user wanted help finding accessible creative opportunities.

The fewest number of young people (although still 46%) identified access to wellbeing support as something they felt they needed. In some cases, this was because they were already accessing support around this, e.g. receiving CAMHS support or seeing a therapist at their school.

What support would you like from Pathways?



"I get shy and stutter, anxiety, get scared, when I get comfortable, it improves. mum doesn't always have time, so it's hard to put myself out there, and i don't like my school, but i do like school and drama." – JA

"I have really bad anxiety, which stops me from doing things. Overthink things. I also have ADHD. I start something but don't finish. I would like help with applying for opportunities - for example I need to write a personal statement and I'm struggling with what to write." – WA

"I feel like I'm in a cycle of good and bad - when it's bad, [I feel] a ball of anger and I lash out easily. I was a part of CAMHS but it became tedious because the women kept treating me like a child. I want help with cognitive therapy/behaviour... I'm currently at [college] studying Level 2 Music Performance... I don't want to go back though, because I've already completed my course and they are making me attend college when there is nothing to do. [I have] completed my coursework - and the college isn't supporting me with more work/curriculum" – KF

"I don't think I have a lot of support with finding opportunities or places to perform or showcase my art." – CB

"Myself, I am broke. Waiting on my ADHD diagnosis. Lack of opportunities and I am always late for everything, but I will try my best. I am stressed and anxious about getting kicked out of Sixth Form. They will kick me out if I don't get above a D. My parents are pressuring me to stay in college [Studying Psychology, English, Geography]. My friends say that I am not suitable for a 9-5 Job. I don't think I am either. I get distracted easily." – HD

"I need support with writing emails - English is not good. Nervous in face-to-face interviews (phone calls and Zooms are okay)." – KF

"One [personal challenge] is I need to look after my mum, because she had an operation, so unable to do anything, so I've been looking after her so I can't go to certain places at certain times. General anxiety from not knowing what I'm stepping into. What prevents me sometimes is worry about making the next [move]." – JC

One-to-one support

One-to-one support was tailored to each individual, so was quite wide-ranging. Examples of support include:

- Alerting participants to an opportunity that meets their goals, such as an opportunity to record at [The Halley Space](#) (one of our partners which provides studios and workspace for London's creative community), an upcoming casting, a performance opportunity or a work experience/paid position at a relevant organisation.
- Giving young people encouragement with challenges they face, e.g. helping them to overcome their nerves and boosting their confidence before their first performance or encouraging them to step out of their comfort zone.
- Providing support with applications onto programmes, courses, work experience, jobs or college.

Opportunities

Opportunities were varied, ranging from participation in the YUAF Futures programme (49% of Pathways participants were referred to YUAF Futures), YUAF outreach workshops on our media bus, partner organisation training courses, workshops, masterclasses and mentoring, casting calls, free studio time, free tickets to concerts, music workshops, performing at events and festivals, work experience and part-time employment.

Examples of Pathways opportunities:

- **YUAF Talks** - a series of masterclasses where creative industry professionals share their journey, offer guidance and allow young people to gain insight and network
- **The Halley Space** - free studio time; Launchpad Workshop: Translating Culture and Community Into Currency
- **Sony Music** – A&R Academy
- **Universal Music Group** – work experience
- **Canvas** – Wellbeing for Creativity Workshops
- **Creative Mentor Network** – Sony Mentorship
- **Tom's Trust** – music bursary
- **Synergy Theatre Project** – youth programme
- **Shadow to Shine** – training programmes, motivational activities, mentoring, work shadowing, work experience, skills sharing and assistance with job-hunting
- **Mastering My Future** – Meet the Employer Week
- **Next Steps** – Drop-In Careers Advice
- **TikTok** – script writing opportunity
- **Selfridges** – several young participants got a part-time job
- **The Oslo** (Hackney) – several participants got a chance to perform as part of Dizareli's tour
- Some Pathways participants became a **YUAF Youth Ambassador**

"The highlights for me were seeing how many opportunities are available around and having someone to help find ways to attend them." -SK

"Pathways was really insightful, it showed me opportunities that I wouldn't have got to know without Pathways. So it's just opened my eyes to things I wouldn't have otherwise known and goes to show that there are good things going on in the industry." - KL

"Receiving a lot of opportunities is my favourite part, because I don't usually get that many opportunities in music." – RK

"[The highlight for me was] the podcasting, getting to use professional studio for free was really exciting, and how to use the microphone and being introduced to editing for the first time and learning about how podcasts are made was really interesting. That has opened up opportunities for me such as starting my own podcast at university. Podcasting knowledge can help me get some radio opportunities, its all connected so im excited about that, so it has definitely encouraged me to do those things" – CS

"YUAF is like tight knit community, even though I don't know everyone, they are very supportive, especially online. Like during the YUAF Talks I got to meet a few people and we connected on instagram. The spotlight friday, I got a lot of engagement on my song and really supportive comments. I've also increased my communication online cause i feel I want to be supportive back, so I engage with their posts too." – IA

"A lot of challenging things have been happening but with [Pathways] I have been able to manage them. I've learned that I can focus on small goals to achieve bigger ones." - YP

"I never knew what to expect but it honestly feels like the best decision I made this year. I now have a clearer vision on what I want in my career and it's all thanks to the amazing helpers at YUAF who take the time to get to know you better and go through the journey with you." – TR

"Yesterday I found out I got an unconditional offer from my 2nd choice of uni to study music technology, and this is mainly due to Yuaf giving me the opportunity to create a strong portfolio." – MS



YUAF Futures

Young people are referred to YUAF Futures via Pathways. Young people joining YUAF Futures enrol onto a cohort, which then engages them in a series of creative sessions/workshops (once a week for 6 weeks) put together by the YUAF Futures Lead. Examples include: a DJing workshop, visiting TikTok HQ, a session on professional upskilling (how to write an email/CV). Most sessions take place at The Halley Space in Hackney, which has music studios, a DJ space and music technology facilities.

In the first session, participants complete a Journey Web, where they rate how they feel in relation to various aspects of their life: confidence in themselves, knowing what opportunities are available to them, their ability to access opportunities, their professional profile, having a connection to industry contacts/networks, feeling part of a creative community, feeling skilled in their creative field, feeling positive about the future, and their overall happiness/wellbeing. The Journey Webs provide a starting point for the remaining sessions. Partway through the programme, participants have a midway assessment with the YUAF Futures Lead to ensure that their goals are being met, check that the programme is meeting their expectations, and identify how they might get more out of the programme, e.g. through further support, work experience etc. In the final session, young people complete an exit survey and an exit Journey Web. This helps to measure the distance they have travelled since the first session, and progress they have made in specific areas of their life. Based on this, follow-up opportunities are assigned, such as work experience or job opportunities.

Some additional young people don't enrol onto a cohort for varying reasons which may include their inability to confirm 6-weeks of attendance or being just below the age threshold. In YUAF Futures 'Taster Sessions' they are able to engage with the programme by attending workshops or accessing opportunities that the YUAF Futures Lead feels they would benefit from.

- **62** unique young people engaged in YUAF Futures in total. This includes 43 young people who enrolled in a particular cohort and 19 additional participants who attended one-off events, etc.
- **50** unique young people received one-to-one YUAF Futures support
- **249** one-to-one interactions with participants (phone/Zoom calls, face-to-face meetings, emails, or WhatsApp communications).
- **42** creative workshop sessions delivered
- **52** individual participants (84%) gained access to a total of 216 opportunities aimed at increasing their future prospects, employability and life chances. (This exceeded the target of up to 36 young people who would be upskilled with employability skills, in work experience and/or internship placements.)
- **55%** of YUAF Futures participants gained access to work experience or paid employment.
- **53** participants (85%) recorded at least one outcome.

"I have found the programme really amazing. The opportunities provided are so amazing. It's very rare. It's so easy to enjoy it and get stuck in. Everyone is encouraging. The radio thing I found hard but everyone was so supportive that I really enjoyed it." – SB

Outputs

Cohort	No. of young people
Cohort 4 – No specific theme	8
Cohort 5 – Documentary videos – YUAF x Skiddle	6
Cohort 6 – Taster Session	<i>See below</i>
Cohort 7 - Transform - YUAF x Inspire x Timberland Project	6
Cohort 8 – Music & Radio	5
Cohort 9 - Taster Session	7 (2 were also involved in Cohort 6)
Cohort 10 - Film & TV	6
Cohort 11 - Music Business (UKF)	5
Extra Futures beneficiaries	19
TOTAL FUTURES PARTICIPANTS	62

Opportunities

In total, participants were given access to 216 opportunities, including internal and external opportunities, upskilling, work experience and paid employment. 52 unique young people (84% of all 62 YUAF Futures participants) benefitted from at least one opportunity, with several accessing 4 or 5.

YUAF Futures Opportunities	Count	No. of young people	% of all Futures participants
External opportunity	14	11	18%
Internal opportunity	18	17	27%
Upskilling	138	39	63%
Work experience	21	14	23%
Paid employment	25	20	32%
TOTAL	216		

Some examples of opportunities:

- Hosting a radio show (Subtle Radio in Hackney; Vibe 107.6 in Watford)
- Creating podcasts
- Recording sessions / DJ workshops / music production sessions at The Halley Space
- A talk at Hospital Records on ear health for people who work in the music industry, followed by a tour of the studios and networking opportunities
- 'Working At a Major Label' Q&A with Hannah Helbert
- 'How To Make The Most Of Your iPhone/Tips On Filming Online' masterclass with Richie from Skiddle
- 'How To Get Into Music' workshop at PRS
- CV workshop with Fitch Ratings
- Directing x Creativity in Film & TV masterclass w/ Tiffany from Perspective Pictures

- Film & TV Production workshop with Susan from The Story Collective (Disney)
- Production, filming and editing sessions for the SKIDDLE x YUAF project at The Halley Space
- Interviewing creative industry contacts (e.g. DJ Sterling)

“My favourite part was meeting new people and meeting people that have similar goals to me, working in the same industry as me.” – AF

“My favourite part of Futures was the opportunity to work on a project from a company, you gave us the freedom to do an amazing task and gave us resources. You didn't leave us in the dark, you were always checking up on us.” – FI

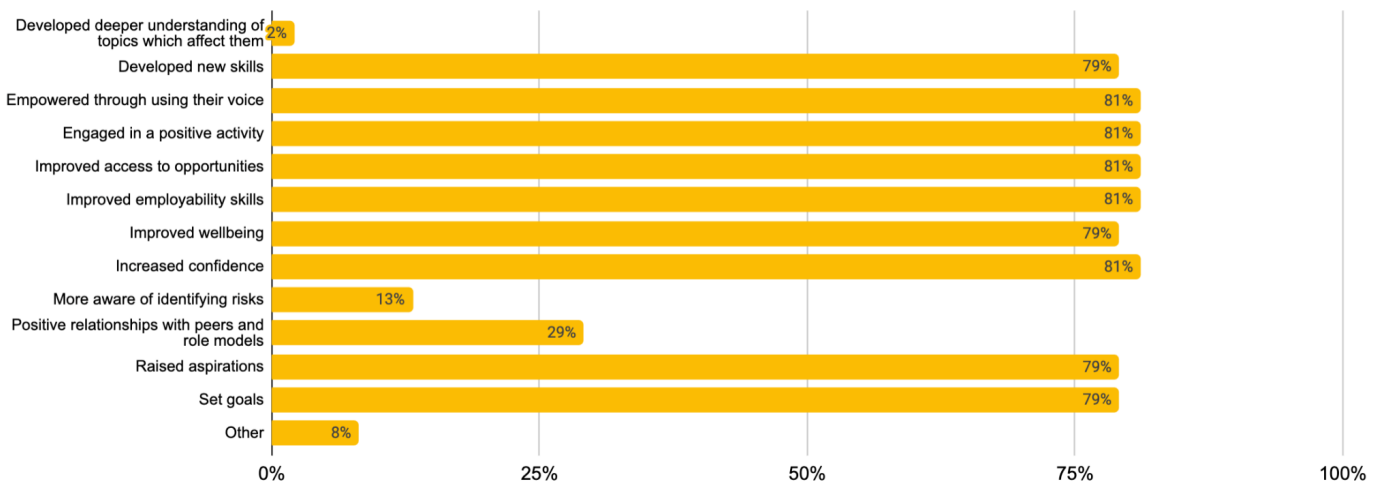
“It was wonderful. I got to work and learn so many new things, I've never thought I'll do. It was 10/10. I didn't even know I had the desire to learn, so I discovered a new desire.” – AV

“It was a very nice experience to work with people who have the same aims and who are like minded. I enjoyed filming for an advert we made, because we got to put the theory of what we learned.” – LY

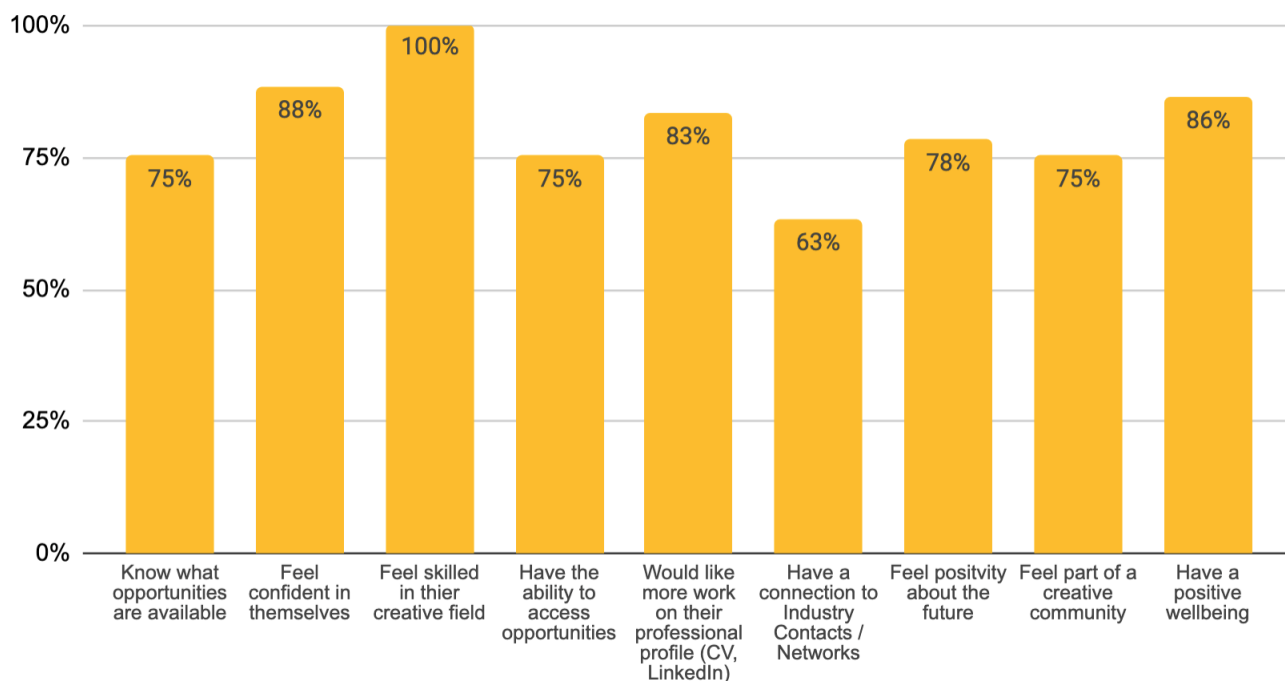
Outcomes

53 young people (85% of all YUAF Futures participants) achieved at least one outcome, with some achieving as many as 11 (the average was 9), resulting in a total of **477 unique outcomes**. These outcomes were recorded by the YUAF Futures Lead, who noted when a participant showed evidence of a particular outcome.

% of Futures participants achieving outcomes



Some participants also completed a Journey Web at the start and end of their YUAF Futures journey, measuring how they felt in certain areas of their life. The chart below indicates where there was a positive shift from young people's baseline Journey Web.



Below are some examples of feedback from participants showing how YUAF Futures helped them. These quotes are taken from conversations with the YUAF Futures Lead and young people's exit surveys.

Improved confidence

"I am more confident to approach other like-minded creatives. I was able to move out of my comfort zone and look for opportunities instead of just waiting for them to present themselves." – RC

"I am much more confident and feel much more prepared to achieve what I have set out to." – C

"The programme did build my confidence in people as they were non-judgmental and encouraging and upbeat. The challenging part was meeting new people as I get really nervous, but again they put me at ease quickly once I was there. I have learned that I can be talkative with people I don't know well, which I wasn't expecting due to my anxiety. Laurie [YUAF Futures Lead] was great, she really made me feel included and safe and she was really cool. If you're a shy person, I would recommend this programme as it was great at showing me that I have another side too." – IL

"Yes, definitely have more confidence to step into work roles and now I know where I am going and how I want to get there. More open to discussions." – MM

"I think in terms of working with someone else I was forced to have that confidence. In terms of being comfortable of having an opinion that isn't the same as someone else's. There were times where I could speak up and mutually disagree on something." – LA

Learning about themselves and about principles for the workplace

"I have learnt that I should always put myself around people with experience so that I can learn. I have a lot to learn." – **LA**

"Weirdly I learnt about myself that I know more about music than I thought I did. I felt like when I was doing the project, it brought out a side of me that I didn't know I had. The project helped me dig that out." – **EC**

"Learnt about myself in a professional capacity for the first time which was great. I enjoyed the responsibility outside of a school setting. I am able to work well by myself and in a team." – **MM**

"[I learned that I'm able to multi-task and try. Give things a go, balance things out. I can handle more than one thing at a time." – **FI**

"Understanding that sometimes if you don't feel ready, you should try and do it." – **LA**

"You don't know until you ask, putting yourself forward. Networking. Taking a risk and going for it." – **FI**

Feeling they have the experience/ability to access opportunities

"I guess I know now that a lot of the opportunities stem from the work you do...you need to get out there and do it. Gain experience...I really feel like I've expanded my network because of it. In terms of people, I know I could come to Laurie [YUAF Futures Lead] and Sam if I needed industry advice." – **LA**

"I enjoyed the podcasting, getting to use a professional studio for free was really exciting, and how to use the microphone and being introduced to editing for the first time and learning about how podcasts are made was really interesting. That has opened up opportunities for me such as starting my own podcast at university. Podcasting knowledge can help me get some radio opportunities, it's all connected, so I'm excited about that, so it has definitely encouraged me to do those things." – **CS**

"Now I can say I have experience in producing something for a company, which is great." – **AF**

"I think what's become possible is knowing I'm capable of going down the route I want to go down in terms of my career...It was a chance for me to see that I was suitable for that environment. I could do it, I interviewed a few people and that helped me know that this is something that I actually want to do and commit myself to...Next, I want to work on any sort of work or experience-based things towards my creative career. Networking too." – **EC**

"I can say that I've had this experience, and now if I do want to intern with someone, I have experience already. I also have someone that can vouch for me in that I can do video making. It's bettered my chances of getting work." – **FI**

"More confidence to reach out and network with other people without fearing rejection. Ready to write my CV, gather more experience and get into scriptwriting. I've been able to reach out to companies confidently to source opportunities." – **MM**

Awesome Coaching / Mentoring

The Awesome Coaching/Mentoring strand focused on providing one-to-one support to young people aged 14-19 who need some additional help taking the next steps into opportunities through Pathways and YUAF Futures or in other areas of their life. Many have low confidence, are working through personal issues or face challenging life experiences, which limit their self-belief and prevent them from reaching their full potential.

The one-to-one sessions were delivered face-to-face and online. A lot of the focus in the sessions was on wellbeing support, confidence-boosting and supporting young people to find ways to overcome personal challenges.

11 vulnerable young people received one-to-one coaching/mentoring support. 4 of these (36%) also engaged in Pathways; 1 (9%) engaged in all 3 programme strands; while the remaining 6 (55%) only accessed the Awesome Coaching / Mentoring support.

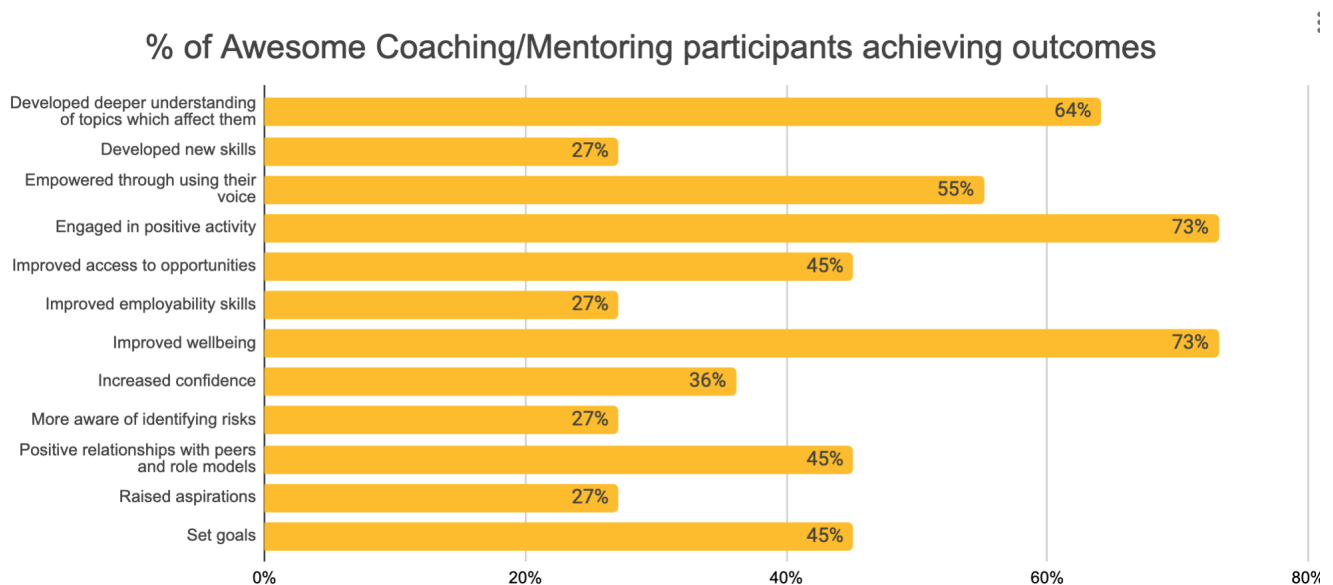
40 one-to-one mentoring sessions were delivered over the course of the year. The number of sessions that each person received depended on their individual needs and personal circumstances: some required up to 10 sessions, while others received the support they needed after only 2 or 3 sessions.

100% of participants achieved at least one outcome, with almost two-thirds (64%) achieving 5 or more (the average was 5 outcomes, with some achieving up to 10).

Between them, the young people achieved a total of 60 outcomes, ranging across 12 different outcomes.

Outcomes

We measured participants' outcomes across 12 different outcomes. Those which the highest number of participants achieved were 'engaging in a positive activity' and 'improved wellbeing'. Over a quarter of all participants achieved each individual outcome.



"I was able to speak safely without judgement." - **IME**

IME's mentor was able to help her find better ways of coping with emotions and stress. Her relationship with her parents and friends improved and she saw an overall improvement in her wellbeing.

"People think I am more confident than I am." - **AI**

AI's mentor helped him build his confidence. He demonstrated an increase in positive peer relationships and was supported to be empowered to use his voice by speaking at events.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself; I need support with anxiety because of family issues." - **HH**

HH's mentor helped support her with sharing with her mother about how she feels. As a result, HH showed improved confidence and overall wellbeing.

Conclusions

Thanks to the generous funding from Betsy Foundation, YUAF was able to support vulnerable young Londoners through difficult stages in their lives, empowering them to take control of their futures.

Feedback from the programme participants was overwhelmingly positive, both in terms of what the young people got out of their involvement and the support they received from the YUAF Futures team.

"Laurie [YUAF Futures Lead] was very helpful with questions. Enjoyed getting Laurie's input and feedback - extra support from Sam was excellent too." – MM

"The leaders, Laurie and Sam were amazing and helped us through everything. Made sure we had access to everything we needed." – FI

During this 1-year period, the combined YUAF Pathways services helped young people grow and blossom as individuals and take advantage of new opportunities that will help them to achieve their goals and realise their potential.

Some of the key outcomes for disadvantaged young people included:

- Improvements in their overall wellbeing, including improved mental health and happiness, greater resilience, improved relationships with their peers, family members and role models, and a better sense of community.
- Greater clarity about their goals and next steps.
- Greater self-confidence and self-belief, including being empowered to move forward independently, seek out support, and express themselves more effectively.
- Improved employability skills, including communication, teamworking, time-management and organisation skills.
- A greater knowledge of, and access to, meaningful creative opportunities, including relevant courses and masterclasses, useful hand-on experience in areas that interest them (e.g. DJing or film production), work experience and paid employment.

Learning

At YUAF, we constantly evaluate our work and reflect on what is working well and what could be improved. Therefore, while this 1-year programme of YUAF Pathways was hugely successful and received high praise from the young people who engaged with it, we have gathered learnings from our experiences, helping us identify how we might improve young people's experiences going forward. This included listening to what the young people told us through our interactions with them as well as through their exit surveys and exit interviews.

Specific feedback from YUAF Futures participants on how the programme could be improved included:

- Finding a better way to introduce the project – e.g. a rapport building day so participants could get to know each other.
- Bigger cohorts, to give participants more opportunities to meet more like-minded people.
- Giving participants a clearer outline of what the work experience would entail before they sign up. A lack of lead-in time meant young people had to get up to speed quickly without much time to prepare.
- More upskilling opportunities.
- The coaching was good, but sometimes it was a bit intense!

Key Learnings:

- Since the end of this year-long programme, we have changed how our after-care programmes are structured. Previously, Pathways, YUAF Futures and Awesome Coaching/Mentoring all sat under the wider 'YUAF Pathways' programme. However, we found that, while some young people joined YUAF Futures from Pathways, young people were also joining YUAF Futures via other routes, e.g. YUAF outreach sessions and social media recruitment. As a result, we decided to run YUAF Futures and Pathways as individual programmes and have a separate 'After Care' service for those who require additional support.
- At the end of the 1-year grant period, we made the decision to stop delivering the Awesome Coaching/Mentoring service. We learned that it is difficult to provide effective mentoring online, given the nature of the issues being covered; yet, at the same time, it proved challenging to schedule one-to-one sessions with young people. Additional considerations of whether we move forward with this program long-term included the added costs associated with booking spaces to meet with young people, additional supervision time needed for facilitators, and the cost vs value. Through our Pathways Service we have now identified and partnered with many reputable organisations to work with. Young people who request/require additional mentoring support are referred to one of our partners who provide specialised mentoring programmes (e.g. D.I.C.E).
- We have amended the way that the YUAF Futures cohorts are organised. Previously, we gave young people a choice of multiple activities from which to pick and participate in during their 6-weeks. This proved to be very labour-intensive and difficult to organise and did not give young people the full breadth of the experience. We now offer specific themes for each cohort (Fashion, Film/TV, Radio, Podcasting, etc).
- Once a specific cohort is created, all participants gather together in an initial meeting over a meal. This was put into place based on young people's feedback after participating in the Futures programme. We've since found that this helps participants feel invested in the programme, bond with one another, and feel comfortable working as a team.

- Since March 2023, we have put in place long-term impact calls with young people involved in Pathways and YUAF Futures to check in with them 3-6 months after their last session. These calls help us measure longer-term outcomes, such as whether they have taken up new opportunities, have managed to gain work experience or have found employment, as well as whether they have managed to sustain some of the outcomes they achieved during the programme, e.g. improved wellbeing and increased confidence.

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A5cend supports community organisations to be sustainable through creative, tailored solutions. We act as a catalyst for strategic development and growth, supporting community organisations to work in new ways, develop their practice, demonstrate their value and foster new skills.

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