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at Cheltenham and Gloucester

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Future 4 Me
External Evaluation

Final report prepared for 1625 Independent People

July 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an independent external evaluation of the *Future 4 Me* project charting the operationalisation and impact of the project on the cohorts of young people whom it serves. *Future 4 Me* is specifically targeted towards the development of effective and improved resettlement solutions for young people aged 16-21 leaving custody and care. More specifically the project works with those who other services have found most difficult to engage and who are at high risk of homelessness, reoffending, poor employment, education and/or health outcomes. Using a psychologically informed approach, the project aims to work in a way that understands and responds to the needs of young people in a therapeutic manner, using relationships as the main tool for change. This is achieved, in part, through the use of Reflective Practice and sharing specialist skills/knowledge. The project also aims to facilitate the co-ordination of efficient collaborative relationships between the various organisations and agencies that work with the young people involved in order to service their everyday needs and entitlements.

The *Future 4 Me* project commenced in September 2012 and ran until September 2016 and was supported by the Big Lottery Fund. The evaluation of the project was carried out between December 2014 and September 2016 and deployed a mixed method evaluative research model in order to investigate the impact of *Future 4 Me* on the young people and agencies concerned. The quantitative aspect of the study investigated the experiences and perceptions of project clients (i.e., young people/participants), via a questionnaire survey of those involved, whilst also collating local, regional and national data on young people's engagement with this, and similar, initiatives. The qualitative aspect of the evaluation involved in-situ observations of *Future 4 Me* participants (young people) during project delivery and semi-structured, one-to-one and/or focus group interviews with the project staff team/practitioners, and stakeholder/partner agencies. The overall aim of the evaluation was to explore the extent to which the project met its stated aims. With these issues at its core, the evaluation sits comfortably amidst broader debates surrounding the curtailment of re-offending and innovative approaches to resettlement and social and political agendas concerning criminal justice, social inclusion/cohesion and youth/community development.

Key findings

The key findings of the report are as follows:

- *Future 4 Me* participants spoke positively about their experiences of the project and the advantages on offer in terms of the help and practical support which they received in relation to: securing and managing accommodation, handling finances, education, training and employment opportunities, access to health care services, mental/emotional and physical wellbeing, and carrying out everyday tasks, i.e., assistance with obtaining documents such passports and birth certificates, reading letters, completing forms, making telephone calls and keeping appointments (e.g., with social services, probation, health practitioners);

- Project participants highlighted how they were frequently assisted by Key Workers frequently in their negotiations with statutory services around referrals to accommodation providers to ensure that they were not at risk of being homeless upon release from prison and/or when moving on from or losing their existing accommodation;

- Housing was identified by young people as one of the key areas with which they received support with 82.7% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that *Future 4 Me* had helped them with their housing needs. This ranged from assisting young people in attending housing interviews and referring them to the Housing Support Register, to supporting young people to manage their tenancies and develop independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting;

- Survey findings revealed that 79.3% of young people surveyed 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the project had helped them move towards employment, training and /or education. Young people who accessed this type of support reported receiving encouragement and motivation from staff as well as practical help with things such as exploring options, writing job or college applications and preparing for interviews;

- Project staff believed that part of what made employment support so effective was: (i) the time that staff had to dedicate to young people, and (ii) the flexible and tailored approach which they deployed in providing such support. Having quality time with

participants allowed staff to discern in more detail the kinds of barriers that young people were facing, where their career interests/ambitions lay, the stage that they were at in their employment journey, and the expectations that they held;

- Young people reported positive relationships with project staff and considered the staff team to be one of the main strengths of the project. The vast majority of young people (89.6%) surveyed reported having a good relationship with a trusted adult who they liked and respected. Young people and staff alike highlighted the significance of relationship in terms of their overall experiences of the project;

- Young people who had previously been in custody noted how the project had helped prevent reoffending. Many young people reported that after being released from prison they often lacked meaningful ways to spend their time and, as a result, were often tempted back into antisocial and/or criminal activity. *Future 4 Me* offered the opportunity to become regularly involved in activities such as sport, cookery and art as well as occasional days out (e.g., climbing, indoor skiing, go-karting). This provided young people with more positive ways to occupy their time and helped to remove the urge to (re)offend in order to relieve boredom;

- Survey findings revealed that 62% of young people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that *Future 4 Me* had provided them with activities to fill their time and 65.5% said that the project had had a positive impact on their offending behaviour. In turn, a small number of young people said that the project had helped reduce reoffending and/or antisocial behaviour because their Key Workers had encouraged them to see the value in making more positive lifestyle choices, giving them hope of a better future and supporting them whilst they made steps towards their aspirations;

- Project participants and stakeholder/partner agencies alike highlighted the fact that Key Workers had the necessary time to dedicate to engaging and working with complex young people. Professionals within statutory services often noted that through partnering with *Future 4 Me* they could ensure that young people had access to the additional practical and/or emotional support that they needed but which they were unable to provide themselves due to the way their own services were structured;

- *Future 4 Me* staff were not as restricted as statutory or other primarily office-based services might be in terms of their engagement with young people and this was considered a significant benefit by all those associated with the project. To this end, staff were able to exercise a greater degree of flexibility than other professionals with regards to how and where they provided support. This approach helped maximise opportunities for engagement by avoiding the creation of unnecessary barriers and by facilitating the development of trusting relationships. *Future 4 Me* Key Workers were able to go out into the community and meet young people in physical spaces that they felt comfortable in and carry out activities which young people found enjoyable and/or relevant;

- Partners, stakeholders and project staff reported that, on the whole, their experiences of multiagency working had been positive and successful, allowing all parties involved to deliver a better service to young people. In particular, findings highlighted the roles of communication and sharing professional expertise. *Future 4 Me* staff were regularly praised by partners for keeping in close contact and sharing information with the various agencies with which they engaged. Similarly, professionals working with *Future 4 Me* valued this multi-agency approach because it allowed people to come together and support each other in their roles by sharing knowledge, providing access to specialist skills, exploring ideas, thinking creatively and joint problem solving;

- Staff found that adopting a psychologically informed approach towards their work had helped to make them more aware of young people's psychological and emotional needs as well as gaining a better understanding of psychological basis for behaviours. This helped to shape their responses to young people;

- Managerial staff within partner/stakeholder organisations expressed a desire to continue to work closely with 1625 Independent People and with their help start to develop a way of working with young people in a way that was relationship based and psychologically informed and there was rising expectation on them to deliver this. The toolkit currently being developed by Future 4 Me/1625 Independent People which would deliver training on topics such as using relationships as a tool for change and PIE/Reflective Practice was seen as a potential solution to this problem. Another

perceived benefit of the toolkit was that it could be used in a multi-agency setting to provide a common framework, helping to ensure that all the agencies involved with a young person had shared knowledge and understanding of the psychological/emotional issues in play and are working in a way that is therapeutic, relationship based and consistent;

- The ability of Key Workers to act as advocates for young people was considered an important part of the project by all involved (i.e., staff, young people and partners/stakeholders);

- Young people found it helpful to have someone supporting them in meetings and to have staff with them at appointments with other agencies in order to help both parties to understand each other's perspectives and needs. This enabled young people to maintain their engagement with key services which, in turn, helped prevent them from returning to custody or being made homeless.

Conclusions

In terms of the specific aims of *Future 4 Me*, this report indicates that the project makes a valuable contribution to the personal and social needs of those with whom it engages. In turn, project participants reported: (i) improvements in their understandings of (and ability to engage with) wider agency support including housing, healthcare and education, training and employment opportunities; (ii) reduced involvement in anti-social/offending behaviour; and (iii) an increased sense of connection, advocacy and entitlement in relation to social service provision. What this report also demonstrates is that the development of trusting relationships (via on-going investment) is key to the engagement of those from hard to reach groups within the context of the youth justice sector. In turn, such levels of investment can facilitate the exploration of a series of broader life choices for those who choose to access the opportunities on offer.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent external evaluation of the *Future 4 Me* project which is hosted by the organisation 1625 Independent People. The project evaluation conducted by the University of Gloucestershire commenced on 1st August 2014 and concluded on 1st September 2016; it was financed by The Big Lottery Fund.

The *Future 4 Me* project is specifically targeted towards the development of effective and improved resettlement solutions for young people aged 16-21 leaving custody and care. More specifically the project works with those who other services have found most difficult to engage and who are at high risk of homelessness, reoffending, poor employment, education and/or health outcomes. Using a psychologically informed approach, the project aims to work in a way that understands and responds to the needs of young people in a therapeutic manner, using relationships as the main tool for change. This is achieved, in part, through the use of Reflective Practice and sharing specialist skills/knowledge. The project also aims to facilitate the co-ordination of efficient collaborative relationships between the various organisations and agencies that work with the young people in order to service their everyday needs and entitlements.

2. THE EVALUATION

2.1 Aims and objectives

Utilising an action research approach, the evaluation focused on the extent to which 1625 Independent People meets its stated aims within the context of the *Future 4 Me* project. To this end, the research team adopted a developmental and integrational evaluation strategy whereby they worked with project clients (i.e., young people engaged with *Future 4 Me*), staff/practitioner teams, and stakeholders/partner agencies to generate clear understandings of the everyday processes around which the project operates. In this sense the evaluation process was cyclical and on-going, with each stage of data collection (and analysis) informing the next thereby increasing the potential for instances of 'good practice' to be disseminated across project personnel and networks.

In particular, the evaluation seeks to address the following research questions:

(i)   What is the impact of the *Future 4 Me* project on the lives of young people and what do young people identify as most valuable and significant about the project?

(ii)   What do partners and stakeholders identify as most valuable and significant about the project?

(iii)   What are the factors and triggers that facilitate or hinder the achievement of *Future 4 Me* project outcomes?

(iv)   To what extent does *Future 4 Me* assist in joining up services for young people in transition?

(v)   To what extent does *Future 4 Me* manifest 'good practice' with regards to the development of policy (and practice) in this area?

With these issues at its core, the evaluation sits comfortably amidst broader debates surrounding the curtailment of re-offending and innovative approaches to resettlement.

2.2 Methods and methodology

A mixed method evaluative research model was deployed in order to investigate the impact of the *Future 4 Me* project on the young people and agencies concerned. The research involved both quantitative and qualitative elements. Data collection was on-going between December 2014 and September 2016.

Quantitative data was collected from project participants via questionnaire survey and investigated the attainment of key outcomes around accommodation, employment, education and training[1] and physical[2] and mental wellbeing.[3] The initial evaluation design involved project participants completing pre and post intervention questionnaires so as to be able to track progress over time. However, as a result of difficulties encountered with re-contacting young people, only a very small number completed both pre and post measures within the follow up period.[4] This meant that the sample size was not large enough to perform a reliable statistical analysis. With this in mind, and given the fact there was not sufficient time left

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[1] Items relating to accommodation, offending, employment, education and training were developed by the research team specifically for the *Future 4 Me* evaluation study.

[2] Items relating to physical and mental health were adapted from the Casey Life Skills Assessment.

[3] Mental wellbeing was measured using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008) which was funded by Scottish Executive National Programme for improving mental health and wellbeing, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh.

[4] Where young people completed pre and post questionnaires their most recent questionnaire responses were included in the analysis.

within the evaluation to be able to administer both pre and post-test questionnaires to new participants, the decision was taken to only administer questionnaires to new participants at a single point in time for the remainder of the project.

The qualitative aspect of the evaluation involved in-situ observations of *Future 4 Me* participants (young people) during project delivery and semi-structured, one-to-one and/or focus group interviews with the project staff team/practitioners, and stakeholder/partner agencies. exploring their experiences of project delivery. Qualitative data was analysed using a grounded theory approach whereby respondent interpretations of their experiences of the project were explored in detail as were the meanings which they attached to these experiences (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Langdridge, 2007; Bryman, 2015). Interview discussion explored participant perceptions and experiences of the project and their role within it. The questioning style during interview was open-ended and, where necessary, further probing took place to clarify responses (sees Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Willig, 2008; Smith, 2008). Interview and focus groups lasted between 15 and 70 minutes and were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim. Grounded theory methodology allows for the systematic analysis of data through a process of open, axial and selective coding, and the formation of a conceptual narrative that explains the experiences of participants from their perspective (Charmaz, 2000, 2014). Data were coded, managed and organised manually and were subsequently analyzed in four stages (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008). First, transcripts were read in full to gain an overview of the data. Second, each transcript was individually coded and indexed allowing the different aspects of respondent experience to be captured. Third, these experiences were clustered and inductively rationalized into a number of over-arching topics. The final stage of analysis involved the formal organization of these topics into generic themes in line with which the qualitative data are presented. The empirical findings of the evaluation are located and contextualized against an analysis of existing research and it is to a review of this literature that we initially turn.

3. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

3.1 Young people in care and/or custody

There is a substantial amount of overlap between the risk factors associated with being a looked after child and those associated with being a young offender. Both are considerably more likely than their peers to have experienced neglect, abuse and poor parental supervision and have a wide range of needs relating to education, employment and training, mental and physical health, substance misuse, relationships and unstable living conditions. Perhaps not surprisingly, care leavers are significantly over represented within the prison population, comprising around 25% of offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2012; Prison Reform Trust, 2016). However, whilst care and/or custody leavers may differ from their peers in this regard, the challenges that both groups face as they transition towards independent living are not dissimilar, save the fact that care/custody leavers often do not have the same resources or experiences to draw upon as those who have grown up within their birth families. This is where the role of professionals both within and outside of statutory services becomes crucial, as it is often they who take on the responsibility of ensuring that care/custody leavers have the skills and support necessary to successfully enter into adulthood (Daly, 2012).

Whilst the number of young people entering the care system is rising,[5] recent figures show that the number of people entering the youth and criminal justice system has reduced. Where young offenders are concerned there has been a fall in the number of first time entrants, down 9% from 2014-15 (Ministry of Justice, 2016a; Ministry of Justice, 2016b). Whilst this is encouraging, data also shows that the reoffending rate has increased. Of the 1,100 young offenders (i.e., those under age 18) released in the period October 2013 - September 2014, 68% reoffended within a year, representing an increase of 1.5% on the previous year. The reoffending rate for adult offenders during the same period was 45.6% (a marginal increase on the previous year) with levels of reoffending being highest among the 18-20 age cohort (Ministry of Justice, 2016a; Ministry of Justice 2016c). Likewise, findings suggest that whilst the number of people entering the youth justice system is getting smaller, those that remain have more complex needs, are likely to display a more entrenched pattern of offending and commit more serious crimes (Bateman, Hazel & Wright, 2013; Ministry of Justice 2016d).

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[5] As of March 2016, the number stood at 70,440, representing an increase of 5% since 2012.

3.2 Relationships

Research findings (including those from Lord Laming's recent review of looked after children in the criminal justice system) have highlighted the important role that positive relationships can play in acting as a protective factor against negative life outcomes and their potential to solve some of the deep and complex problems facing today's society (Cottam, 2015; Prison Reform Trust, 2016). Cottam (2015) reveals that up until recently the idea of relationships had been purposefully written out of social work practices, which operated on a model put forth in the Beveridge Report (1942) of an impersonal and detached system of care aimed at maximising finite resources. Cottam (2015) argues that intervention works best when the client has a choice over who supports them and when that person is perceived as having human qualities (as opposed to embodying 'the system'), stands by them, listens to their needs and offers practical support. To this end, Cottam coins a new way of working which she calls 'relational welfare'. Unfortunately this is not the kind of experience that all young people have with regard to living in and leaving care and/or custody.

A recent survey conducted by the Centre for Social Justice (2014) found that 77% of young people leaving care struggled with feelings of loneliness and isolation. Many of their existing relationships with birth families or former carers had broken down whilst in care, with 55% reporting that they had difficulties maintaining contact with their support networks. Similarly, offenders often did not receive any assistance from prison staff in helping them to maintain contact with friends, family or partners. Indeed, their own efforts to do so were undermined by the expense of telephone calls and the fact they were often placed too far from home to receive visitors, meaning that relationships often broke down whilst they were in custody (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014). There was often a lack of consistency amongst the professionals young people worked with. This was usually due to staff turnover or the young person having multiple care placements. Often the latter also meant leaving behind school teachers and friends (Centre for Social Justice, 2014).

Even where stability does exist there are other barriers in play. The caseloads of Personal Advisors average around 30, but can be higher in some local authorities. This means that workers often do not have the time to cultivate meaningful relationships with young people (Centre for Social Justice, 2014; Ridley *et al*, 2013). The Laming Review found that many care leavers were frustrated that meetings with social workers were often spent taking notes and ticking boxes as opposed to listening and engaging in real conversation. To the young

people concerned, this represented a lack of genuine care for them as a person (The Prison Reform Trust, 2016). Additionally the role of local authorities in separating young people from their families (combined with negative experiences of the care system) led to the mistrust of the professionals within it (Centre for Social Justice, 2014). As a result young people often found it difficult to form new relationships and lacked the support of trusted individuals as they transitioned into adulthood and independent living. This lack of support sometimes meant that relatively minor issues had the potential to escalate into something much more significant. For example, one young person reported how she ended up in a large amount of debt because she had no one to show her how to pay her bills (Centre for Social Justice, 2014).

Feedback from care leavers and those still in care frequently reveals that they feel as though they would have benefitted from having someone consistent in their lives who was 'there' for them both practically and emotionally; someone who cared for them, who they trusted and who would listen, support and advocate their needs and interests (see Gaskell 2010; Mcleod, 2010; Prison Reform Trust, 2016; Ridley *et al,* 2013; Selwyn & Riley, 2015). Where these types of relationships existed they resulted in positive outcomes for care leavers including increased chances of being in paid work or education/training, more stable accommodation and decreased likelihood of offending (Daly, 2012; Dixon & Stein, 2003; Prison Reform Trust, 2016). A significant number of respondents featured in Laming, reported that they had no such relationships. Therefore it was recommended that professionals within statutory services should not only strive to build consistent, long term relationships with young people based upon mutual respect and understanding, but, where appropriate, young people should also be supported in maintaining familial ties (Prison Reform Trust, 2016). Whilst such recommendations are commendable, it is clear that in their present state many statutory services do not have the time capacity or the infrastructure to facilitate more relationship-centred working due to issues such as high caseloads and staff turnover. This is where the voluntary sector can make a significant contribution, providing support that is complimentary and/or additional to statutory services. Findings from Beyond Youth Custody (Bateman & Hazel, 2013) echo the message about the importance of good quality relationships, emphasising the crucial role they play in engaging young people in interventions and achieving positive outcomes. However, it is also noted that whilst there is much consensus in the literature about the power and salience of good relationships, there is less research into the constituent elements of successful relationships and how these should be built.

3.3 Accommodation

In 2016 37% of former care leavers (aged 19-21) had moved onto independent living at an average age of 18 (Department for Education, 2016a). This is in comparison to their non-looked after peers who can often expect to stay in the family home until they feel ready to move on at some point in their twenties, or even early thirties (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Being able to live independently and manage a tenancy requires a range of skills (e.g., cooking, cleaning and budgeting), many of which would ordinarily be nurtured within the family home, with young people being allowed to gain responsibility gradually under the guidance of their parents. Young people leaving care and/or custody often do not have the opportunity to develop such skills due to spending time inside prison and/or care homes and can struggle as a result (Centre for Social Justice, 2014; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Over half of young people surveyed by the Centre for Social Justice (2014) found it difficult to maintain safe and secure accommodation when they left care, two thirds of care leavers felt that they did not receive enough day to day support, and 57% said they found it hard to manage their finances and avoid debt

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Similarly, for those in custody the HM Inspectorate of Probation (2012) failed to find any evidence of planning around young people's futures and did not observe any successful transitions into independent living. Young people frequently do not know where they will be living upon release from custody until the latter stages of their sentence, this despite the fact that the provision of suitable housing can reduce reoffending by up to 20% by providing the stability needed to access health services, gain employment and address offending behaviour (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2015; Home Office 2001; Gojkovic, Mills & Meek, 2012; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Those leaving custody face specific barriers to securing housing. It may be that they are excluded from certain accommodation provision due to their criminal record or that they do not meet eligibility criteria to allow them to escape homelessness, in which case their local council is under no statutory obligation to house them (Gojkovic, Mills & Meek, 2012; Wilson, 2014).

Related research has identified the need for young people leaving care and custody to have more access to practical support around securing and managing their tenancies (Daly, 2012; Dixon & Stein, 2003; Selwyn % Riley, 2015; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2007). This is made all the more critical by the fact that care and/or custody leavers have particular needs in relation to accommodation and a lack of suitable housing can leave

them vulnerable to homelessness (Barnardos, 2014; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Youth Justice Board, 2007). 11% of all homelessness cases involve care leavers yet they only make up 1% of the general population (Homeless Link, 2014). Those whose time in care was characterised by instability are potentially at greater risk with one study showing that of those care leavers who experienced homelessness, 43% had four or more placements. Similarly, research by Schofield *et al* (2014) reveals that young people with upwards of four placements are more likely to offend (see also: Williams, Poyser & Hopkins, 2012).

3.4 Education, training and employment

Recent research by the Department of Education (2016a) on former care leavers aged 19-21 shows that 40% were not in employment, education or training (NEET) compared with 14% of all 19-21 year olds. Moreover, looked after children are less likely to attain 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE (or equivalent) than their non-looked after peers (14% vs. 53% respectively) (Department for Education, 2016b). The disruption caused by a lack of familial stability makes it very difficult for young people to focus on their education and/or employment. Those with the most placement moves tend to experience the worst outcomes in relation to education, training and employment (Jones *et* al, 2011; Prison Reform Trust, 2016). The Hadley Centre (2015) found that 38% of young people in care had experienced at least one placement move in the previous 12 months, 25% had moved more than twice, and 16% three or more times. Dixon and Stein (2003) found that 95% of their study participants had truanted or been excluded and half had been victims of bullying.

Research with care leavers has also revealed that the professionals around them typically hold low expectations in terms of their future successes and that these young people often lack the presence and support of encouraging adults who might motivate them to succeed. Dixon and Stein (2003) found that those care leavers who achieved good outcomes relating to education, employment and training (ETE) had been supported by professionals or family members. Young offenders are 2.6 times more likely to be classified as NEET than their non-offending peers (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Research shows that employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half. However, two-thirds of prisoners arrive in prison from unemployment, one in seven have never been employed and three-quarters leave prison with no job to go to. A criminal record can present a significant barrier to employment with three quarters of employers admitting they would not look favourably upon those with a history of offending. Without employment, people leaving custody find it harder to maintain

their tenancies and may resort to earning money through illegitimate means. As well as a lack of employment history those entering the criminal justice system tend to have poor levels of educational attainment with over half of prisoners not having any formal qualifications at all and many being at or below the minimum expectation levels in relation to reading, writing and numeracy that are required for 96% of jobs (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Therefore raising education and skill levels has the potential to impact positively on the ability to gain employment.

3.5 Mental and physical wellbeing

Children and young people within the care system have poorer levels of mental and physical health than their peers. Two thirds have at least one physical health concern and almost half suffer from mental health difficulties. This is likely linked to the reasons behind young people being taken into care in the first place with over half entering as a result of abuse or neglect (Centre for Social Justice, 2014; Department for Education, 2016a; Luke *et al*, 2014; Selwyn & Riley, 2015). Likewise, young people in custody often present with mental and physical health problems and tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds characterised by absentee parents, experiences of care, and/or disrupted education and living arrangements (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Mental health problems are more prevalent among those in care and custody than in the general population (Chistabesan *et al, *2006*; Ford *et al,* 2007*; Luke *et al*, 2014). The Laming Review found that young people in care had difficulties accessing suitable mental health services; this is reflective of the inadequacy of mental health services more generally for children and young people in England (Prison Reform Trust, 2016). However, young people in care sometimes harboured mistrust towards services and stigma could also act as a barrier. As such it is suggested that health services need to be brought to young people in order to ensure that the most vulnerable and hard to reach receive the help that they need and to allow young people to access services on their terms, without intrusion from others (Centre for Social Justice, 2015; Selwyn & Riley, 2015). In some instances there is a lack of knowledge among professionals about mental health issues and which services they may refer to (Lamont et al., 2009). In turn, frequent placement moves could have an adverse effect on young people's mental and physical health as a result of losing touch with trusted sources of emotional support and changing GP's (Selwyn & Riley, 2015).

Past studies have found that marginalised young people often feel that they do not receive as much information as their peers concerning physical health issues such as healthy living, sexual health and substance misuse as well as the practical aspects of accessing health care services such as free prescription entitlements and how to register at doctor and dentist surgeries (Selwyn & Riley, 2015).

3.6 Multi-agency working

Young people leaving care and custody often present with a range of complex needs, therefore interventions should seek to take a holistic view and provide individualised support (Bateman & Hazel, 2013; Beyond Youth Custody, 2015; The Centre for Social Justice, 2014; Daly, 2012; Department of Education, 2013; Ministry of Justice, 2013). This is likely to require involvement from a number of professionals and services across different sectors. Adopting a multiagency approach can help improve outcomes for young people by ensuring that services are well co-ordinated, enable joint planning and delivery of support, share knowledge, identify gaps in provision and increase accessibility and suitability (Atkinson, Jones & Lamont, 2007; Cheminais, 2009; Oliver, Mooney & Statham, 2010).

3.7 The voice of the young person

As we have seen, many disadvantaged young people want to be listened to and have their voices heard. To help ensure that young people are actively engaged in the resettlement process it is important that these desires are recognised and that work is carried out collaboratively in order to achieve positive change. Not only is this beneficial for the young person in terms of fostering responsibility, trust and self-esteem, but it enables professionals to better understand and respond to the needs of their client group (Wright, Francis and Goodfellow, 2014). Often young people's voices are not heard within and across the many systems and organisations with which they work and this can lead to feelings of anger, powerlessness and 'acting out' in order to try to regain some control (Prison Reform Trust, 2016). Young people also often report uncertainty concerning their rights and entitlements (e.g., to financial support) and a lack of faith in the complaints system. Hence, it is recommended that every young person should have a 'key supporter' outside of statutory services who can act as an advocate for them and champion their interests. (Prison Reform Trust, 2016).

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 Sample characteristics

Between May 2015 and September 2016 a total of 29 young people who engaged with the *Future 4 Me* project completed evaluation questionnaires. Of these 26 were male and 3 were female. The age of participants ranged between 17 and 23 years (*mean age = 19.9, standard deviation = 1.5*) 93.3% were of White ethnic origin, 3.4 % Black and 3.4% classified themselves as being of 'other' ethnic origin.

31% of participants had not achieved any formal qualifications, 41.4% had achieved GCSE level qualifications, 20.7% NVQ or equivalent and 6.9% had gained an A/AS level qualification. 86.2% reported having been excluded or expelled from school. 65.5% of participants reported spending time in care. 93.1% had been in trouble with the police and 69% had experience of custody.

Service users were categorised according to the point that they were at with project engagement. At the time of being surveyed 24.1% were considered Stage 1 service users (had recently started working with *Future 4 Me*), 31% Stage 2 (established service user accessing *Future 4 Me*) and 44.8% Stage 3 (access coming to an end or recently closed).

Due to the different time points at which questionnaires were administered, length of engagement varied greatly from a matter of days to 4.4 years. The average length of engagement was 1.3 years.

4.2 Practical support

The practical support on offer through the project was highly valued by young people. The flexible nature of the project allowed staff to assist young people with a wide range of needs. This included work around key areas in young people's lives such as the ability to secure and manage their accommodation, handle finances, look after their wellbeing and find employment, education or training, as well as help with smaller, everyday tasks like keeping appointments and completing forms. Below each area of support is explored further.

4.2.1 *Securing and managing accommodation*

Housing was identified by young people as one of the key areas with which they received support with 82.7% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that *Future 4 Me* had helped them with their housing needs. This ranged from helping young people to attend housing interviews and referring them to the Housing Support Register, to supporting young people to manage their tenancies and develop independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting. Key workers were also frequently called upon to assist young people in their negotiations with statutory services around referrals to accommodation providers to ensure that they were not at risk of being homeless upon release from prison and/or when moving on from or losing their existing accommodation:

 I do Home Choice [the Housing Register] on my own really … they helped me get onto it and apply for it … but now I'm on it I just do it on my own.

(Jess, Project Participant).

I come [sic] out [of prison] and they got me a place to live … I didn't have nowhere to live. I would have been on the street and I was only 17.

(Rob, Project Participant).

[Alisha] put in a referral for me for St. George's House [supported housing] and three days later or something like that I get a call … They said I could go there … So that was helpful. When I got kicked out of St. George's House she put in another referral for me to Knightstone … Alisha took me to my interview, got through that then got into my shared house where I am now … She took me to where [the interview] was so I felt comfortable where I was going. Then I went in the room and [Alisha left]

(Omar, Project Participant).

Often young people are released [from prison] or … getting to an age that they're leaving care and their kind of plans for move on are non-existent quite often. So part of our role is supporting that planning … trying to work with a young person to come up with a plan for moving on from wherever they are to more suitable accommodation. Often young people that we work with have

very limited kinds of independent living skills. They've often had very difficult experiences and … more often than not, haven't had the support to develop skills around independent living, managing tenancies, knowing how to cook their tea, knowing how to keep their clothes clean…all that kind of thing.

(Annie, Project Lead).

If they've gone into short term accommodation then I would be supporting them with looking at sort of move on options, so that would be helping them to apply on to the Home Choice register for their local authority … showing them how to bid etcetera, making sure they're putting the right band in.

(Jenny, Project Staff).

As the interview excerpts below illustrate, helping young people to settle into secure accommodation often provided them with much needed stability:

[Jenny] got me a [housing] interview and she told me yesterday she had good news for me. I've been accepted for a self-contained flat … that's what I've been waiting for. I've been passed from pillar to post … [since] I was in care at the age of 13, so 13 to 22 years old, a good few years … It's going to be my place. My place of rest you know what I mean? That's what I need.

(Ben, Project Participant).

I had somebody who, when I first started working with them, they were sofa surfing all over the place and because I worked with him sort of for a longer period of time … I was able to get him into a housing association flat. He got through the one year introductory tenancy. He's a secure tenant now. There hasn't been any problems with his behaviour so he's maintained that accommodation … He's still got some issues but for me that was a success.

(Jenny, Project Staff).

Of course, helping young people obtain accommodation was not without its difficulties. As staff noted, it was sometimes the case that young people were banned from certain establishments because of past transgressions which meant that finding accommodation for

them presented something of a challenge. Additionally, a lack of suitable accommodation meant that some young people were living in less than ideal circumstances:

> A lot of the young people I have worked with on Future 4 Me have come out of prison and have been homeless or they have been offered emergency accommodation in night shelters. Many of them have been like ex communicated from these in the past so it's been working with social workers, working with housing authorities to get them either into supported accommodation, hostels or with relatives and trying to support them to pay rent, to set up like direct debit, budgeting really and to set up a bank account.
>
> (Victoria, Project Staff).

> I quite often find that it's far from ideal to put the prison leavers straight into hostel accommodation … It's not the greatest environment and they often say to me 'I've just done x number of years or months in prison and this feels like it again' … [and] very often, they're very clean in prison … They take pride in keeping their cells very clean and they come out go into hostels [where] there's evidence of sort of like drug use … alcohol … and, you know, they say to me 'We're trying to stay away from all this and we've been put back in this environment.'
>
> (Jenny, Project Staff)

Of the young people that completed questionnaires 13.8 % were living in shared housing, 6.9% in a bail hostel, 10.3% were living with friends or sofa surfing, 10.3% still lived with their families, 6.9% had a foster care placement and 34.5% had other living arrangements. The majority of young people (37%) rated the quality of their accommodation as 'good' or 'very good'. 31% of young people thought that their accommodation was 'OK' and 24.1% considered the quality of their accommodation to be 'poor' or 'very poor'. Participants were also asked to rate how confident they felt on a scale of 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (very confident) on 5 items relating to looking for, securing and managing accommodation. Scores from the 5 items were summed and their mean taken to give an overall mean score for confidence in finding accommodation. A higher score indicates greater confidence. The mean score for the group was 3.4, with a standard deviation of .99 suggesting that most participants rated their confidence on these skills as neutral.

4.2.2 *Employment, training and education*

The *Future 4 Me* project also aims to help young people into employment, education and training opportunities. 79.3% of young people surveyed 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the project had helped them move towards employment, training and /or education. Young people who accessed this type of support reported receiving encouragement and motivation from staff as well as practical help with things such as exploring options, writing job or college applications and preparing for interviews:

> [They] support me with job interviews and job applications …When I was applying for apprenticeships Nathan helped me … fill in the form and think of good words to use and then he sat with me and read out some interview questions and just practice what I'd say … to prepare so I could get a taste of what it's going to be like.
>
> <div align="right">(Jess, Project Participant).</div>

> They [project staff] supported me with [my motor mechanics course] … I didn't know what companies or what courses to call so I got James to help me get onto it so if it weren't for him I don't think I'd be on the course.
>
> <div align="right">(Joe, Project Participant).</div>

> Yeah, they supported me [with getting a job]. They pushed me towards actually trying to do it … They talked me into the benefits of having a job, having your own money. I mean it's just made it easier. Obviously, I've got a family. I've got two kids so it helps me pay for stuff for them.
>
> <div align="right">(Liam, Project Participant).</div>

> It can be things like helping people to search for jobs online, to apply for them, thinking about what's important for an interview so kind of preparation for interviews, what are the right things to wear, maybe helping people to get clothes for interviews if they need that … Setting up maybe [numeracy] or English classes for young people although they don't always keep attending those but trying to kind of encourage [them] to keep going with that.
>
> <div align="right">(Danielle, Project Staff).</div>

Though there were positive instances of young people being supported to access employment, education and training opportunities (as shown above), generally the extent to which young people were successful in moving towards these outcomes varied greatly and was seen as individual to the young person in question. 13.8% of survey participants self-reported being in employment for 8 weeks or more since working with the project. Considerably more young people reported being in education for 4 or more weeks[6] and 24% said they had been involved with some kind of voluntary work since starting the project. Participants were also asked to rate how confident they felt on a scale of 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (very confident) on 5 items relating to looking and applying for employment, education and training. Scores from the 5 items were summed and their mean taken to give an overall mean score for confidence in seeking employment, education and training. A higher score indicates greater confidence. The mean score for the group was 3.2, with a standard deviation of .99 suggesting that most participants rated their confidence in these skills as neutral.

Project staff and participants alike noted the many barriers faced by these young people when trying to enter and/or sustain work or education, including: past criminal record, behavioural and/or learning difficulties, and a lack of motivation or readiness to change. Quite often it was also simply the case that finding education, employment or training was not a priority due to the chaos surrounding the other areas of their lives:

> Training and apprenticeships, they're always trying to get me into doing stuff … I attended an interview for Costa Coffee. They helped me get an apprenticeship at a car garage … They helped me to do quite a lot of stuff just quite a lot of it I fucked up … The majority of the time I'm immature, I do what I want to do not what I should be doing … At the time … I'll be dead serious, I'll be like 'Yeah, I've got an interview tomorrow' but then I'll wake up in a completely different mood like 'I'm going to cause trouble today' … even though I'd have a text on my phone from someone like Jenny in the morning saying 'Don't forget in an hour you've got an interview' … I'll just still do what I'm doing and forget about it.
>
> (Aaron, Project Participant).

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[6] These were not necessarily FE/college courses. Some were short courses run by organisations such as The Prince's Trust.

Yeah, Jenny helped me out saying [what I needed to disclose] and telling me what I got to do. She helped me do my CV and everything. I always apply for jobs and that but never hear back and then when I do [they say] 'We want to see your criminal record' … [I] show them then I don't get no phone call back after.

(Elliot, Project Participant).

4.2.3 *Mental and Physical Wellbeing*

The support available to young people around mental and physical health took many different forms. Quite often Key Workers helped to ensure young people were able to access the health services they needed by helping them sign up to a GP, attending medical appointments with them and, where necessary, referring young people to specialist mental health services:

Often young people need support in accessing health services both physical and … mental health … I would say that's really broad … from, you know, thinking about sleep routines … accessing football clubs that we've got here so that there's a bit of physical activity, signing up with GP's, signing up with dentists, right through to accessing primary mental health services and you know supporting people who may be coming in and out of hospital.

(Annie, Project Lead).

Yeah, they put me on programmes to actually try helping me with [my mental health] and yeah, I've attended a couple of programmes … I haven't put a hole in a wall or a door for about 3 months … LIFT [Psychology] was really good … I would like to go back … it did help a lot.

(Joe, Project Participant).

I got anger issues as well and they referred me to CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] because they wasn't (sic) sure if I had mental health [problems] or not … I've been diagnosed now … so they helped me with that … [If] they didn't refer me to CAMHS I wouldn't be [able to sit] here now… I'd probably sit here for five minutes swearing and everything, getting angry and just leave … It's given me more opportunities … Like last year I went to the Philippines and done some charity work. If I was like what I was in the past I

would have gone to the Philippines and ended up coming straight back … I wouldn't have been able to cope over there.

<div align="right">(Rob, Project Participant).</div>

Yeah, I mean somebody might make a referral and … they might think that somebody is … say low in mood and they're not sure … what to do with that so I might meet with them and ask them more questions … That might then lead us to perhaps making an appointment … for that person to be seen by mental health services or it might mean that we decide that that young person might just need some counselling … So, you know, it's about checking and making sure that young people are getting the services they need.

<div align="right">(Evan, Project Staff).</div>

Two of my current lads [clients] have got adult ADHD and they're not receiving medication for it because before they went into prison they were juniors and under a junior medication scheme and as adults … They have to be reassessed. So I've taken them to a psychiatrist, crisis teams, mental health support services to try and get referrals for that. A lot of them are on very varied mood swings and so a lot of my time has been taken [up] taking them to GP appointments to try and get … where appropriate anti-depressant medication or other support services.

<div align="right">(Victoria, Project Staff).</div>

The project also helped to facilitate opportunities for young people to take part in physical activity. Young people commented on the significant positive impact this had had on their mental wellbeing as well as their physical health, something that was also observed by project staff:

Now I'm going to the gym [its] making me feel better about myself. I'm cycling a lot more, not sitting on the bus so I'm losing weight; I'm thinner and fitter … I can go to the gym and … I can release my anxiety or my stress … so I'm a calm person, I can relax. [It helps] a lot because I won't get back in prison really, I won't get into fights. I can just see people's points of view

when I'm calm … instead of me just snapping at them and kicking off, I'll think rationally about the situation because I'm calm and relaxed in myself.

(Johnny, Project Participant).

What else Future 4 Me has done is got me into boxing … If they didn't do that for me I don't know where I'd be to be quite honest … It really helps … me with my temper and my anger. Every time I'm steaming and like frustrated I go down there and box it out, then it all comes out and I feel a lot better instead of like smashing up my house or smashing things or anything like that.

(Joe, Project Participant).

I found [the] boxing club most useful … because my caseload is young men who [have] some issues surrounding anger management, self-esteem and also kind of like some mental health issues … There's one young person who … became a lot more confident in terms of accessing, going down and seeing his mentor, eventually he ended up going there on his own and now he goes there without any kind of help what so ever … He's said how much it's improved his mood. Say he's in a bad mood, he can go there and work out, speak to [his mentor] let off a lot of steam in a safe way…Whereas historically he's well known … for lots of criminal damage within the housing projects he's lived in, being quite abusive and aggressive to staff and I think he's kind of identified that [boxing] really helped him.

(James, Project Staff).

Results of the survey corroborated this with 48.2% of young people reporting they were able to deal with feelings of anger without hurting others or damaging things.[7] Young people were also asked to complete the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). Analyses revealed that the average wellbeing score was 45 (*Standard deviation = 11.31)* slightly below the national average for their age group (51.7). Additionally, where physical health was concerned, it was found that the majority of young people (79.3%) were able to access medical and dental care when needed. Participants were

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[7] Brief Resilience Scale (Smith *et al.,* 2008).

also asked to rate the extent to which they agreed from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to 3 statements relating to sexual health. Scores from the 3 items were summed and their mean taken to give an overall mean score for sexual health knowledge. A higher score indicates greater knowledge. The mean score for the group was 4.3; with a standard deviation of .54 suggesting that overall participants knew how to protect themselves against STI's and unwanted pregnancy and where to seek information.

Some young people attributed improvements in their psychological and emotional wellbeing to the fact the project had helped them to make positive life changes:

> I feel better in myself, [now] that I've got a job and stopped smoking and started spending more time with my family and stuff … [there's] not that hate between me and my actual Mum … [she] used to hate me for smoking weed, causing trouble and stuff so in a way it's made it a lot better for me.
>
> (Liam, Project Participant).

> I feel happier, [I have] more freedom and stuff so I'm a lot happier … I'm more relaxed in myself because I can get out and do stuff like and [Evan is] getting me somewhere, he's making me go further, I'm not sat in my house all day … Steps are being made and things are being done and he's pushing it forward for me so, yeah, I do feel better in myself … I feel better because I know things are progressing …
>
> (Johnny, Project Participant).

Once relationships were built between young people and staff, Key Workers were also able to provide a source of emotional support for young people, helping them to cope in times of psychological distress:

> [It helps because] they're there to obviously talk to us, support us as well as everything else so you can actually talk to them about your problems , there's that chance and opportunity so you can do that.
>
> (Joe, Project Participant).

[I've] got epilepsy… Evan gave me support and helped take me to the [hospital] to get my neurology scan and stuff like that just to get it all sorted so I could find out what it was and as soon as I found out I went through a little down moment and he kept me up by seeing me every day … saying 'It's not the end of the world' and stuff and that helped … a lot because when I first found out I had epilepsy I gave up … If I tried handling it by myself I probably wouldn't be alive because there was a point where I went through a lot of depression. I was struggling with it a long time.

(Rob, Project Participant).

She's always there for me … If she sees me struggling she'll actually … ring me up and say 'Do you want to chat?' … It's not always to do with like the housing side … She's there for support as well … If I have an argument with someone … I ring her and I say to her 'Jenny look I need to chat'. She'll sit there like and … chat to me … She won't leave me to sit there and wallow … It helps me a lot because I suffer from depression.

(Ben, Project Participant).

4.2.4 *Managing money*

The ability to budget and to manage money responsibly was highlighted as a major need by some young people on the project and as such the support that *Future 4 Me* provided in this area was considered helpful. It was sometimes the case that young people had accrued a substantial amount of debt as a consequence of difficult life circumstances and poor choices. In such instances Key Workers were able to help young people to arrange manageable repayments to prevent them sinking further into debt and incurring sanctions. However, more often than not young people simply required support in making a budget plan in order to better manage their finances and general advice about how to make their money go further:

They gave me a budget plan … because I was in a lot of debt and if I kept it like that I would have got arrested and charged an even bigger fine … so it was good that [budget plan] happened and I managed to pay it all off … They would phone me up and just be like 'You haven't spent none of your budget have you?'… because back in the day I had money problems … as soon as I got money I'd spend it … but they would phone me up every time I got paid on the Friday… and

then they would come pick me up, take me shopping [and] we'd do like a £25 food shop, pay my rent and then I'd have a little bit of money at the end … [When shopping] I'd pick up all the expensive brands and they'd be like … 'No you could get twice as much more'… So I'd get like Sainsbury's basic brands and stuff [instead] and it helped me out really because I got a lot more for my food shopping than what I would have done … [before] I probably only could have got three or four meals and that's about it.

(Rob, Project Participant).

[Future 4 Me] helped me also with managing money … because I am one of those people who likes to spend money which I haven't got and obviously I have had help with that and now I'm going back to see … the cashpoint lady and she's going to be helping me some more as my benefits have been cut … They just helped budget the money down on a piece paper to say like gas, electric, council tax … at the top then obviously my food will come underneath … So I can see what I can spend because normally I'd just be like 'Oh well, council tax doesn't matter'.

(Emma, Project Participant).

We'll do like a budgeting form and then a referral to cashpoint or just going out shopping with them with the money and just seeing how they spend it and you can advise 'Instead of buying this for this price why don't we go to this other shop it'll be like the same thing or slightly the same thing but a lot cheaper'. So it's kind of putting that in their head … So just practical things that maybe for you and I would be standard but for a young person that we work with might be not something they would think about.

(Alisha, Project Staff).

My first case I worked with was a lad who I think all he needed was to sort a few key things out when he came out of prison and that kind of set him on a path … So it was around massive court fines and he needed to sort out his benefits … Working with Future 4 Me he managed to get his court fines covered in with his benefits. So his benefits were being paid to him but his court fines were also being paid off in small amounts so he still had enough money to survive on but then also

he was actually chipping away at his court fines so he wasn't going to kind of get summons reports for court hearing for fines he hadn't paid … He wouldn't have sorted it out himself if Future 4 Me hadn't have been there to help him … and I think that really allowed him to focus on other areas of his life that he could cope with.[8]

(James, Project Staff)

4.2.5 *Managing everyday life*

The practical support that young people received from project Key Workers in terms of carrying out everyday tasks was by far the most valued. Examples included assistance with obtaining important documents such passports and birth certificates, reading letters, filling in forms, making telephone calls and keeping appointments (e.g., with social services, probation, health practitioners):

It might start with really basic stuff … helping them get to … doctor's appointments, dentist appointments … YOT appointments … One of the young people who was on my caseload … he wasn't a prison leaver but a care leaver … He was also a refugee so I was doing things like helping him to kind of understand his post, pay his bills … getting ID, passports that sort of thing.

(Danielle, Project Staff).

[I]t's just the really practical things … just things such as setting up benefits, interviews, getting them to important appointments, helping them move house … positive activities, just giving them those links to things … maybe other services don't offer.

(James, Project Staff).

Of course, in one sense these may seem like very basic tasks, but for many of the young people on the project who had spent much of their lives in care or in and out of prison without having these abilities nurtured, seemingly routine jobs could present significant barriers to moving forward

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[8] 37.9% of young people surveyed said that as a consequence of their engagement with the project they had learnt how to responsibly manage their finances.

It's not complicated, it's the simple stuff … Nobody can be expected to manage accommodation, hold down a job, keep themselves clean, tidy and fed and healthy if they've never been shown how to do any of that stuff ... You can't expect people to be able to manage independently if they don't have the skills to do that.

(Annie, Project Staff).

It's really basic stuff for a lot of young people, especially if they don't have experience … like encouraging them to phone up themselves and find out about opportunities … even those little things can feel quite overwhelming so just to have somebody there who knows how you get through these things just to support with that and I think encouragements really important as well.

(Danielle, Project Staff).

The way young people described the impact of the support that they received was striking; often it was help with some of these smaller tasks that led to young people making significant steps towards achieving some of the longer term goals around health, housing, employment and offending. The latter was a particular case in point with some young people saying that support around desistence was often the difference between returning to prison or not:

[Future 4 Me] help[ed] me with transport to get places, so they paid for a push bike for me to go places … £15 from the bike project … So I can get around on my bike and stuff now so they really do help … [having the bike] helped me get to Probation, apply for jobs like going to agencies and things … I won't walk … [but] I don't mind cycling so it's opened doors up.

(Johnny, Project Participant).

[Jenny] helps me with all my forms and stuff like that, because I'm dyslexic I can't read or write so they help me a lot like that … [Without Jenny] I wouldn't be able to do it. I'd probably end up back in prison because I'd be offending because I wouldn't get my money from benefits and stuff so like I'd go out and reoffend to get money.

(Callum, Project Participant).

Coming from working with other statutory services it's great just to be able to do some of the practical tasks that really seem to help young people … resettle into living back in Bristol or moving on from being a care leaver into being more independent its … just the practical things that if they didn't get those done then they'd kind of be taking steps back rather than taking steps forward. So it's really simple things just like getting them to appointments, helping them move house, getting them to a benefits appointment, liaising with their probation officer so they don't get recalled to prison, it's just those little things.

(James, Project Staff).

4.3 Reducing re-offending

For young people who had previously been in custody one of the most notable benefits of the project was how it helped prevent reoffending. Many young people reported that after being released from prison they often lacked meaningful ways to spend their time and quickly became bored. As a result, young people were often tempted back into antisocial and/or criminal activity to pass the day. Aside from time spent meeting with Key Workers, the Future 4 Me project was able to offer young people the opportunity to become regularly involved in activities such as sport, cookery and art as well as occasional days out (e.g., climbing, indoor skiing, go-karting). Additionally, the project had a small amount of funding which could be put towards helping young people afford things like gym memberships. This provided young people with more positive ways to occupy their time and helped to remove the urge to (re)offend in order to relieve boredom:

They pay for my gym to keep me occupied too, so now I have a gym membership. This time of year I'd be sitting around, going out, getting in trouble but they said 'Keep yourself occupied' and put me in a gym, so now I'm motivating myself and keeping fit! … I came out of jail with nothing to do so I'd just go out and commit crime [because] I was bored … That's what it was really, it wasn't for money or anything [I was] just bored and my mates were doing it … [Having a] gym membership, having a bike to go around and look for jobs and things like that it's been occupying my time so I haven't got time to get bored and go out and do things.

(Johnny, Project Participant).

Basically [Future 4 Me] tried to make it more busy, take up more time in your freedom … [Before the project] I would go out doing … criminal stuff like stealing bikes … doing something that would lead me into prison or arrested … I'd wake up one morning and say 'I'm bored, I'm gonna make some money', but it'd be in the wrong way … [While] I was with Future 4 Me they'd give me a call and say 'Right, we're doing this today, do you want to come out?'… It draws me away from that situation … It keeps you off the streets.

(Joe, Project Participant).

Football … cooking … they've actually tried getting me involved in loads of community based activities … I miss quite a lot of stuff but if I wanted to attend everything there'd be something to do every day … [It] stops me from being bored … I don't like causing trouble but if I'm bored … I'll do things I know I shouldn't do but I'm not bothered because I'm just hyper … a lot of times it gets me into trouble

(Aaron, Project Participant).

[It helps] to keep my mind off because I've got a lot of energy … I want to get involved in stuff … playing football helped keep me away from prison … I enjoy playing football … the trouble is I'm in a hostel and I'm surrounded by crack heads and heroin addicts so unfortunately I get involved in that because I'm bored and I don't know what to do.

(Darren, Project Participant).

The main worry for him and for us was that he would be bored when he comes out of prison … even though a lot of what happens in prison is very boring … there is a routine and a structure and if you've been in there for eighteen months and [you come out to] no routine and no structure you can easily after the first few days of excitement wonder what to do with your time. Then boredom sets in and when boredom sets in people can drift towards smoking too much cannabis or starting to hang out with people and get into trouble again. So we've looked at football … going to the gym to do some boxing

which he's interested in, spending time talking about future plans which is kind of a way to motivate and think about what's next.

(Evan, Project Staff).

We do a lot of work around supporting young people to try and explore what it is they're interested in and also how those interests can translate into structure to kind of build routine for them … A prison regime is very, very structured and people, particularly if they've been in prison for a while really struggle when they then come out of prison with that lack of structure.

(Annie, Project Lead).

These data are supported by survey findings which revealed that 62% of young people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that *Future 4 Me* had provided them with activities to fill their time and 65.5% said that the project had had a positive impact on their offending behaviour. In turn, a small number of young people said that the project had helped reduce reoffending and/or antisocial behaviour because their Key Workers had encouraged them to see the value in making more positive lifestyle choices, giving them hope of a better future and supporting them whilst they made steps towards their aspirations:

[Alisha] is in the process of helping me get an apprenticeship … plumbing [or] mechanics … I wouldn't be where I was now if it wasn't for her. I'd be out there doing the same shit I was doing before I went to prison which was selling drugs, stealing … She's put a road in front of me … and so far I'm doing good … I see my nightclub and my garage at the very end [of the road] … but I see lots of little roads and [Alisha] is taking me off some of them to go to do things that I need to do to get to the end of the road, a couple of U-turns, back on and off I go again … She's putting everything in place for me that I need.

(Omar, Project Participant).

I don't do half the things I used to. I've settled down a lot. I don't go out causing trouble anymore. I ain't smoking weed anymore, which I used to do daily. They've turned me and pushed me down the other road … They convinced me to see the bad side rather than the good. They tried showing me that what I was doing wasn't going to get me nowhere … the only place it was

getting me was prison … They talked me around to doing it. They gave me little nudges every time they saw me to push me away from doing it and slowly but surely it sunk in and I actually decided to make a change.

<div align="right">(Liam, Project Participant).</div>

4.4 Relationships

The vast majority of young people (89.6%) surveyed reported having a good relationship with a trusted adult who they liked and respected. Young people and staff alike highlighted the significance of relationship in terms of their overall experiences of the project. Together they identified several key elements that went into building and sustaining positive relationships as well as describing how these promoted engagement and stimulated change. Below we explore each element in detail.

4.4.1 *Relationships with Key Workers*

Young people often described staff as being the mainstay of the project. One of the reasons for this was that they felt that staff genuinely cared about helping them and went the extra mile to do so. They often compared *Future 4 Me* staff to professionals within other services who they perceived as only being there to do a job:

Some companies or like agencies have workers they don't really help or don't really want to engage with you, they just want to get paid and do their job. Some people that work there [F4M] … they are actually decent people, they'll go out their way to actually help you even if it does bite into a bit of their time ... Growing up in the care system there's always social workers and things like that and they're not there for [you], they're there because they're placed with you to do this. Evan hasn't got to work with me, if he wants he can say 'I don't want to work with him' ... He goes out of his way. He'll pick me up and take me places like he hasn't got to do that, I'm supposed to go down to him but if I aint got the money he'll got out his way 'I'll come to you today, I'll take you out.' It feels more meaningful.

<div align="right">(Johnny, Project Participant).</div>

I just think [Evan] is a legend. He'll do anything, as much as he can [to help]…There's a lot of things he can't do but I know for a fact that if that thing

could be done he'd do everything in his power to do it … He cares, there's not a lot of people who care, they say do but they don't … Evan is one of those people who care.

<div align="right">(Rob, Project Participant).</div>

I think for most of the young people we work with … not only will they probably have had lots of relationships that have broken down for one reason or another or you know pretty traumatic experiences, also they'll have had lots of professionals coming in and out of their lives and I think for a lot of those young people you're just another person who's coming into their life for some reason … So, actually building a relationship early on is really, really important … It's gonna take a long time for young people to trust you so you've really got to demonstrate that you care and you've really got to take the time to listen to them and … hear what they want or what matters to them … I think it's just really important to be genuine and to not come across as … a detached professional who is just doing their job. Of course, you are doing a job and you've got to keep your boundaries but at the same time I think you have to go a little bit extra, a little bit further and show that you're there to help them and take an interest in them as a person.

<div align="right">(Danielle, Project Staff).</div>

4.4.2 *The importance of 'second chances'*

Both staff and young people highlighted the importance of persistence and the necessity of a 'second chance' mentality. It was acknowledged by staff members that the young people on the project faced many difficulties and that change was unlikely to happen overnight. It was a journey during which young people were likely to make mistakes and what was needed was for staff to stand alongside them and to guide them until they got it right:

They're not going to throw you off the company, they'll be like 'You screwed up once and we'll give you another chance'… [They might] just take you off for a good couple months and then they'll bring you back and be like 'Right, we'll do it slower this time, we want you to be working with us, we want your co-operation'… and that's what the company wants, no other company does that.

<div align="right">(Rob, Project Participant).</div>

They put me into a place [at the] Restore Trust for a day to do my CSCS test … They paid £20 for me to do the test and … I missed it … [but] they still … paid another £20 for me to do another test … They give second chances … and because I went down there and failed the test they'll rebook it again now …

(Johnny, Project Participant).

Evan does give you a lot of support, even if you're angry, stressed or, say, like you're shouting at [him] or something like that, you're putting so much pressure on him [and] he's still there because he cares about that person ...

(Kyle, Project Participant).

It's keeping going when they do something stupid or they come in and say 'I just got nicked, I was stealing stuff'… You just kind of think 'Okay, you've done it, accept what's coming and now let's move on.'

(Victoria, Project Staff).

4.4.3 *Consistency, reliability, honesty and trust*

Given that young people had previously been in care and/or custody, it was often the case that they had experienced working relationships with a number of professionals and, as a result, had built up a certain amount of mistrust towards such people and the services which they offered/represented. In order to overcome this, project staff often had to prove that they could be trusted by demonstrating consistency, reliability and honesty:

[My] relationship with Jenny is good. I couldn't ask for a better worker … If I ask her to do something she'll help with it until it's done … She's not one of those people that'll say 'Yeah, I'll help you' and don't do anything. She'll help me with it straight away.

(Callum, Project Participant).

I don't trust no one … I don't talk to no one about nothing. But Jenny, I talk to her about anything … [because] she's just always been there for me … she sticks to her word

(Elliot, Project Participant).

As these extracts illustrate, the establishment of trust between Key Workers and young people was a fundamental ingredient in the relationship building process. By maintaining consistency and integrity, staff were able prove to young people that they could be relied upon to support them. That staff were seen to care also helped to reassure young people that relationships with Key Workers were genuine and authentic. Notwithstanding the fact that a number of young people made it clear that they were reluctant to place their trust in anyone at all, many stated that they trusted their Future 4 Me worker more than any of the other professionals they worked with. Nevertheless, young people clearly felt comfortable confiding in staff and going to them for help. This, in turn, meant that project staff were able to offer young people advice and ensure that they were appropriately supported through difficult circumstances:

It's a lot better than most official relationships I got … there's a lot of people I wouldn't talk to, I wouldn't open up to… [But] I can tell [Alisha] about my past, what happened in my past, how I got to where I am now … She's a good listener.

(Omar, Project Participant).

I felt happy that I could talk to someone. I don't talk to many people about my problems. But, yeah, to a Future 4 Me worker, I mean I don't tell them absolutely everything but I tell them parts that are on my mind … They're there to help you aint it so like I'm gonna trust them, there's not many people I trust … when it comes to workers.

(Joe, Project Participant).

Anything I'll talk to Jenny about. I'll talk to her about everything, even stuff that's going on in my life if you know what I mean? If I'm worrying about something or I'm curious about something [and] I wanna ask questions … or I wanna get involved in some sort of training like I ask her first.

(Callum, Project Participant).

They have really stressful lives for one thing, so actually just being able to offload is very important. I think having a trusted adult, you know lots of them don't have reliable adults in their lives and to have somebody who they think of as responsible but caring as well … So somebody who's a bit stable and who they

can talk to about the things they're going through because a lot of the time life is really difficult for them and everybody needs someone to talk to don't they? I think a lot of the time there might not be anyone else actually so to have someone they can off load to…and who's advice they can trust and who they can trust to be looking out for them and not have other agendas and I think that's really important yeah.

(Danielle, Project staff).

4.4.4 *Getting along with others*

It was important to young people that their Key Worker was someone they got along with, someone who was easy to talk to and with whom they could have fun and share jokes. As one interview participant noted, if young people did not enjoy spending time with their key worker then they would be unlikely access the service. Staff also noted that relationships with young people were more successful when they 'clicked' in this way. Additionally, doing fun activities together was also seen by staff as an important opportunity to build a good rapport:

We can have a laugh you know what I mean? A bit of banter which is always good … Some workers I don't like … To be a worker in that sort of job you've got to know how to talk to young people and some people can't and that's when no one likes them … If you don't like them you're not going to want them to do anything for you ...

(Jess, Project Participant).

I think the key thing is you have a laugh with them as well and that's really important. So you do fun things as well as all the paperwork stuff, so when we do get to take them out on activities that's nice. If you like it shows that we are human, not just sort of sitting there doing paperwork!

(Jenny, Project Staff).

You've got a few [young people] where from the moment you meet you click and with those people you meet regularly … they wouldn't call and say 'I can't be bothered' where as some people … it doesn't click [and] those are the people that disengage quite quickly

(Alisha, Project Staff).

4.4.5 *Permission to challenge young people*

As well as allowing staff to become a trusted source of advice and support, a strong relationship meant that Key Workers felt able to challenge young people about their decisions and encourage them to make more positive lifestyle choices in order to stimulate change:

> I think when you've got a good relationship with someone you can say things that you can't if you haven't got the relationship. You know you can feel safe and you can … maybe be a bit more honest and a bit more confrontational at times, you can nudge things, move things because the relationship means you've got permission to do it. If you were just a worker and there's no relationship [then] there's a distance. So I suppose you get closer to somebody, they trust you and then you can say things that normally you wouldn't … [So] I don't think conflict arises as much as you imagine it could because the relationship is there that protects you.
>
> (Evan, Project Staff).

> I think once staff have got relationships with young people … they can help them think about things that maybe aren't helpful, maybe think about things that would be helpful for them and … be alongside them as they go through the struggles … So, I think the relationship enables them to get alongside that young person and once [built] … there's a bit of scope for that worker to help guide that young person through the tricky bits.
>
> (Annie, Project Lead).

4.5 Time

One of the greatest strengths of the project identified across staff members, young people and stakeholder/partner agencies alike was the fact that Key Workers had the necessary time to dedicate to engaging and working with complex young people. Professionals within statutory services often noted that through partnering with *Future 4 Me* they could ensure that young people had access to the additional practical and/or emotional support that they needed but which they were unable to provide themselves due to the way their own services were structured. With their comparatively smaller caseloads, *Future 4 Me* staff were perceived as having the scope to do the depth and quality of work necessary to help young people address their specific needs:

He'd had quite a lot of support when he was 16, 17 and then he got to 18 and actually there was no money left to pay for that from our local authority and his … additional support would have just dropped off really and I couldn't see him as much as I think he needed. So, it was really good to be able to refer to Future 4 Me for that because he just needed some extra help really. To start … [he needed] someone to meet with and talk to and share his problems with and then that turned into more practical support around his housing and looking for work and education … statutory-wise we really only have to see a young person once every eight weeks but this young man really wanted to see someone on a weekly basis and Evan was able to see him once every fortnight … which was really helpful for him.

(Social Worker).

They [the F4M staff team] have that extra time they can give it … they're time is focused … whereas … I'd be doing the living skills, the money, then I'd be looking at drugs and family relationships, emotional wellbeing … They come in at that one element so they've got that time and skill set in one particular area … [It's] sharing the workload and them bringing that specialism to the table which is brilliant. Instead of me dipping into that in that short space of time you work with a young person … to bring someone in externally is really great.

(YOT Worker).

Young people also appreciated the amount of time that *Future 4 Me* staff were able to dedicate to listening to their needs and supporting them:

[The best thing is] they've got time for you … because if a young person needs that Future 4 Me workers time then they give it and that's good because obviously everyone needs time to say their peace, say their bit, I mean everyone's got things on their mind so for a Future 4 Me worker to say 'Right, what's up?' when they're out … that's really good because that means that they're willing to help, they're willing to say 'Right what's your problem?' and things like that and take it … forward and see if they can actually help.

(Joe, Project Participant).

For staff, having time to spend with young people was a prerequisite to building a positive relationship (in particular, allowing for persistence and consistency) which was ultimately used as the tool for change:

[One of the best things is] the fact that we can work a long time with young people, we can be quite flexible and be led by them and see them you know quite frequently. Lots of these young people see their Social Worker once every month or six weeks, you can't really build up much of a relationship of trust in those kinds of time scales.

(Danielle, Project Staff).

Time [is important] … because it enables you [to build] a relationship … We're also not working with a bunch of young people who can turn up to an appointment and say 'This is what I'm worried about'… More often than not I would say, we're working with young people who maybe don't even have the language to describe how they're feeling so we've kind of got to go right back to the beginning and think about what is emotional literacy. You can't teach emotional literacy in a one hour session once a week with somebody who can't be in a room …

(Annie, Project Lead).

I feel as though I can spend a reasonable amount of time with each young person so you can … form quite strong relationships with them that kind of allows them to trust you and want to work with you so you feel like you really do the tasks that really help.

(James, Project Staff).

We've been able to give them time that other people haven't been able to give them and consistency and, you know, endlessly forgiving them for things that don't go well, you know and keep coming back and coming back and coming back even though they might struggle or might be abusive or difficult to be with so it's kind of persistence.

(Evan, Project Staff).

4.5.1 *Lower caseloads*

The project was specifically designed to accommodate lower caseloads and whilst the number of young people a Key Worker was assigned fluctuated throughout the life of the project, 12 was the expected norm. It was acknowledged by staff that this was low in comparison to other services and that a reduction in caseload size greatly improved outcomes for hard to reach young people. In particular, staff spoke of the benefits of being able to dedicate a whole or half day to working with a young person, especially at the beginning of their engagement with the project when the most intensive work was needed. This allowed staff to capitalise on a young person's motivation to produce tangible results which, in turn, helped to build momentum around the participant/Key Worker relationship. This perception is in line with broader research findings which show that there is often a window of opportunity when young people are transitioning from custodial to community settings during which time they possess a good deal of enthusiasm and desire for change. Often, however, this is undermined by a lack of timely and relevant support which can quickly lead to disillusionment and a return to old behaviours (Bateman, Hazel & Wright, 2013).

Staff also aired the view that working in this way may help to combat young people becoming dependent on their Key Worker. This was based on the premise that being able to work more intensively at the start of the relationship (with a view to gradually reducing support) could potentially increase the likelihood of achieving outcomes and moving young people more quickly towards independence:

> I was chatting with a colleague the other day who was saying that at the beginning of the project they had a slightly smaller caseload and there was time to spend half a day or a whole day with a young person … It varies but [at the moment] mostly we're seeing young people once a week for between one and three hours.
>
> (Danielle, Project Staff).

> I think what we need is not to work with fewer cases … intensively for a long time but maybe to work very intensively at the beginning for a chunk of time with a plan of tailoring that off, because there's often a lot to do at the beginning, practical and otherwise but if you start at that pace from the beginning, there's an expectation that will continue forever and then people become very dependent.
>
> (Evan, Project Staff).

I think [I have] 12 and I know, compared to Social Services it's nothing, but then at the same time we're not Social Services and we're not Probation. I think having a much, much smaller client [number] with more staff will … make us a lot less stressed because … you can actually see every one of these [young people] in one week and … maybe spend a whole day seeing them and you can do that every week whereas at the moment where you're working with a lot more you kind of have to pick and choose the ones you want to see that week … for an hour, not for the whole day and sometimes that's what you need.

(Alisha, Project Staff).

4.6 Flexibility

Future 4 Me staff were not as restricted as statutory or other primarily office-based services might be in terms of their engagement with young people and this was considered a significant benefit by all those associated with the project. To this end, staff were able to exercise a greater degree of flexibility than other professionals with regards to how and where they provided support. This approach helped maximise opportunities for engagement by avoiding the creation of unnecessary barriers and by facilitating the development of trusting relationships. *Future 4 Me* Key Workers were able to go out into the community and meet young people in physical spaces that they felt comfortable in and carry out activities which young people found enjoyable and/or relevant. These kinds of ventures have proved to be important in the initial engagement process (Bateman & Hazel, 2013) and it is acknowledged that such levels of flexibility may be used to tailor support around the specific needs of the young person concerned (see Cooper *et al.,* 2007; Mason & Prior, 2008):

I think flexibility to work with young people in a way that they can engage with is one of the best things about the project. So if a young person works best by standing in a bus shelter and having that conversation about accessing a mental health service then we'll do that … We try and engage with young people. We're not a service that says 'Three strikes and you're out, if you don't turn up for this appointment, we will close your case'. Obviously we get to a point where we have to disengage but we're working with people that we know won't want to engage with us probably initially, we'll have to prove ourselves a little bit and the service is set up so we can do that work

(Annie, Project Lead).

He's flexible, Evan, with meetings. Like, I can meet him either in cafes, he can come to my place, I can go to his place anytime really, flexible times, he'll ring me up, if he makes an appointment I could easily phone up and say 'Listen, I can't make it' and he'll rearrange it so everything's alright. [It's good] because kids our age don't have a clue what they're doing day in and day out … People say 'Yeah, we aint got nothing on tomorrow'. You ring me at one o'clock in the morning, I've got tons on today! So yeah being flexible is good.

(Johnny, Project Participant).

Future 4 Me work in a slightly different way to what we do … they can … go meet them in their environment … they can … go and pick them up whereas we. you know insurance-wise, we can't take young people in our cars whereas Future 4 Me are more able to do that and … being able to take someone to the gym, being able to take someone paintballing … The relationships that are formed at those points speak volumes.

(Team Leader, substance misuse support charity)

Staff and partners/stakeholders noted that meeting outside of an office environment also had the benefit of encouraging young people participate in society and could be considered less stigmatising:

Often statutory services have a very set way of working and they won't deviate from that and that's not actually that helpful. For example, with the person I mentioned earlier … our local statutory service would have met him but the only place they'd have met him is in their office … [and] … he could not face going to a community building for mental health support. It was a massive stigma for him so he wouldn't go. But he would meet with someone from Future 4 Me.

(Social Worker).

Yeah, we're a lot more flexible we can be a lot more reactive as well in terms of kind of being there for young people and yeah kind of as their needs arise we can kind of act on it quite quickly.

(James, Project Staff).

In comparison to statutory services *Future 4 Me* staff could also be more flexible in terms of who they provided with support. As some of the above comments illustrate, the project was able to continue engaging with young people when their support from statutory services decreased or came to an end:

> [I was referred] to help me with housing, like support with other things as well … because I'm 21 soon [my] social worker cuts me off so they'll be there to support me if I need them … I don't need them all the time but if I do need somebody there then they are there to help like so it's good to have somebody just to fall back on if I need.
>
> (Johnny, Project Participant).

4.7 Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)

Staff found that adopting a psychologically informed approach towards working had really helped to make them more aware of young people's psychological and emotional needs as well as gaining a better understanding of psychological basis for behaviours. This helped to shape their response to young people:

> By looking at each person as an individual with assets and needs, then building positive relationships over time … PIE can bring an understanding of many internal and external factors that affect the lives of the client.
>
> (Victoria, Project Staff).

> For me the PIE approach allows me to remind myself of the trauma and barriers that our clients have faced … This makes navigating the difficult scenarios with them easier, as you can put [a] reason to why they behave how they do.
>
> (James, Project Staff).

> I think an understanding of some of the various psychological theories and ideas has really helped staff in understanding the young people that we work with and being able to respond accordingly.
>
> (Annie, Project Lead).

Both case meetings and reflective practice were a way for the team to be able to review cases and to share any difficulties they may have been experiencing. It was an opportunity for staff to be able to learn and draw from the wide range of skills and experience within the group as well as providing a safe space in which to challenge colleagues and put forward alternative viewpoints. Within this context the team were able to help each other to explore and develop effective approaches towards building and sustaining relationships, supporting young people and improving the running of the project as a whole. It also provided a forum in which staff could support each other to manage the emotional impact of their work with young people:

> Reflective Practice has been of benefit to staff … [who have] been able to both learn and offer advice … to the group, both as a professional and for the benefit of the client. It has been an opportunity to develop positive procedures for the project as a whole, as well as techniques of working with clients who have many issues … Reflective practice has enabled staff to be supported by the team and to share good practice.
>
> (Victoria, Project Staff).

> Reflective practice is really, really important …You get to share your cases and the case meetings. In fact, they're so valuable to bring up any issues you have or think about how you're working and if you come to them [the team] with a problem or a situation and you're thinking 'Right, this is the way I'm going to deal with it' and then someone else might have a completely different [idea] and that allows you to re-evaluate.
>
> (Nathan, Project Staff).

> I think Reflective Practice for our team has been really valuable. It's been quite challenging at times and we've had some tough conversations within it and it hasn't always run smoothly but … I think it's worked well.
>
> (Annie, Project Lead).

> We have team meetings and Reflective Practice so you know we have the opportunity to talk about practical issues, to talk about the emotional impact of the work on us and to be able to share with each other in that setting. I think you know you just share some of the burden and it helps you to feel like you're

not incompetent or to realise that you know some of the uncomfortable feelings you might be experiencing are just part of the work actually.

(Danielle, Project Staff).

There's a lot of knowledge and experience within the team you can pull on … It's been massively beneficial for me especially in terms of some of the housing side of things because that's kind of a mine field in terms of trying to navigate young people through that … and again I think mental health services as well can be quite daunting in terms of what to offer, where to get assessments … That's the good thing about the team that everyone's kind of on the same level in terms of everyone's a project worker for Future 4 Me but then everyone's kind of got their own knowledge and skill bases that they specialise in …

(James, Project Staff).

4.8 Multiagency working

All partners, stakeholders and project staff reported that on the whole their experiences of multiagency working had been positive and successful, allowing all parties involved to deliver a better service to young people. In particular, findings highlighted the roles of communication and sharing professional expertise. This is in line with previous research on the benefits of multiagency work (see Atkinson, Jones & Lamont, 2007; Bateman & Hazel, 2013; Cheminais, 2009; Oliver, Mooney & Statham, 2010).

4.8.1 *Communication*

A good standard of communication was considered important between project partners as it allowed agencies to avoid duplication in their work and to put in place effective and coherent plans around young people. *Future 4 Me* staff were often praised by partners for keeping in close contact and sharing information with the various agencies with which they engaged:

We need to be multiagency working, getting all the agencies working with that particular young person and having a bit of a plan [around] how we move forward so it's not crossed over … Communication has always been good … They're [the F4M staff team] always quick to invite us to things, making sure that we're there, getting minutes out … I've found them very good to work with … When it comes

to joined-up working and multi-agency meetings and things like that … I think that makes a hell of a difference. It's not just about the relationships you have with young people but it's about the relationship you have with the professionals too.

<div align="right">(Team Leader, substance misuse charity).</div>

We'll phone each other, we email, and it's keeping close contact so that I can put a plan in place. Then I can do certain elements and they're able to do the other elements. As long as you're working together you're not duplicating what you're doing … We attend professional meetings together, she [F4M staff member] comes here for the vulnerability risk meetings with the young person so it's that whole multi-agency working…[There's] good communication which is key.

<div align="right">(YOT Worker).</div>

Statutory services … particularly Probation, don't have the luxury of time to spend with these clients that we do so we will sort of like meet with them … For example, the care leavers, we will quite often sit in on the pathway plan meeting to agree who's going to do what task so we're not duplicating things and with Probation they will say what that young person has to do as part of their licence conditions and … we might have funding to do something that the probation doesn't have funding for that we can do and they think that's brilliant and so do the young people.

<div align="right">(Jenny, Project Staff).</div>

Some young people too had experienced the benefits of multiagency work in terms of the support they received:

When I was on probation I had my Future 4 Me worker, he came with me a few times to me key working sessions and that. It gives them that [opportunity] to come together and say look 'Joe's doing well' or 'So and so's going well' … A Future 4 Me worker and a Key Worker combined together you have more support so you get double the support but one will give you different support to the other. So like one will give you support on courses, one will give you support on housing … So there was more support which made it easier … [A] couple of

<div align="center">51</div>

years ago when I was in St. Georges I only had one Key Worker and that was it, I had no other support and it took a lot longer for them to support me.

(Joe, Project Participant).

Project staff also noted that there were times when they would start work with a young person who was involved with a number of other professionals yet little, if any, communication existed between them. In these instances, the *Future 4 Me* team was often able to form the missing link between different services and help facilitate more joined-up working:

Once they've referred to us and we're involved with them we can sit down and work as a multi-agency team and look at what they're gonna provide and then we can then kind of fill in and make that's a really solid rounded service for the young person … I think it's a massive help for young people especially … because you can have a lot of …services working with a young person…[but] I've seen it where I think personally Future 4 Me have joined up those services and made everyone communicate a little bit better … which has avoided you know four different people working with a young person but none of them are really speaking to each other and then I think from my experience I've got everyone kind of round the table or at least through an email conversation which has…made the links within those services so much more, efficient and more useful for young people because they're all aware of what's going on.

(James, Project Staff).

The other thing … that I think it is important to retain is not necessarily being care coordinator but sometimes being the person that links all the agencies together. You know, when other agencies are working with somebody but they're not really communicating that well with each other to step in and try to bring them together which sometimes is helpful … You can observe, you can think hang on a minute these people aren't really communicating so you can step in as a new person and say 'Look I'm not quite sure what my role is and it all seems a bit confusing, can we get together and think about that' and then you've brought people together.

(Annie, Project Lead).

Besides improving support through better planning and communication, a further benefit of joined-up working was less repetition and duplication for young people:

> I think a lot of the time there's a lot of repetition. You know, young people have to tell their story many different times to different people so to have everyone talking to each other means they're not doing the same thing with four, five different people so there's less repetition for them in terms of what they have to tell people.
>
> (Danielle, Project Staff).

> I've given [Evan] access to all of them … my doctors, social workers, Probation … [It's helpful] … because he hasn't got to keep contacting me for information … I find that annoying when people keeping ringing you up asking for information and it sometimes means you have to receive information and it's like 'Just tell each other'.
>
> (Johnny, Project Participant).

4.8.2 *Sharing professional expertise*

Similarly, professionals working with *Future 4 Me* also valued this multi-agency approach to work because it allowed people to come together and support each other in their roles by sharing knowledge, providing access to specialist skills, exploring ideas, thinking creatively and joint problem solving:

> [W]e have a good relationship and we'll talk to each other and when things go wrong we'll pick up the phone and it's been helpful for me as a professional to have another professional working on the same case [so] that we can sort of share ideas with and make plans … After we've met with a young person, we've said 'Shall we go and just
>
> chat and really bounce ideas off each other and support each other actually in what we're doing', which … [has]been really helpful.
>
> (Social Worker).

> The knowledge base that … an organisation like 1625 has, never in a million years would I end up with social workers who have the in depth knowledge. They have to

know so much about other stuff that they would never have the in depth knowledge around housing and benefits and you know the basic stuff that if you get sorted for a young person it helps build the relationship … So it is about their knowledge and skills [that they bring] as well as just their therapeutic approach.

(Helen, Child Integrated Services).

One of the best things about 1625 was their willingness to do things outside the box. Willingness to think creatively, willing to be involved creatively. When I think in statutory services - which is what I've been in - sometimes it plays a little too much within the 'We've always done it this way'. They help as I would say look at 'Go on we don't actually need to do it that way, we can do it this way'. So I'd say between that team and 1625 it's been a very dynamic working relationship.

(Social Worker).

4.8.3 *Toolkit*

Managerial staff within partner/stakeholder organisations expressed a desire to continue to work closely with 1625 Independent People and with their help start to develop a way of working within their own services that put the relationship with the young person at the centre. The professionals within statutory services were becoming increasingly aware of the research and practice recommendations around working with young people in a way that was relationship based and psychologically informed and there was rising expectation on them to deliver this. However, project staff often lacked the training and structures to be able to effectively implement this. The toolkit currently being developed by Future 4 Me/1625 Independent People which would deliver training on topics such as using relationships as a tool for change and PIE / Reflective Practice was seen as a potential solution to this problem:

When the Care Leavers role came in it was very practically based … you know it was about benefits money, skills for life … education, training, employment … now they're required to do this, this and this [and] you know be a therapist as well but without the skill base. They've built it up over time but they've never had the training for it and the expectations now are huge that everybody has on Personal Advisors … the expectation is to have a real understanding of that young person's history and the effect of that history on the young person … [The toolkit training] would be really, really good because that's what's missing

and … I want to approach my workers with something that's local, something that is working and is something that is being used consistently around the area … what is significant for us is our young people are complex and we need to understand that complexity. We may still have a very simple approach to it … but we need to know what's going on behind it. You know when people are being very offensive to you and telling you to 'fuck off' consistently you know not to take that personally but to find a way through … know where is that all coming from and how do we get through that so that workers can carry on or approach things in a different way.

(Linda, Children in Care and Moving On Team Manager)

I love the way that it promotes reflective practice and people being able to reflect and then also looks at the support needs of those people [staff] because these kids are really traumatised you know and … So it does recognise the need to emotionally support the staff working with them as well … from my perspective the toolkit is going to be key to moving this forward really. I think reflective supervision is very much seen as a social work practice and [for] clinical psychologists … and actually it's very important that it's part of the wider professional group so that other professionals are able to engage in that reflective supervision that it's not just a social work driven skill base … By the time you get to this age group, sort of sixteen plus age group they're kind of done with Social Workers in many respects, they kind of have to have a PA and a social worker but you can tell that a lot of them are just done with working with social services. So if you're going to promote developing that relationship with those young people through another professional or somebody else within their life you've got to give them access to the structures around them that will support them and key to that is reflective supervision

(Helen, Integrated Child Services).

Another perceived benefit of the toolkit was that it could be used in a multi-agency setting to provide a common framework, helping to ensure that all the agencies involved with a young person had shared knowledge and understanding of the psychological/emotional issues in play and are working in a way that is therapeutic, relationship based and consistent:

A lot of social workers have that basic knowledge and understanding and background [around psychologically informed approaches] because that's what they cover in their degree but it becomes very diluted overtime and what this [model] does is enables people to be trained in a multiagency way … You work across the system and that is what for me is unique about this, is that you'll be training housing workers, support workers, drug and alcohol workers, mental health workers, social workers across the system in finding a common framework and a common goal that understands the psychological background of these young people and that is what this is offering that's different. It's very difficult to access multi-agency, psychological, therapeutic training.

(Helen, Integrated Child Services).

Managerial staff were also interested in engaging with *Future 4 Me* to explore how they could restructure their approach to working with other agencies in order to allow limited financial and temporal resources to be put to better use by focusing on enabling young people to build a single trusted relationship which was then supported by the other professionals involved. Not only did this provide benefits in terms of cost saving and efficiencies it was also more positive for young people who often lack good quality relationships and struggled to engage with services despite having many different workers around them:

What I find very positive about this particular model is that it's not social services dependent. It's a model that 1625 want to develop and focus very much on who is the right person in this child's life ... So you know the expectation within a statutory framework is that the care leaver for example or a young person who has become homeless has a social worker and they have to form a relationship with that person and that person has to be the key person. Whereas this model says well actually they might not like their social worker and they might not want to work with them but their social worker can still be involved and be very supportive and influential but without having to build the relationship…the way that this therapeutic framework will …[bring together] all the knowledge and skills a young person needs but they will agree a way of working that is actually in the child and young person's best interests, not the

interests of their agency necessarily, and a group of people working through a relationship I think can be much, much more powerful.

<div align="right">(Helen, Integrated Child Services).</div>

Young people at different times in their life access different workers and different agencies and with particularly troubled young people sometimes you need to give them multiple opportunities. They might engage very effectively with their YOT worker and frankly don't need a … 1625 Independent People Future 4 Me worker but on the other hand if things have broken down for whatever reason … it might be introducing a Future 4 Me worker at that time might be somebody that the young person will engage with and so use it and so again I think it's sometimes about giving multiple opportunities as you possibly can to people so that you try and catch them at some point in their lives where they are more likely to engage and you try and foster that and motivate that young person to carry on …

<div align="right">(Service Lead, Youth Offending Team).</div>

As the above comments illustrate it is important that professionals take the lead from the young person in terms of who will build the single trusted relationship, acknowledge this may change over time, and ensure that the young person remains aware of and maintains some form of relationship with the other professionals who are there to support them should they need it (e.g., if service provision comes to an end, or their key worker is off sick or leave).

4.8.4. *Referrals*

One area of improvement for *Future 4 Me* staff in terms of multi-agency working was addressing the referral process. As it stood there were two main issues to consider: (i) Staff sometimes found that the quality of referrals they received were often lacking in terms of informational content. This significantly affected the quality and efficiency of their work with young people, as well as posing concern over undisclosed risk; (ii) At times there was a misconception among referral agencies regarding the project's role in relation to housing which led to a number of inappropriate referrals.

4.8.4.1 *Improving the quality of information*

In order for F4M staff to best serve the young people with whom they worked, it was essential that they had access to information concerning the history and needs of the young person concerned and why they had been referred to the service. This significantly impacted the quality and efficiency of the work that staff were able to do with young people, as project staff member Victoria articulated during focus group discussion:

> Facilitator: So what makes a referral helpful ..?
>
> Having a good background I think of why they want that service … I had a referral recently for a young person which gave his name, his date of birth and said he wanted to look for something to do, i.e., some sort of college course. It turns out this guy has got huge history of convictions behind him, quite serious convictions, so a lot of places he won't be accepted by… Had all this been on a form we wouldn't have wasted time trying to get him into things for him to be refused because of his past record … [They should be] more specific about what they actually want rather than saying 'This guy needs something to do' saying [instead] 'This guy has had a few problems, he's not eligible to go to X, Y and Z, can you find something else?

Another reason why detailed client histories were important was that there were times when staff started working with a young person unaware of the potential risks involved; risks that could then spread as young people were referred into further services and activities. The way that staff hoped referrals could be handled going forward was by the referral agency concerned sending out an initial expression of interest which could then be followed up. If the referral was judged to be suitable, then a member of the *Future 4 Me* team would arrange for a face to face meeting with the referrer and any other key professionals around the young person. This would allow for a detailed discussion to take place surrounding the history of the young person, their specific needs, and what *Future 4 Me* may be able to offer them in terms of support. This would ensure that staff had all the necessary information before beginning work with a young person which, in theory, would improve the quality and efficiency of the service delivered.

4.8.4.2 *Unsuitable referrals*

Being located within a housing organisation, the *Future 4 Me* team were very much aware of the external perception that the project could offer young people a short cut into accommodation. Though attempts had been made from the outset to clarify the remit of the project to referrers, staff felt there was more work to be done in this area. Whilst the project had begun to implement a number of changes around the referral process, it was yet to undergo complete overhaul and because of this staff continued to receive referrals which they felt were unsuitable:

> I've had a referral recently and I think that the referrer just wants me to sort out housing for somebody [but] that's his job to do that, he has statutory obligation to do that … We're not here to do stuff that other people don't want to do. We're here to compliment what they're doing and add value to what they're doing.
>
> (Evan, Project Staff).

> Maybe from our point of view or from what we could do better is make it clear about what we need in a referral and make it clear that we're not here to provide housing ...
>
> (Nathan, Project Staff).

> [I think we need] to look at the parameters that Future 4 Me has and make sure we only take on referrals [where] they're not just looking for a back door to housing and that can sometimes happen ...
>
> (Laura, Project Staff).

That said, staff noted that they often found themselves sourcing accommodation for young people because they felt a strong duty of care towards them and did not want to put them at risk of homelessness. However, this only served to reinforce the more general misconception alluded to above.

4.9 The voice of the young person

4.9.1 *Advocacy*

The ability of keyworkers to act as advocates for young people was considered an important part of the service by all involved (staff, young people and partners/stakeholders) and this manifested itself in various ways.

Young people found it useful to have someone supporting them in meetings, to 'look out for them' and to 'fight their corner' if needs be. As we have seen, some valued having *Future 4 Me* staff with them at appointments with other agencies in order to help both parties to understand each other's perspectives and needs. This ultimately enabled young people to maintain their engagement with key services which, in turn, helped prevent them from returning to custody or being made homeless.

> Yeah [Jenny] speaks to Hannah my Probation Officer [which means] my Probation Officer know what's going on with me [and] I'm not just making things up to her if I can't attend appointments … She'd believe me because obviously she talks to Jenny and Jenny tells her what's going on in my life … no one would believe me otherwise, everyone just sees me as a criminal.
>
> (Elliot, Project Participant).

> [Being] an advocate for a young person in terms of, say, communicating with his Probation Officer if he was going to be late for appointments, or just the little things that could save him from getting breached or having to go back to prison ... If you kind of have Future 4 Me being involved I think it kind of gave young person's arguments sometimes or issues a little bit more credibility… not saying that the professionals involved don't take them seriously or don't believe them but …I've seen on a number of occasions where Future 4 Me have advocated for their clients and because of the strong links we have with the other key services ... it kind of really helps in terms of dodging some of the pitfalls that they get trapped in and which they could end up returning to custody or kind of getting kicked out from their house.
>
> (James, Project Staff).

We work with lots of statutory organisations and I think a real strength is being able to challenge those organisations. I see that as a hugely important role of the charity sector and I see it as an important part of Future 4 Me … that advocacy element I suppose, saying 'No it's not okay for you to tell this young person that they don't have a priority need and they made themselves intentionally homeless when they've just come out of prison' … This project gives us quite a lot of ability to be advocates and make those challenges in a way that's respected as well. People listen to us I think.

(Annie, Project Lead).

The things that he talks to his Future 4 Me worker about he doesn't talk to me about so not things that would be a concern but things that are stressing him out ... [They're able] to act as his voice really so I can know a bit more about what his priorities are and things, just having a bit more of an insight so you know thinking about different ways that I can help him as well.

(Probation Officer).

A crucial part of the Key Worker role was also empowering young people to be able self-advocate so that they could better articulate their own needs and interests, increasing their chances of receiving appropriate help and support to make positive lifestyle changes. It was also hoped that, in time, project participants would be able to act as advocates for other young people by sharing their experiences through participation activites. A project panel comprised of service users was implemented to support this:

The reason it's set up [Project Panel] is to try and support young people's voices to be heard in terms of shaping this project but also in terms of what have we learnt from young people. So that's about that group of young people being able to say this is what's worked for me, this is what hasn't worked for me, but also those young people being able to chat with other young people, 'what's worked for you, what hasn't worked for you?'

(Annie, Project Lead).

The young people really deserve to have their voices listened to because they are the people who have lived this experience and I think, you know I often

hear some quite insightful stuff … and it's really useful to get those case studies and hear those experiences for us as a project but also so we can have some influence on the people who make these really big decisions, you know the youth justice consultation and the Taylor Review. Those are big things and if we can have an impact on and speak the truth of some young people then I think that's really useful.

(Lauren, Project Staff).

Young people were motivated to take part in the project panel so that they could use their personal experiences of the youth justice and/or care systems to influence how these services worked with young people and to help others who may be in a similar position to themselves.

4.9.2 *Young people taking the lead*

As well as helping young people's voices to be heard by people outside of *Future 4 Me*, the project placed great emphasis on ensuring that young people played an central part in shaping and developing services within the organisation. This was done through various forms of consultation and helped to ensure the project was meeting young people's needs and working with them in the right way:

I think 1625 are really committed to having young people involved at every level, so there's the Youth Board and Youth Forum…[they] have influence you know they have a voice, what they say is taken on board. [When we] …interview new staff, I make sure I have a young person on the panel and …that person has a very important part to play in that interview and I really trust young people's views and judgements … The project has been designed based on …what young people have said they need and the outcomes … that have been put together are based around what the young people said they needed and … so that influences the work that we do with young people … So it feels like it's quite a needs led approach.

(Annie, Project Lead).

They're [Future 4 Me] good at including the voice of young people through their projects both at an individual and group level … I think that's a strength … I know that they will consult with them when they're trying to develop how

a project might work best and to get their feedback so that the project isn't a 'done to' young people, it's a project that's worked with young people so that they own it … I think it's important one because you don't presume you know what's best for young people, you actually check it out, test it out and even if what you were thinking is echoed by young people it still ensures that they own services. So involvement enables ownership which encourages change and of course the other thing is that young people will bring suggestions and ideas to the table which practitioners may not have thought of or may not have realised how important they were in terms of emphasis you know so that's good as well.

<div align="right">(YOT, Service Leader).</div>

4.10 Staff turnover and project funding

High staff turnover was an issue throughout the life of the project. This was in no small part due to the uncertainty over future funding which not only had a negative impact on staff wellbeing and team morale but also disrupted service delivery, problems which were not only highlighted by *Future 4 Me* staff but also their partners and stakeholders.

4.10.1 *Impact on staff wellbeing and team morale*

The lack of job security, which was further complicated by a series of changes to the project deadline, had a significant impact on staff wellbeing and morale. In particular staff struggled with the uncertainty and scarcity of information surrounding the re-funding of the project which left them unable to plan for the future:

> Everyone has to plan financially in some way … There needs to be some
> thought about how that impacts on our own lives and … if you're trying to
> provide like a robust service to someone you've got to be able to be feeling
> safe and secure in your own role and yourself otherwise, you know, motivation
> can wane and you can sometimes become a little bit disillusioned by it.
>
> <div align="right">(James, Project Staff).</div>

I think at times the team struggles with motivation levels, I think it can feel a little bit like where are we going? Are we going to be closing? ... Am I going be out the job? How do I tell this to the young people?

<div align="right">(Lauren, Project Staff).</div>

It's had a massive impact [uncertainty over future funding], definitely. Evan has left the project … we've also had discussions about how difficult it is not knowing whether you're going to have a job in three months' time … At points people didn't know if they were going to have a job in two weeks' time.

<div align="right">(Annie, Project Lead).</div>

4.10.2 *Impact on the service*

As staff left the project concerns grew over its ability to maintain a consistent service for young people. It was to this end that the decision was taken to use resources that would have otherwise been spent on re-recruiting to extend the project deadline by working with a smaller, established staff team for a longer period. Despite this, it was still felt by staff and partners/stakeholders that the project struggled to provide a consistent service for young people and there were concerns over the amount of knowledge and experience being lost from the project team. This was in part an unavoidable consequence of short term funding but it had perhaps been unintentionally exacerbated due to the volume of staff that had left and the amount of times the project had to be extended:

[The project deadline was in April] then it was June, then it was September, now it's December. [It's moved] four times … I think above here there's just an expectation that you can just keep on working with people for a bit longer now … You can't tell the young person it's coming to an end in September [then] 'Actually, you know what, now we can work with you until December'. You … can't do that.

<div align="right">(Evan, Project Worker).</div>

I think with the kind of oh it's ending, it's not ending, particularly when you're working with young people like consistency is really important …you can't lose that because then young people … They drop off and they'll ignore you

and they won't have a stake in it because they're like 'Well, is this actually going to continue or not?

<div align="right">(Christian, Project Worker).</div>

We've been waiting on whether they're going to be [re]funded or not … so we haven't really been putting in referrals to *Future 4 Me* because we knew it was all going to be very short term … until the funding has been assured … because we've been talking about relationships and … how it needs to be sustained. Anybody that thinks they can go in for six weeks, do an intensive piece of work and go out again is just naïve really … It's just not helpful to have projects that are not funded for a length of time … because the last thing a young person needs in their life is somebody to come, get engaged and then they have to leave because … there's no money.

<div align="right">(Linda, Leaving Care and Moving on Team Manager).</div>

I think one of the problems for all projects whether statutory or third sector is more about sustaining continuative staff, bearing in mind that relationships between organisations and with young people, continuity of relationships is a critical element … and that, to be frank, may be beyond their control but you know as far as is possible to sustain and retain staff is critical in terms of building up, sustaining a knowledge base and just in on-going work with agencies and young people … At a strategic level [1625] Independent People do seem to have stability in senior management and I think that helps … I think at a project level it's more difficult just because of the reality of short term funding but that's always been a perennial issue for every organisation.

<div align="right">(Trevor, YOT Service Lead).</div>

4.11 Endings

How to successfully end a relationship with a young person formed a significant area of learning and development within the project. By the Future 4 Me team's own admission, in their haste to get the project up and running they had neglected to create a strategy around closing cases:

At the beginning of the project it's all very exciting because it's new and it's all about … getting started and I think that we didn't think enough and we didn't have time really to think enough about how it might progress and that includes the endings really and how we might end working with people …We kind of learnt that on the job and I think that now were thinking … it would have been good in hindsight to think a bit more about how we end working with people and at what point we end working with people and try and establish some ground rules around that for the team because what I think we've done is just do our own thing, which is probably okay and it might be the same as we would have done anyway but it'd be good to have looked at that at the beginning. But we only know that now because we're two thirds of the way through.

<div align="right">(Evan, Project Staff).</div>

The result of this oversight was that some young people felt ill prepared for their work with Future 4 Me to come to an end:

I'd like to know that … I get to move out, get on my own two feet with Jenny still there, and then after a year or two or three Jenny can go, and I'll be stable. Instead of that I came out of prison in March, two months ago, within that two months she got me a flat and then she was gone.

<div align="right">(Jimmy, Project Participant).</div>

It's almost like [F4M key worker] has got me a flat and then gone. I didn't expect that … I wish someone had told me that if I was getting a flat then I wouldn't be seeing [F4M Key Worker] no more.

<div align="right">(Cass, Project Participant).</div>

In light of such feedback the team started to address the matter of endings and think more carefully about how they impacted upon young people and what could be done in terms of better planning and management:

We've been talking about endings recently because people have had difficult experiences of ending relationships with young people and from that we've, you know, we're putting together some training around endings and we know

that that's an area we need to work on and that's because a young person found the ending of a relationship really difficult and it had to be … reworked and that ending had to sort of happen again in a more planned way.

<div align="right">(Danielle, Project Staff).</div>

Case meetings were introduced as a way to review young people's progress and in particular think more critically about when and how to close cases as well as discussions taking place during one to one supervision and team reflective practice:

I have much more conversations with people in supervision I would say about ending pieces of work and planning those endings …We talk through cases, we're thinking 'Okay, where are we in this piece of work? … What's our plan and when are we thinking might be a good time to close this case and what's the next bit for that young person? … We've got much better at talking in those terms I think … Staff invest a lot of time and energy into building good relationships with young people so, of course, those young people mean something to them and they care about them and I think also sometimes they find it hard to step away from that feeling that they are needed in order for that young person to be okay. So it's hard for staff I think to close cases and I think it can only really effectively be done in relationship with others.

<div align="right">(Annie, Project Lead).</div>

By reflecting on their experiences with young people, the project team identified several key issues to consider when closing a case in the hope of making endings as positive an experience as possible for all concerned.

4.11.1 *Planning, preparing and setting expectations*

Ending a relationship with a young person is something that needs to be considered from the very start of their engagement, this includes making sure that the young person is aware of what they can expect from the project in terms of the length of their involvement. Staff observed that they often had most difficulty closing the cases of young people that had been involved with the project for a long period of time, in some instances several years. This was before a strategy around endings had been formulated and, as such, the process lacked many of the features which, over time, became an integral part of good endings:

We're doing it well with new cases and that is about talking about endings at the beginning, that's about being really mindful about our roles and the parameters of our roles ... I think where it's really difficult is where … young people who have received a service from Future 4 Me before - maybe have gone into prison and then have come back - we've started being much more aware of the importance of endings and the struggles ...

(Annie, Project Lead).

A central part of the learning process here was that young people needed to be prepared for endings early so that when their case was closed the impact was not sudden and unexpected. After significant reflection on this issue, staff felt that having honest conversations with young people at the beginning of their engagement about how long they could expect to work with the project may be beneficial. Thereafter, staff would provide a series of gentle reminders around this issue by highlighting the progress of the young person and encouraging them to look beyond their engagement with *Future 4 Me*:

It's just being more clear about it right from the [start] about how long you're gonna work with someone and then being clear and maybe looking at planning the end right from the start just so that maybe it doesn't come as such a shock to the young person.

(James, Project Staff).

I would start to talk to a young person about, you know 'Things are looking really good, you don't call me as often as you used to. Do you remember when you used to call me a lot and say 'What you doing, I need help with this?' 'Now you don't which is great because it means that you're coping' and I drop in the idea of you know we're probably going to have to think about ending our work at some point ... Maybe not every time [we meet] because it might become annoying, but occasionally drop that into conversation, gradually increase the kind of intensity of it, so I might then give a time frame … always kind of stressing the positive reason …So it's a gradual process of kind of letting people know and then ideally, although it doesn't always work like this but kind of setting an actual date, so we'll meet a couple more times … but give them plenty of notice.

(Evan, Project Staff).

Whilst staff stressed the importance of having early and open conversations with young people in terms of endings, they also noted that careful attention needed to be paid to the language that was used. The concern was that not framing these conversations sensitively could lead to young people putting up a barrier and disengaging prematurely:

> They vote with their feet anyway. You can give them three months' notice but as soon as you say 'By the way I'm leaving' you never see them again … James was talking about the big overlap [when signposting young people onto other services] but actually as soon as you mention leaving or closing you've changed something dramatically and actually even if you had years of overlap it's still, you've used the words. Their like forbidden words aren't they?
>
> (Evan, Project Staff).

> I think the language is really important as well because … we're not going to be there forever and it's important young people know we're not going to be there forever. If we were to say it in those terms to young people they'd be like 'What? You're like every other agency. You just work with us for a bit and then you dump us?' So the language is really important.
>
> (Annie, Project Lead).

4.11.2 *Introducing other sources of support*

Another means by which Key Workers could help to ensure that young people were prepared to move on from *Future 4 Me* was by encouraging them not to think of the project as their only means of support. This was done through facilitating access to other services and activities either within the organisation or externally. Not only did this help to avoid dependency but it also meant that when young people's engagement with the project came to an end they had alternate sources of support upon which to draw.

> Part of it is about trying to, whilst you're working with them, trying to encourage and get [them] used to working with other services or other agencies so they can see there are other people out there to help them.
>
> (Jenny, Project Staff).

Referring them to floating support or if they need specific mental health work referring them to whatever particular mental health team. So making sure that's all done before anything else, so they're prepared for when it does end.

(Nathan, Project Staff).

Making sure that there's sort of very solid exit strategies for the project so that other services that might kind of compliment what you've done [are there that] they can move on to.

(James, Project staff).

Where necessary *Future 4 Me* staff facilitated handover processes with young people and the services to which they were being signposted:

I think the idea was that it would be over lapping; there would be a big overlap of what you're trying to end and what you're trying to introduce. So maybe you would have a series of sessions where Evan and Nathan would meet together with that young person and 'This is your floating support worker' … and that would be the idea to really build that [new] relationship alongside that standing relationship so that then you could hopefully move them forward. So they're [the young person] building that relationship while you're still there.

(James, Project Staff).

Sometimes this was done very successfully. At other times it proved more problematic. One difficulty was that sometimes the length of the handover period was not sufficient to enable the young person to build a similar relationship (in terms of depth and quality) with their new worker. Thus, in the eyes of the young person concerned, the new worker was not a suitable substitute for the service they had received from *Future 4 Me* which made them reluctant to move on from the project and accept the new support. This, once again, highlights the importance of implementing a plan around endings early on:

I know it's about signposting to different services but it takes a few months to get to a point where someone feels comfortable [accessing that service] … We've

built a relationship [and] it's going to be quite difficult for them to find someone else where they build the same relationship

<div align="right">(Alisha, Project Staff).</div>

I was with Jenny when I got out of prison … and then she found me a flat and then because the flat I moved into came with another Support Worker she had to let go. She had to close me down and I had to work with this other one … It was almost like she was just dropping me on my two feet and then that's it, you know, what I mean? ... It felt like 'Bam. Here's your flat, see you later. You've got a new worker now'. 'Well no, because I aint gonna talk to this one because I don't know her', you know what I mean?

<div align="right">(Elliot, Project Participant).</div>

I've got a young person at the moment who I said I was going to end in September and they're more than capable [of handling this] … but I mentioned closing yesterday and they're like 'Well, don't do that' and I was like 'I'll refer you on to floating support and if you do need anything … 1625 is still here. You can still come in. You can still access it … And she was like 'I'm not interested in that I want to continue working with you, I feel I can do good stuff with you, [we've] got a relationship'.

<div align="right">(Nathan, Project Staff).</div>

Similarly, the reason why a handover period between Future 4 Me and a new service was thought to be helpful was in part due to the fact that a young person's Key Worker, someone they trust, endorsed the transition. Therefore, it was important to ensure that a level of trust existed between the young person and their Key Worker before a new service was introduced:

I saw that young person [we closed] the other day and he is engaging with the service that we passed him onto where he hadn't been before and so he feels like a real success because he wasn't engaging before … it seems to me if we can show that we trust another worker [and] if that young person trusts us, they trust that that person is okay because we trust that person …

<div align="right">(Annie, Project Lead).</div>

4.11.3 *The end of a relationship*

The *Future 4 Me* team also felt that it was important to recognise that many young people formed attachments to their Key Workers and therefore when young people stopped working with the project they may miss the relationship as much as, if not more than, the practical support.

> You build this quite strong relationship and I think because of the good work we do and … the use that we are as Support Workers you can see when people who have to end working with us … it can raise anxiety levels quite a lot. I guess it's just making sure that we [end the relationship] with lots of thought.
>
> > (James, Project Staff).

> It's both [relationship and support] … It's a bit like a bereavement. You lose someone you miss them but you also miss them because of what they did. You know, they used to organise the money or they used to cut the grass, you know what I mean?
>
> > (Evan, Project Staff).

These issues were evident in how young people described their feelings at the prospect of having their case closed:

> I think even after Jenny stops working with me … I will still stay in contact with her and say 'Hello … because I do really get on with her … She really is like family … I wouldn't want to just chuck that away because me and her aren't together anymore.
>
> > (Ben, Project Participant).

> I did ask [Alisha] the other day 'So how long until you disappear then?' and she was like 'Well basically from now'… So she's slowly fading away … I'm gonna need it [to end] eventually but I don't know, it's just nice having her there … When I want to talk about something but, yeah, I suppose she's done her job … I feel ready to go out on my own but still, like I said, she's more of a

friend. That's what I look at her as … So for her just to disappear … it's like 'Fuck you then, you gain my trust, gain my respect and now you're going.

<div align="right">(Omar, Project Participant).</div>

The new approach to ending cases acknowledged this through making a more concerted effort to signpost young people onto services and/or activities internally so that if they wished they could still maintain a relationship with the organisation and keep some form of connection to their Key Worker, albeit more distanced. It was also important to ensure that young people did not interpret their case being closed as rejection or that their Key Worker no longer cared about them:

> Another important thing is about young people seeing that we're part of an organisation and that just because they're relationship with their Key Worker is coming to an end doesn't mean their relationship with the organisation has to end, and also doesn't mean that they won't be held in mind once the end … has happened. So we've had conversations with young people who are finding the thought of an ending really difficult, 'What do you mean I'm not going to be able to see you anymore, you don't care about me' and having the conversation about 'Actually, we'd really love to hear how you are doing. Yeah, we're not going to be working with you anymore and that's because you're able to be independent. It doesn't mean to say if you're passing by and you want to tell us how you're doing that that's not okay'.

<div align="right">(Annie, Project Lead).</div>

4.11.4 *Negotiating endings*

Staff were conscious of the fact that young people had varied experiences of past relationships, some of which may have ended under circumstances that were negative or traumatic. Therefore when it came to closing cases it was likely that each young person would react and cope differently. With this in mind, staff felt that it was important that each ending was individually tailored to the young person concerned thereby giving them as much 'voice' as possible in the way that their relationship with the project ended:

Yeah, it's a combination of whether they've had lots of relationships ending in their lives and how they've ended … how they've reacted to that … because some young people … have had it happen so often to them that they don't really care and that's why they end it … Or it can be that they've had relationships end and they don't take very well to that, so another one ending causes them a lot of stress

(James, Project Staff).

Not acknowledging you as you walk down the street might be what works for one young person, another young person might feel like actually it would be really helpful just to send a text 'I'm doing really well' and whatever else. So it's about a negotiated process.

(Annie, Project Lead).

I think [it] depends on the individual, but I would give them warning and I would also accept if they find that very difficult to cope with and want to cut it [the relationship] completely from that initial time, then I would go along with that. I would try and identify the positives of what the support had done for the person … I think a lot of it [has] got to be led by them … because some people can cope with it emotionally and some people can't.

(Victoria, Project Staff).

4.11.5 *Unplanned endings*

Staff noted that it was not always possible for endings to happen in a planned way. Young people's lives were often chaotic and sometimes they would simply stop engaging and, despite the best efforts of the project team, the relationship would fizzle out. However, staff still felt that they had an obligation to young people in this situation to make the ending as positive as possible and, at the very least, that every young person should receive a closing summary which would read as a list of the progress and achievements they had made whilst being involved with the project:

As a minimum we are creating a closing summary, which is a celebration document I guess for the young person which is copied to the referrer and other key agencies which are involved ... I think what that has meant is that it's defined and there's kind of something people are aiming for whereas previously

a piece of work just kind of stopped I think and there wasn't really a review process … I think there are hardly any cases where you don't make any progress with the young person. Even if what you're summarising isn't necessarily very tangible, I would say in every case that we've engaged with a young person there is something positive that can be reviewed.

(Annie, Project Lead).

Though during the course of the evaluation there were no explicit examples of cases ending where a strategy had been in place from the very start of young person's engagement, as a result of the learning implemented, young people generally felt more optimistic about ending their relationship with the project:

I reckon I'll get on alright because by the time I finish working with Evan I'll be fully independent because I'm pretty independent now but there's certain things I do need their help with which in future is obviously going to change. I should be able to do them myself.

(Liam, Project Participant).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Future 4 Me is specifically targeted towards the development of effective and improved resettlement solutions for young people aged 16-21 leaving custody and care. More specifically, the project works with those who other service providers have found most difficult to engage and who are at high risk of homelessness, reoffending, poor employment, education and/or health outcomes. Using a psychologically informed approach, the project aims to work in a way that understands and responds to the needs of young people in a therapeutic manner, using relationships as the main tool for change. This is achieved, in part, through the use of Reflective Practice and sharing specialist skills/knowledge. The project also aims to facilitate the co-ordination of efficient collaborative relationships between the various organisations and agencies that work with the young people concerned in order to service their everyday needs and entitlements.

The purpose of this report has been to provide evidence of the extent to which the project achieves these stated aims in meeting the needs of the young people with whom it engages. In this section we provide a series of conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from the evaluation research. These are presented as a template of 'best practice' in relation to the ways in which inclusive service provision may be structured in relation to hard to reach young people. In this sense, the following discussion constitutes a series of key learning points which may be applied and incorporated by those involved in similar work across the youth justice sector.

5.1. Personal and practical support

The *Future 4 Me* project makes a valuable contribution in terms of the help and practical support that it provides for those with whom it engages. Participants spoke positively about their experiences of the project and the advantages on offer in relation to: securing and/or managing accommodation, handling finances, education, training and employment opportunities, access to health care services, mental/emotional and physical wellbeing, and carrying out everyday tasks, i.e., assistance with obtaining documents such passports and birth certificates, reading letters, completing forms, making telephone calls and keeping appointments (e.g., with social services, probation, health practitioners). Participants testified that project staff provided excellent levels of support for young people establishing trusting and impactful relationships and considered the staff team to be one of the main strengths of

the project. Participants highlighted how they were frequently assisted by Key Workers in their negotiations with statutory services around referrals to accommodation providers to ensure that they were not at risk of being homeless upon release from prison and/or when moving on from or losing their existing accommodation. Indeed, housing was identified by young people as one of the key areas with which they received support with 82.7% 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' that *Future 4 Me* had helped them with their housing needs. This ranged from assistance in attending housing interviews and referrals to the Housing Support Register, to support around the management of tenancies and the development of independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting.

5.2 Employment, training and education

Research findings revealed that 79.3% of young people surveyed 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the project had helped them move towards employment, training and/or education. Young people who accessed this type of support reported receiving encouragement and motivation from staff as well as practical help with things such as exploring options, writing job or college applications, and preparing for interviews. Though there were positive instances of young people being supported to access employment, education and training opportunities, generally the extent to which young people were successful in moving towards these outcomes varied greatly. 13.8% of survey participants self-reported being in employment for 8 weeks or more since working with the project. Considerably more young people reported being in education for 4 or more weeks and 24% said they had been involved with some kind of voluntary work since starting the project. Project staff and participants alike noted the many barriers faced by young people when trying to enter and/or sustain work or education, including: past criminal record, behavioural and/or learning difficulties, and/or a lack of motivation or readiness to change. It was often the case that exploring employment, training and/or education opportunities was not a priority for young people due to the chaotic circumstances of their broader lives and lifestyles. Project staff believed that part of what made employment support so effective was: (i) the time that staff had to dedicate to young people, and (ii) the flexible and tailored approach which they deployed in providing such support. Having quality time with participants allowed staff to discern in more detail the kinds of barriers that young people were facing, where their career interests/ambitions lay, the stage that they were at in their employment journey, and the expectations that they held.

5.3 Reducing re-offending

Young people who had previously been in custody noted how the project had helped prevent re-offending. Many young people reported that after being released from prison they often lacked meaningful ways to spend their time and, as a result, were often tempted back into antisocial and/or criminal activity. *Future 4 Me* offered the opportunity to become regularly involved in activities such as sport, cookery and art as well as occasional days out (e.g., climbing, indoor skiing, go-karting). This provided young people with more positive ways to occupy their time and helped to remove the urge to (re)offend in order to relieve boredom. Survey findings revealed that 62% of young people 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that *Future 4 Me* had provided them with activities to fill their time and 65.5% said that the project had had a positive impact on their offending behaviour. In turn, a small number of young people said that the project had helped reduce re-offending and/or antisocial behaviour because their Key Workers had encouraged them to see the value in making more positive lifestyle choices.

5.4 Relationships

Given that young people had previously been in care and/or custody, it was often the case that they had experienced working relationships with a number of professionals and, as a result, had built up a certain amount of mistrust towards such people and the services which they offered/represented. By maintaining consistency and integrity, project staff were able to prove to young people that they could be relied upon to support them. That staff were seen to care also helped to reassure young people that relationships with Key Workers were genuine and authentic. The vast majority of young people (89.6%) surveyed reported having a good relationship with a trusted adult who they liked and respected. Young people and staff alike highlighted the significance of relationship in terms of their overall experiences of the project. Project participants and stakeholder/partner agencies confirmed the positive impact of the fact that Key Workers had the necessary time to dedicate to engaging and working with complex young people. Professionals within statutory services often noted that through partnering with *Future 4 Me* they could ensure that young people had access to the additional practical and/or emotional support that they needed but which they were unable to provide themselves due to the way their own services were structured. *Future 4 Me* staff were not as restricted as statutory or other primarily office-based services might be in terms of their engagement with young people and this was considered a significant benefit by all those associated with the project. To this end, staff were able to exercise a greater degree of flexibility than other professionals with regards to how and where they provided support.

5.5 Time and flexibility

As we have seen, one of the greatest strengths of the project identified across staff members, young people and stakeholder/partner agencies was the fact that Key Workers had the necessary time to dedicate to engaging and working with young people including going out into the community and meeting young people in physical spaces where they felt comfortable. With their comparatively smaller caseloads, *Future 4 Me* staff were perceived by other service providers as having the scope to do the depth and quality of work necessary to help young people address their specific needs. This allowed staff to capitalise on a young person's motivation to produce tangible results which, in turn, helped to build momentum around the participant/Key Worker relationship. Staff were also of the view that this approach helped combat young people becoming dependent on their Key Worker. This was based on the premise that being able to work more intensively at the start of the relationship (with a view to gradually reducing support) could potentially increase the likelihood of achieving outcomes and moving young people more quickly towards independence.

5.6 Multi-agency working

Partnership is a central facet of the *Future 4 Me* project and strong working relationships exist with local statutory, voluntary and community (delivery/strategic) partners. One of the reasons why relationships between the project and partner agencies are effective is because there is strong alignment between project and partner initiatives in terms of impacting disadvantaged young people. Partners indicate that the project operates in a professional, effective and efficient manner pro-actively facilitating collaborative links with a wide range of community agencies and stakeholders including statutory and voluntary agencies. Partner organisations reported positive and successful experiences of working with *Future 4 Me*, speaking highly of the staff team and the services that they delivered. Partners, stakeholders and project staff reported that, on the whole, their experiences of multiagency working had been positive and successful, allowing all parties to better service the needs of young people. *Future 4 Me* staff were regularly praised by partners for keeping in close contact and sharing information with the various agencies with which they engaged. Similarly, professionals working with *Future 4 Me* valued the multi-agency approach because it allowed people to come together and support each other in their roles by sharing knowledge, providing access to specialist skills, exploring ideas, thinking creatively and joint problem solving.

5.7 Advocacy

In recent years social and academic commentators have strongly advocated the importance of consultation and the incorporation of youth 'voice' within the design and delivery of work with young people. The ability of *Future 4 Me* Key Workers to act as advocates for young people was considered an important part of the project by all involved (i.e., staff, young people and partners/stakeholders). Young people found it helpful to have someone supporting them in meetings and to have staff with them at appointments with other agencies in order to help both parties to understand each other's perspectives and needs. This enabled young people to maintain their engagement with key services which, in turn, helped prevent them from returning to custody or being made homeless. A crucial part of the Key Worker role was also empowering young people to be able to self-advocate so that they could better articulate their own needs and interests, increasing their chances of receiving appropriate help and support to make positive lifestyle changes and choices. In time, iw was hoped that project participants would be able to act as advocates for other young people by sharing their experiences through participation activites. A project panel comprised of service users was implemented to support this.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Project extension and delivery

In line with recommendations from young people, staff and partners, there was a strong desire to extend the *Future 4 Me* project and further funding has since been secured. The staff team felt that through this initial project phase they had gained a sound understanding of what works with young people and that proof of concept had been established in terms of the structuring of activities and the delivery of outcomes. However, there were some concerns raised by staff regarding the stability of the project team and timings around funding streams (see below).

Relationships with partners

Partnership working constitutes a key strand of *Future 4 Me* delivery and brings with it a number of benefits. In turn, it is clear that the relationships that exist between the project team and partner agencies benefit from: (i) an alignment of aims around the needs of young people; and (ii) a level of trust, respect and understanding around the nature of effective partnership working. Extension of the project will inevitably necessitate the maintenance of existing partner relations and the involvement of a greater number of partners, and it is important that this does not lead to compromise around the quality of the relationships involved.

Relationships with young people

How to successfully end a relationship with a young person formed a significant area of learning and development within the project. By reflecting on their experiences with young people, the project team identified several key issues to consider when closing cases in the hope of making 'endings' as positive an experience as possible for all concerned. A central part of the learning process here is that young people need early preparation for the ending of the relationship with their designated Key Worker so that the impact of the exit/transition process impact is structured and clearly mapped out. It is acknowledged that maintaining trust and integrity within the context of this process, whilst at the same time avoiding dependency, is a difficult balance to strike. Nevertheless, it is important that the staff team continue to reflect upon and refine their work in this area so that endings are tailored to the specific needs of the young person concerned and that clients have as much 'voice' as possible in the way in which their relationship with the project ends.

Toolkit development

Managerial staff within partner/stakeholder organisations expressed a desire to continue to work closely with *Future 4 Me* to develop a way of working within their own services that placed the relationship with young people more centrally. Professionals within statutory services articulated that they were becoming increasingly aware of recommendations around working with young people in a way that was relationship-based and psychologically informed and that there was a rising expectation upon them to do this. The toolkit currently being developed by *Future 4 Me* to deliver training on topics such as using relationships as a tool for change and PIE / Reflective Practice, was seen as a potential solution to this problem Needless to say, it is important that time and effort is put into developing this resource in Phase 2 of the *Future 4 Me* project.

Referrals process

One area of improvement for the *Future 4 Me* staff team to reflect upon further (in relation to multi-agency working) is the referral process. As it stands, there appear to be two main issues to consider. First, staff sometimes found that the quality of referrals they received were lacking in terms of informational content which significantly affected the quality and efficiency of their work with young people, as well as posing concern over undisclosed risk. Second, at times there was a misconception among referral agencies regarding the *Future 4 Me* project's role in relation to housing which appeared to lead to a number of inappropriate referrals. In order for *Future 4 Me* staff to best serve the young people with whom they work, it is essential that they have access to information concerning the history and needs of the young person concerned and why they have been referred to the service. There have been on-going attempts to implement change around the referral process and this work should be progressed.

Staffing strategy

High staff turnover was an issue throughout the life of the project. This was in no small part due to the uncertainty over future funding and job security which had had a negative impact on staff wellbeing and team morale and had also disrupted service delivery. In particular staff struggled with the uncertainty and scarcity of information surrounding the re-funding of the project which left them unable to plan for the future. As staff left the project, concerns necessarily emerged over its ability to maintain a consistent service for young people. In turn, it was still felt by staff and partners/stakeholders that the project struggled to provide a

consistent service for young people and there were concerns over the amount of knowledge and experience being lost from the project team. Such issues are, of course, an inevitable consequence of short term funding but, given these experiences, the *Future 4 Me* team may wish to consider the recruitment and retention of staff in a slightly more strategic way in Phase 2 of the project.

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